

*24 portraits by Joseph Vitone
drawn from*

family records

1998 - 2012



family records

This sampler is drawn from photography begun in 1998.
The pictures and writing are centered around a group of
good people in and around Akron, Ohio; centered around
themes of relationships and individuals observed over time.

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On the front cover: *Marjorie Angel in her back yard with hollyhocks, Akron, OH, 1998*

On the back cover: *Dorothy Morrison and Bailey Hutchinson, grandmother and granddaughter
playing in the Cuyahoga River, Akron, Ohio, 2006*



family records ~ 1998 - 2012

photographs by Joseph Vitone

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*Essay by David Haberstich, Curator of Photography, Archives Center
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution*

These photographs have been drawn from an ongoing series called *Family Records* which was begun in 1998 to document members of immediate and extended families of the photographer and his wife. The majority of the portrait subjects live in or near Akron, Ohio, former home to the country's major rubber and tire producers including Goodyear, Goodrich, and Firestone. Doylestown, Barberton, and other more rural communities neighboring Akron serve as locations for many of these images along with Akron proper. The photographs generate dialogues between one another at a number of levels, some directly, as in lineage and interpersonal relation of mother to daughter, father to son, or brother to sister, and some at less specific and more universal places as well. Comment is made on time and aging, on moving from childhood to adulthood, on relations sustained or lost through the years, on masculinity and femininity, on sensuality and beauty seen not only in youth but in age, and on our valuing of ourselves and others not only because of our strengths but, perhaps even more so, by reason of our vulnerabilities.

There is a base I have in the Midwest. A foundation that shifts as pasts colored by memories fold and crease events of a place to which I cannot often enough return. This is the source of much of who I am. It holds me. Is me. Of me, as I am of it. As I see it and mine, I know myself and mine as well.

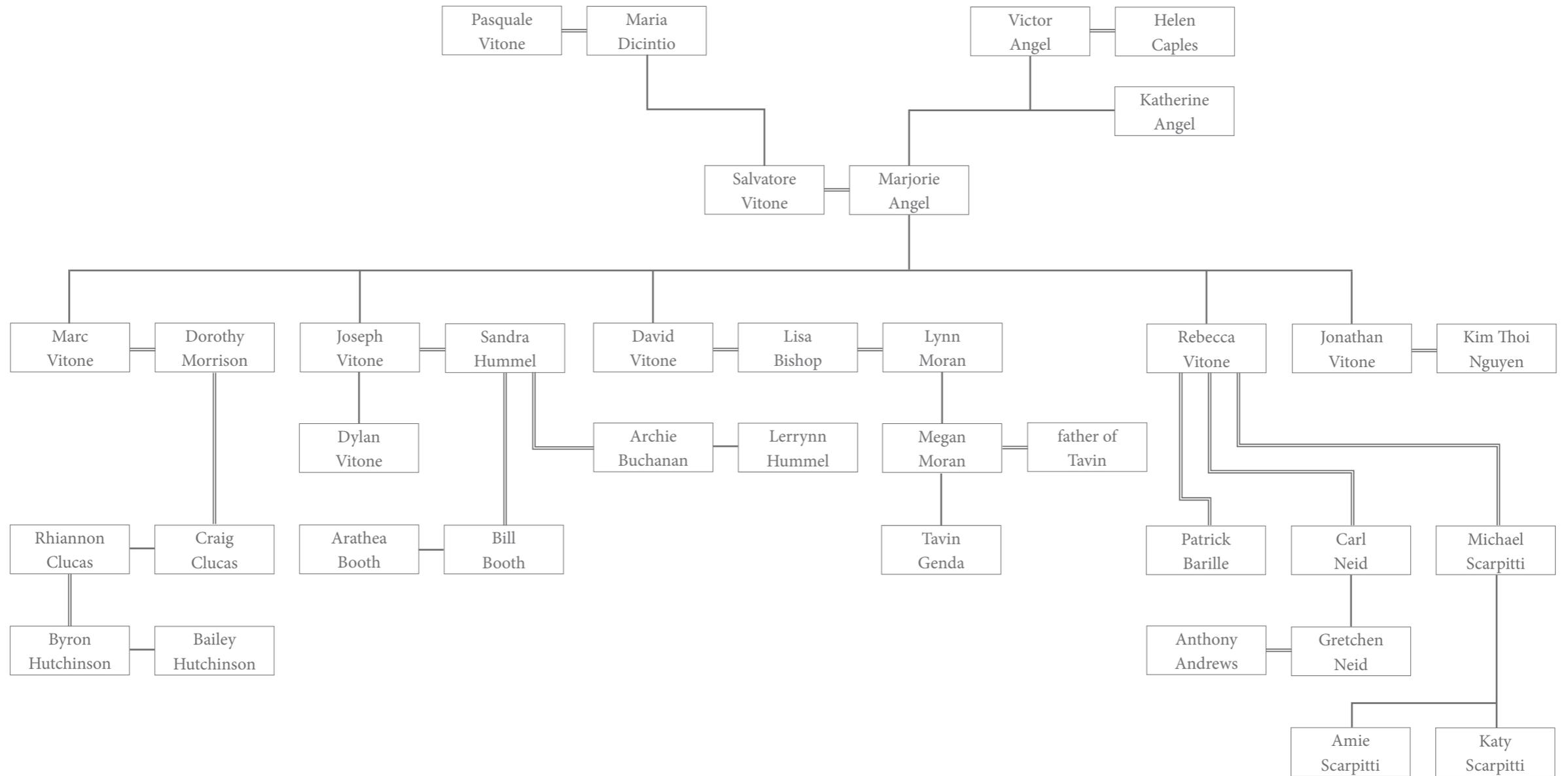
SECTION ONE

family trees

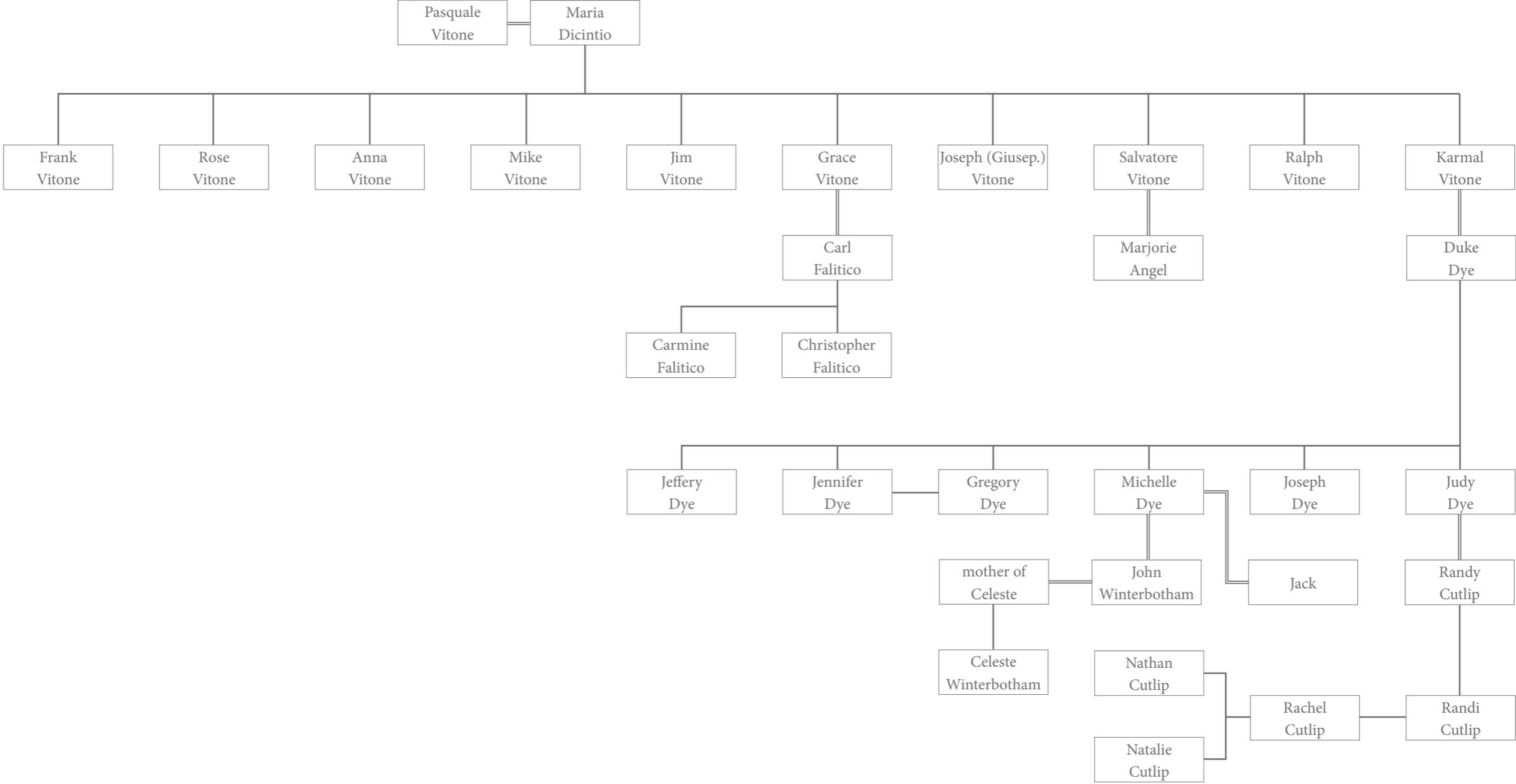
The 24 pictures contained within this document are sampled from a larger book. These family trees provide a guide to relationships of individuals presented in the full volume but are germane to this sampler as well. The trees are not intended to be genealogically exhaustive, and numerous relatives have not been charted if they are not featured or mentioned in the larger work.

The full collection of photographs spans a decade and a half and well over 1,000 large format negatives. In building cohesive visual and conceptual narratives, many editing decisions were made. The photography could provide material for other groupings and interpretations; for as with all documentary work, one study cannot offer all possible tellings. None the less, it is hoped that the 24 images presented here, offer a significant and engaging sampler of the bigger project.

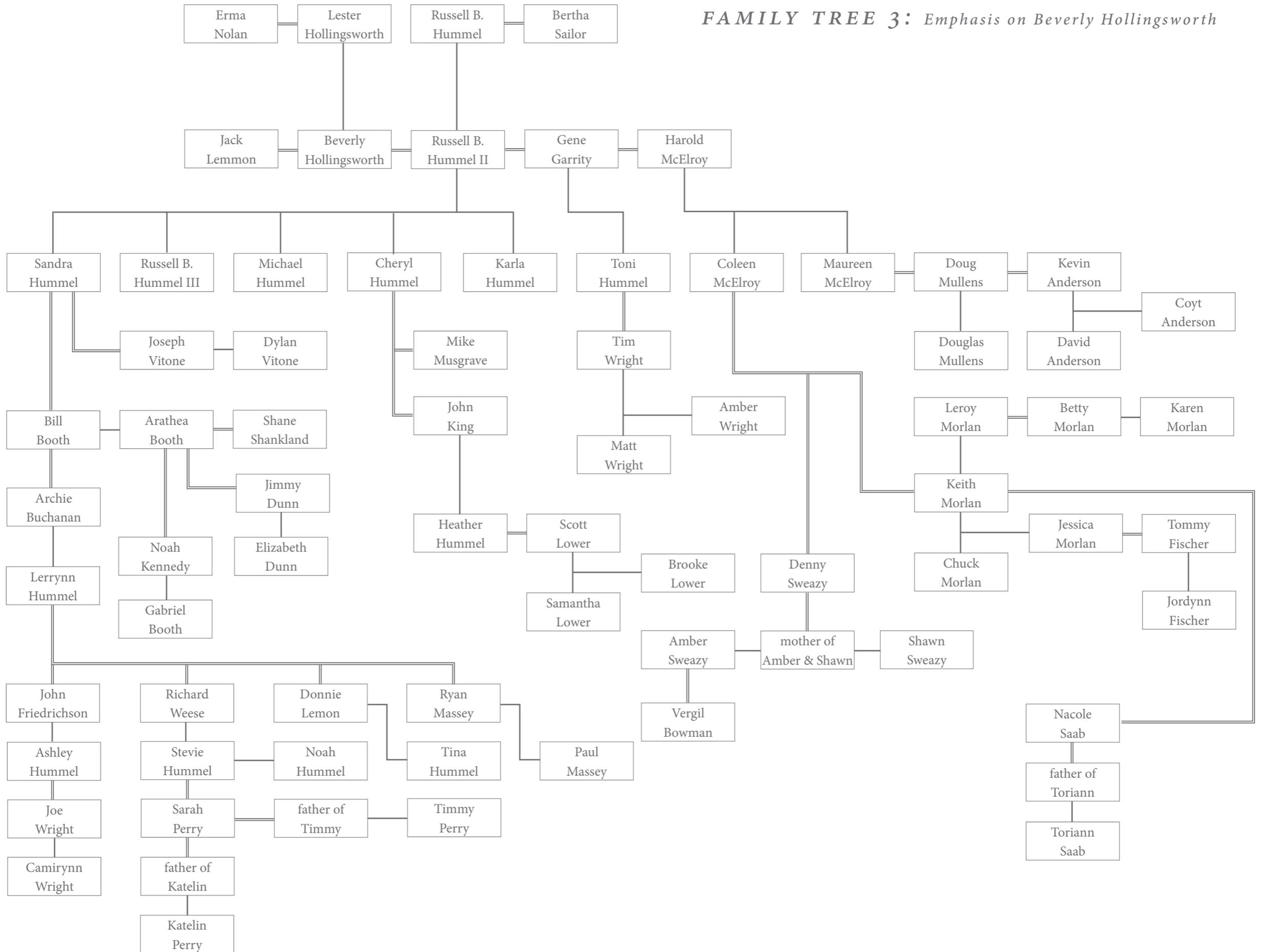
FAMILY TREE 1: Emphasis on Salvatore Vitone and Marjorie Angel



FAMILY TREE 2: Emphasis on Pasquale Vitone and Maria Dicintio



FAMILY TREE 3: Emphasis on Beverly Hollingsworth



SECTION TWO

portraits



Marjorie Angel in her back yard with hollyhocks, Akron, OH, 1998

Since 1991 Marjorie has lived on Clifford Avenue just off of East Archwood Avenue in Akron, Ohio. Born in Dover, Ohio in 1928, she was trained and worked in Akron for many years as a registered nurse. Marjorie retired at age 65 two years after she moved into this home. Resting on a concrete slab, it is a small blue house with vinyl siding. It sits next to the asphalt parking lot of an African-American church in a racially mixed neighborhood in Akron's Firestone Park. She has been divorced for many years and enjoys living alone; enjoys her small but neat house; enjoys her yard. Gardening and general yard care are important to her and in addition to the nice spray of hollyhocks at the garage door, many other flowers decorate her back, side, and front yards.



Lerrynn and Stevie Hummel, mother and son at pool, Norton, Ohio, 2000

Along with her other children, Ashley and Tina, Lerrynn has been living with Beverly and Jack at the 3011 Houston Road place in Norton. The property is owned by Beverly's son, Michael, who resides in Colorado. Mike inherited the house and land from his father and Beverly's first husband, Rusty, when he passed away several years ago. Stevie is in 8th or 9th grade at Doylestown Middle School and Jack will typically drive him to school each day. The temporary above-ground pool went up recently to provide residents and the frequent family visitors a bit of relief from the warm summer.



Beverly Lemmon holding great granddaughter, Elizabeth Dunn, Houston Rd., Norton, 2001

Recently-born Elizabeth is the daughter of Arathea Booth, Beverly's granddaughter, and Jimmy Dunn, Arathea's domestic partner. Arathea had been dating Jimmy for some time during which he was convinced it was impossible for him to father a child. This, however, proved not to be the case as evidenced by the unexpected arrival of Elizabeth. Arathea, Jimmy, Elizabeth, and Arathea's first-born, Gabriel Booth, live together in a nice apartment complex on 31st Street in Barberton.



(l. to r.) Marjorie Angel and Rebecca Barile, mother and daughter with flag at Rebecca's front door, Akron, Ohio, 2003

Becky and her mom, Marjie, stand in late afternoon sun on the front stoop of Becky's place on Rhea Avenue. Flags in windows, on porches hung like drapes or on small angled staffs, and as windshield and bumper stickers are usual sights here in northeastern Ohio. Less than two years have passed since the major terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.



Lerrynn Hummel and son, Paul Massey, on patio of her grandmother's apartment, where temporarily staying, Valleyview Apartments, 31st Street, Barberton, Ohio, 2004

Lerrynn has recently had problems with her boyfriend and Paul's father, Ryan Massey. She and Ryan were renting-to-own a nice farmhouse in Doylestown when Ryan developed cancer. He was prescribed OxyContin for pain associated with this disease. Lerrynn, herself, was taking Percocet prescribed for back pain. She began sharing Ryan's Oxy. Both of them lost their jobs. They lost everything and moved from the farm house. She is temporarily at the apartment of the grandmother, who raised her, Beverly Lemmon. Beverly, herself, moved to this location with husband, Jack Lemmon, to be near her granddaughter, Arathea Booth, and because she liked the swimming pool, though she admits she has never swum in it. Lerrynn helps out around the apartment, cleaning and caring for her kids and the kids of relatives who regularly drop in.



Arathea Booth with children Elizabeth Dunn and Gabriel Booth on their front porch, Ford Ave., Barberton, OH, 2004

Arathea holds daughter, Elizabeth, who cries to sit next to her brother, Gabe, who holds a toy machine gun. With many U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, Gabe very much want to join the military and fight overseas. He more often than not wears camouflage clothing. The three live here with Elizabeth's father and Arathea's domestic partner, Jimmy Dunn.



Domestic partners Vergil Bowman and Amber Sweazy with sunflowers, Doylestown, OH, 2006

Vergil and Amber will reside with Vergil's family in a trailer in nearby Rittman. Vergil has lately been working some construction "under the table". His mom, Kelly, is good about driving him to work, though there is mention of Vergil and Amber's money going missing from where they keep it in the home.



Beneath base of a beech tree, Karla Hummel (standing) with sister, Sandra (née Hummel) Vitone, and mother, Beverly Lemmon and half-sister, Toni Wright (seated, far left), West-view Mobile Home Park, Doylestown, Ohio, 2007

Karla is in town from Colorado Springs and Sandra from Austin. Today is Tuesday. On Monday the family and friends gathered near the Cuyahoga River at The Gorge Park for a memorial service for brother Michael Hummel, who died in February at the age of 52. He was found dead of no obvious cause on the floor of his bathroom in Denver. From his father, Rusty Hummel, Michael had inherited the house and land on Houston Road where Beverly and husband Jack lived for years rent-free but finally moved from due to tensions with Beverly's kids and grandkids. Beverly purchased the mobile home in which she and Jack now reside with money she inherited from Michael at his passing.



Jessica Morlan and Tommy Fischer, girl and boyfriend, Doylestown, OH, 2007

Jessica was born 1992. When still a minor, she ran away with a local boy who was around 19 years old. She eventually returned home. The boy was criminally prosecuted and required to register as a sexual predator. Jessica met her current boyfriend, Tommy, when the two were in high school. She was around 14, nearly 15. She will become pregnant when she is 15 and give birth at 16 years of age.



(l. to r.) Half-brothers Paul Massey and Stevie Hummel in parking lot behind aunt's apartment, Doylestown, OH, 2007

Stevie is living at his Aunt Maureen's apartment with her and her two of her kids, Coyt and David. He's not working. He spends most of his time just hanging around and smoking weed all day. He refers to himself and his friends as "Portage Street thugs" in reference to the main street running through Doylestown.



Dave Vitone sitting on mowers he has repaired for sale, corner of 3rd and Bailey Road, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 2007

Dave seems always to struggle to find employment. Though he is a laborer and union member, work is forever off and on. He has had ongoing substance abuse problems and wrestles with this. Currently he is working with someone who repairs lawn mowers. The acquaintance does more complicated repairs and Dave performs simpler tasks in bringing back the mowers such as sharpening the blades. The same guy has a foreclosed house where Dave pays rent to live. Dave's membership in an Akron Baptist church aids him greatly in dealing with a life that is sometimes hard. He became acquainted with the congregation when a church elder, as part of his ministry, visited Dave when he was serving a stint at the workhouse for some minor crime. At the time he had a serious drug problem that had plagued much of his life.



Grace Falitico in her back yard with wheel barrow and Rose o' Sharon, Englewood Drive, Stow, Ohio, 2007

Born in 1918 Grace is nearly 90 years old. She lives alone in the house that she and her husband, Carl, built together and in which she raised her two children, Carmine and Christopher. Carl passed away over twenty years ago, about seven years following retirement from decades of labor at Plant 1 of Goodyear Tire and Rubber. With a little outside help she still tends to much of the yard and house work. Born to Italian immigrants she is a lifelong Catholic as much as a function of ethnic background as of religion. She typically attends mass at two parishes each week -- 5:00 PM Saturday afternoon at Holy Family, half a mile from her house and 11:00 AM Sunday at St. Eugene's in Munroe Falls. She is often called on to sing at church funerals and has in the past been involved in community theater musical productions.



Jessica Morlan and Tommy Fischer with their infant, Jordynn Fischer, Marshallville, Ohio, 2008

Jessica holds her 18 day old baby with whom she was pregnant while a sophomore in high school. Dealing with morning sickness and other problems, she was booted out due to poor attendance; though she will re-enter and eventually complete her diploma after summer school in upcoming years. She and boyfriend, Tommy, dressed in Renaissance Fair style costumes, are at the house of Jessica's cousin, Aratheia, for a party. Jessica and Tommy are living together in Doylestown at the house of mother, Coleen, and her husband, Denny Sweazy.



Brooke Lower standing at edge of soybean field after bobbing for apples, Fulton Road, Marshallville, Ohio, 2008

At a party organized by her great aunt, Sandra Vitone, Brooke in long gown stands wet in a soybean field that touches the yard where Arathea Booth and her two children Gabriel Booth and Elizabeth Dunn reside. Most years Arathea's mom, Sandra, a former hippy and Woodstock Music and Art Fair attendee, puts together some themed party such as Hawaiian Luau, Krishna Consciousness, and this year, a Medieval Renaissance Fair party. With a love for ornamentation and tendencies toward hoarding, Sandra being an avid patron of Goodwill and other thrift stores is able to appoint these get togethers with plenty of props providing fun visual texture.



Arathea Booth seated on a cooler in yard smoking a cigarette, Marshallville, Ohio, 2008

After completing training at a community college in Wayne County, Arathea found employment last year doing initial insurance billing at Wooster Hospital. She enjoys the work and is good at it. Feeling more confident of her income, she moved from government subsidized housing in Orrville to this house on Fulton Road in Marshallville. The place had been rented previously by her niece, Ashley Hummel with boyfriend Joe Wright. Arathea's teenage son, Gabe, misses Orrville, a small town but a town with numerous businesses, such as Smucker's Jams, a car dealership, and a downtown. The Fulton Road place sits on a rural and fast-traveled two lane road about twenty minutes walk from tiny and very rural Marshallville.



Grace Falitico seated and napping beneath tree among hostas in her back yard, 2009

This spring Grace celebrated her 91st birthday. She tires easily and nods peacefully as she sits among the hostas in her well-tended yard. Daughter of southern Italian immigrants, Grace was the sixth born in a family of ten children. Three of her older siblings were born in Italy. Hers was a rough childhood, her mother often cold, abusive, and the Great Depression settling on the country during her teen years. A brother, Joseph, the child born after her, was struck down and killed by a delivery van on the streets of Akron. She tells of his lying in state in the family's front room, head propped to hold it in a more natural position than the vehicle had placed it. She loves to talk. Loves to socialize. Her niece, Judy, purchased a washer and dryer for her yet for the most part she refuses to use it, preferring instead to continue going to the laundromat where she is able to converse with many people.



Grandmother, Sandra Vitone; mother, Arathea Booth; and granddaughter, Elizabeth Dunn, with pool and palm tree backdrop, Marshallville, Ohio, 2009

Arathea's mother, Sandra, is a creative person who loves putting together a good party. By profession a cook, a baker, and a caterer and by avocation a thrift store shopper, she supplements well-considered but inexpensive props with items gleaned from Goodwill and other second hand stores to assemble themed parties near birthday time of her daughter, Arathea. The annual events occur when Sandra is able to make a summer visit to Ohio from her residence in Austin, Texas. This year they are having a luau among the corn and soybean fields of Wayne County.



Jessica Morlan and daughter, Jordynn Fischer, with sunflowers, Doylestown, Ohio, 2009

Jordynn, born July 2, 2008, is one year old this month. Jessica has lost her “baby fat” gained during pregnancy last year. She wants to continue to be attractive to Tommy Fischer, who is the baby’s father. Also a young high-school aged person, he is showing interest in other girls of their group. Coleen continues to provide a lot of help with the new baby and Jessica enjoys getting out with her old friends from high school when possible.



Dave Vitone with tractor on land owned by parents of his wife, Lisa Bishop, Laubert Road, Atwater, OH, 2009

Lisa's parents had a dog grooming business on rural property about 45 minutes drive from Akron. The bank will foreclose on the place but Lisa and new husband, David, will continue to live at and care for the spread. The parents have moved to a small town in north Texas and Lisa wants to follow. Dave finds that area of Texas hot, barren, and isolated. He doesn't want to move from Ohio.



Marjorie Angel in pink sweater with pink rose bush, Akron, Ohio, 2009

Marjorie loves flowers and tending to her yard. The rose growing in her back yard for years has been manically productive, putting out canes that climb as high as the house. The plant blooms early and multiple times from spring through summer and into the autumn. She likes to say the bush was given to her by her son, because she bought it when at the nursery with him and his wife, also an avid gardener. Marjorie notes that she “dead heads” the blooms shortly after they dry up. Then more blooms come. Typically the rose has two major blooms per year. In addition to pink, there are here and there red blossoms on some of the canes.



Michelle Winterbotham with father, Duke Dye, in driveway, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 2010

After living in Orlando for 23 years, Michelle moved back to Cuyahoga Falls in August of 2008. Her mother, Karmal, died in 2005 and she now stays with and cares for her father, Claude Dye (aka, Duke). While in Florida, she married twice. First to Jack, who drove semi-tractor trailer rig for the entertainment industry. They were together for 18 years and married for 10 years of that time before they divorced. Attending an evangelical Christian church, Michelle met and married John. She returned with her new husband and his daughter, Celeste to this, her girlhood, home on Ashland Avenue. A coarse gruff person, John was nonetheless very religious and kind to Michelle. He has custody of his daughter, Celeste, who is a “crack baby”, normal in appearance yet mentally slow and immature for her age. Michelle has recently separated from John who became belligerent and unkind. She hopes to find the several hundred dollars necessary to file for divorce.



Marc Vitone and Dorothy Morrison at base of road leading to their log cabin, Buckhannon, WV, 2010

The road that climbs to Marc and Dorothy's house is steep and some vehicles will have difficulty reaching the place. They like it like that. He and she met in July of 2006 and started building their cabin from scratch in June of 2007. They moved in, March 2008. Servicing a large number of 4-wheelers, Marc works at Smitty's Suzuki Center in Buckhannon and Dorothy, driving some distance to work, at P.D.C. (Petroleum Development Corporation) where she does title searches. Buckhannon, West Virginia is the Upshur County seat and it sits near the town of Sago, site of the Sago Mine Disaster, which occurred in January of 2006, killing 12 miners.



Chuck Morlan and Gabe Booth in background mowing at Coleen and Denny's, Doylestown, OH, 2011

The boys mow together areas in need of sprucing up. Chuck says this is the first time they've worked together on the 3 1/2 acres owned by his mom and her husband. The Work Horse mower that Gabe is sitting was just returned from another location. Chuck estimates if they mow together once per week it should take them about 1 1/2 hour to keep the place looking good.



Lerryann Hummel in purple top at side of Beverly and Jack Lemmon's mobile home, Westview Trailer Park, Doylestown, Ohio, 2011

Not too long ago Lerryann left a rehab facility after months of therapy for drug addiction. Prior to entering she had moved from abusing prescription pain relievers such as OxyContin to shooting up heroine. In 2008 she and ex-domestic partner, Ryan, considered by the state to be unfit parents, lost custody of their son, Paul. Last year she suffered a minor heart attack from withdrawal when hospitalized for another ailment and failing to disclose her drug habit to medical staff. Relapsed and using again, she had no place to stay so is again living with grandmother, Beverly Lemmon. She has been trying to stay clean and find a job and a guy who likes her so she can feel whole. A bad toothache has been vexing her for the past couple days and she is in considerable pain. Still she mentions she might use this picture on her Facebook page.

SECTION THREE

listing of the photographs

listing of the photographs



16 ~ Marjorie Angel in her back yard with hollyhocks, Akron, OH, 1998



18 ~ Lerrynn and Stevie Hummel, mother and son at pool, Norton, Ohio, 2000



20 ~ Beverly Lemmon holding great granddaughter, Elizabeth Dunn, Houston Rd., Norton, 2001



22 ~ (l. to r.) Marjorie Angel and Rebecca Barile, mother and daughter with flag at Rebecca's front door, Akron, Ohio, 2003



24 ~ Lerrynn Hummel and son, Paul Massey, on patio of her grandmother's apartment, where temporarily staying, Valleyview Apartments, 31st Street, Barberton, Ohio, 2004



26 ~ Arathea Booth with children Elizabeth Dunn and Gabriel Booth on their front porch, Ford Ave., Barberton, OH, 2004



28 ~ Domestic partners Vergil Bowman and Amber Sweazy with sunflowers, Doylestown, OH, 2006



30 ~ Beneath base of a beech tree, Karla Hummel (standing) with sister, Sandra (née Hummel) Vitone, and mother, Beverly Lemmon and half-sister, Toni Wright (seated, far left), West-view Mobile Home Park, Doylestown, Ohio, 2007



32 ~ Jessica Morlan and Tommy Fischer, girl and boyfriend, Doylestown, OH, 2007



34 ~ (l. to r.) Half-brothers Paul Massey and Stevie Hummel in parking lot behind aunt's apartment, Doylestown, OH, 2007



36 ~ Dave Vitone sitting on mowers he has repaired for sale, corner of 3rd and Bailey Road, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 2007



38 ~ Grace Falitico in her back yard with wheel barrow and Rose o' Sharon, Englewood Drive, Stow, Ohio, 2007



40 ~ Jessica Morlan and Tommy Fischer with their infant, Jordynn Fischer, Marshallville, Ohio, 2008



42 ~ Brooke Lower standing at edge of soybean field after bobbing for apples, Fulton Road, Marshallville, Ohio, 2008



44 ~ Arathea Booth seated on a cooler in yard smoking a cigarette, Marshallville, Ohio, 2008



46 ~ Grace Falitico seated and napping beneath tree among hostas in her back yard, 2009



48 ~ Grandmother, Sandra Vitone; mother, Arathea Booth; and granddaughter, Elizabeth Dunn, with pool and palm tree backdrop, Marshallville, Ohio, 2009



50 ~ Jessica Morlan and daughter, Jordynn Fischer, with sunflowers, Doylestown, Ohio, 2009



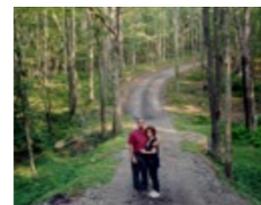
52 ~ Dave Vitone with tractor on land owned by parents of his wife, Lisa Bishop, Laubert Road, Atwater, OH, 2009



54 ~ Marjorie Angel in pink sweater with pink rose bush, Akron, Ohio, 2009



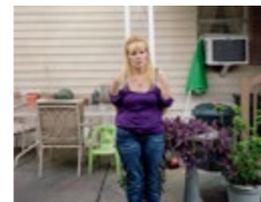
56 ~ Michelle Winterbotham with father, Duke Dye, in driveway, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, 2010



58 ~ Marc Vitone and Dorothy Morrison at base of road leading to their log cabin, Buckhannon, WV, 2010



60 ~ Chuck Morlan and Gabe Booth in background mowing at Coleen and Denny's, Doylestown, OH, 2011



62 ~ Lerrynn Hummel in purple top at side of Beverly and Jack Lemmon's mobile home, Westview Trailer Park, Doylestown, Ohio, 2011

SECTION FOUR

the family photographs of joe vitone

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*Essay by David Haberstich, Curator of Photography, Archives Center
National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution*

The Family Photographs of Joe Vitone

By David Haberstick

Curator of Photography, Archives Center

National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Joe Vitone will probably be surprised to find that I consider his photographic documentation of his family heroic. His heroism consists in rescuing documentary photography.

Vitone eschews snapshots of the simple style some call “vernacular,” demanding that his relatives stand still long enough to be recorded in their humanity, warts and all, through the lens of an intimidating 8” x 10” or 4” x 5” view camera on a tripod. The project bears the deceptively neutral, clinical title *Family Records*.

Vitone subscribes to a documentary tradition which has been a major tributary in the mainstream of photographic history. It embraces many photographers, from the minority among 19th century studio photographers who disdained flattering and prettifying their subjects, to the ethnographic and survey photographers, and others who produced visual catalogues of typologies and topographies, to the documentary photographers of the 20th century--investigative reporters and journalists who dispassionately depict and catalogue disparate lifestyles, occupations, ethnicities, and events. This genre has imitators: the artist-photographers who produce fictional pseudo-documentary images in order to question and dismantle the tradition (or conceit) of photography’s ability to serve as a faithful witness. These photographers,

many of whom were inspired by the fictitious movie “stills” of Cindy Sherman, operate like dramatists, stage managers or movie directors, managing background sets, enlisting actors to create enigmatic slices of time which look realistic but are totally fictitious, calculated “stills” from movies which exist only in the photographers’ minds. The first noteworthy assault of the photographic pseudo-document on a gullible public was probably Les Krims’s fake police story, *The Incredible Case of the Stack o’ Wheats Murders*, which managed to convince some photographic critics that bizarre pictures of nude women in pools of alleged blood were actual crime photographs. Late 20th century postmodern photographic stagecraft derives largely from the examples of Krims and Sherman.

I do not know if Joe Vitone deliberately tried to strike a blow for traditional photographic values when he embarked upon the *Family Records* project, but I doubt it. Nevertheless, as a student and teacher of photography, he must be keenly aware of the crisis of faith which documentary photography has endured in recent years. At every turn, relativists and postmodernists lurk to ensnare and ridicule the naive, the unsuspecting, and the gullible--as well as true believers in the ultimate veracity of photographs--with their pseudo-documentary photographs and their irony. That so many photographers succeed in fooling their publics with impossibly rich fictions sets the stage for a Joe Vitone to rescue and reinvigorate the classic documentary photograph--deceptively simple, spare, straightforward. These are not candid photographs; people are posing. Sometimes they posture a bit as well, but Vitone aims for objectivity and truth. People appear to be pausing in the middle of their ordinary activities to be photographed by a trusted family member. Vitone’s task in documenting his immediate and extended family with a semblance of objectivity is fraught with peril.

It is a risky proposition because contemporary art photography has taught us to be suspicious of what we see in photographs. People worry about digital manipulation which can falsify photographs, but some of the most complex ambiguities and visual confusion can be created in front of the camera even before exposure via stagecraft. We must get past postmodern irony to appreciate Vitone's work. We find it multi-layered: he blends the objectivity of the dedicated documentarian with the subjectivity of one who knows some of his subjects all too well and others not well enough. Although his knowledge may cut both ways, facilitating both objectivity and bias, he avoids the mistakes of the photographer who is too ignorant of his subjects to penetrate their masks, or the tourist who sees only surfaces.

Due to the potential for confusion and uncertainty about the accuracy and reliability of "documentary" photographs when we cannot be certain whether we are viewing unmanipulated truth or a fabricated reality, I revert to the written word as the pedigree of a photograph. To me photographs, to serve as historical evidence, require a verification which is analogous to the requirements for forensic evidence in law, chiefly documentation or testimony which proves that the photograph depicts what it appears to show, bears a credible explanation, and has a verifiable chain of custody. Sometimes the only proof is not scientific at all, but is simply sworn testimony. Documents need documentation. As a curator of photographs, I know that the most useful photographs as historical evidence are hybrids with linguistic modifiers: explanatory captions, the testimony of photographer and/or witness, visual analysis, etc.

Vitone's family portraits are multi-layered. They contain the verbal descriptions which anchor them to time and place and show willing subjects collaborating with the photographer, a man whom they know. Yet they conceal as

much as they reveal. Vitone provides in text his estimate of what you need to know, but he does not tell us what to think or reveal his opinions of them. They provide the saga of a family in pictures within a narrow range of time and specificity of places. These photographs will serve researchers as reliable primary historical and sociological pictorial documents. The photographic exploration of a single family as a vehicle to record these specifics appealed to me, and that is ostensibly why I sought them for my museum's collection. But on a deeper level, I appreciate them as documents of emotional journeys and relationships, imbued with little mysteries despite their pretense of telling all. There is room for interpretation and debate. Finally, fine craftsmanship in photography is a joy, and I find that the feeling of rich silver photographic surfaces helps make documentary photographs convincing. That's a cliché, of course, but it's one I can live with.

Mildly technical information about the photographs

From 1998 through 2003 the photographs were made on 4 x 5 inch film. From 2004 to the present, the pictures have been made on 4 x 5 or 8 x 10 inch film. Using a large format negative gives greater detail and texture in the final print. A portrait made on a large format negative can show individual strands of hair, beads of moisture on skin, the texture of fabric, and subtle tonal variations not recordable by a smaller piece of film. While earlier pictures are 20 x 24 inch silver-gelatin prints, since the mid-2000's the portraits, in black and white or color, have been made as archival inkjet prints. The full size print for a 4 x 5 inch negative portrait is a 32 x 40 inch image on a 36 x 44 inch sheet. The full size print for an 8 x 10 inch negative portrait is a 40 x 50 inch image on a 44 x 54 inch sheet.

About the Photographer

Joseph Vitone is Professor of Photocommunications at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas, where he has lived with his family since 1991. His artistic production consists of portraits, landscapes, and street scenes that record relationships between people as well as the connection of person to place and society. There is often in this work emphasis on the photograph as historical document. *Family Records*, a series of portraits centered around northeast Ohio, has been ongoing since 1998. Vitone's work has been internationally exhibited and is held in a number of collections. He has been a senior Fulbright Scholar in fine art and has received other significant recognition.



Family Records ~ 1998 - 2012 | Portraits by Joseph Vitone
Essay by David Haberstich