

Grandpa Was There!
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My mother's father, **Charles Herman Broad**, told his children that he was in Chicago when it was destroyed by fire in October 1871. I set out to prove his claim.

Grandpa's **death certificate** in a place far away from Chicago gave his birthplace as St. Louis, Missouri in 1848. His **baptism record** was found in the registers of St. Joseph Catholic Church in St. Louis. His parents were German immigrants later found in the Catholic church registers of a small village on the Rhine River.

I searched for him in the US Censuses of 1870, 1860 and 1850. Neither Charles or his parents were found in any of them. There were numerous persons in these censuses who spelled the surname **Brod**. Later they were proved to have been relatives who stayed in the St. Louis area.

In addition to census failures, another problem emerged: **Spelling of the surname**. It was **Broad** on the death certificate, **Brodt** on the baptism. Elsewhere **Brode** which pronounces the same as **Brod**. And also other variations which complicated the search.

I thought it might be possible to find Charles in Chicago City Directories. A comprehensive collection is on microfilm, at the **Newberry Library** in Chicago. Many years ago, I spent a day searching for grandpa on those films. The research librarian on duty that day was Ginger Frere who was very helpful. She now has her own research business in family history and is a frequent lecturer on genealogy topics.

There were many candidates for my grandfather on the films because of the variant name spellings. Directories do not normally show the person's **place of birth**. Ginger found one which **did** give the person's birthplace, and it verified Grandpa's story.

Calling itself a "**Census Report**", the **Richard Edwards Company** publication of 1871, the year of the fire, was available for Chicago. On page 144, there's a listing for **Brode, Charles** with the birthplace **Mo**. The abbreviation for **Missouri**. It's the only listing of similar names with Missouri as the birthplace. Here it is:

Brode Charles, porter, Oglesby, Barnitz & Co. r. 641
4th, w 14, b Mo

Charles is not shown with a family. He had no wife or children as shown for many other listings in the same Directory. I had no luck finding the 641 4th street address in the 14th Ward.

Reasonable connections were then found for Grandpa in directories dating back to 1868 and forward to 1876. This suggests that he arrived in Chicago around the age of 20 just after the Civil War when Chicago was booming as the railroad hub of the Midwest. And he stayed in the city well into the rebuilding period after the Great Fire when jobs with good wages were abundant.

Grandpa's listing showed an employer and occupation. The company description is on page 843 of the Edwards Directory as follows:

Elsewhere we learned that Oglesby, Barnitz & Co. sold books and a full range of

Oglesby, Barnitz & Co. paper and envelopes, 148
Clark

paper products. The next listing in the directory indicated they had a production plant in Ohio. Charles worked as a **porter** which probably means he restocked shelves and delivered to customers. The store on

Clark Street was almost certainly destroyed by the fire of 1871. Grandpa's residence in the 14th Ward northwest of the city center may have been spared.

Charles Brode is not in Chicago directories after 1875. He took the long train ride to **San Francisco** because he's in directories there in 1878 and 1879. In 1879, he's found on a ship's passenger list leaving San Francisco and arriving at the port of Lahaina on the island of Maui. His arrival is recorded on a 3x5" card in the State Archives of Hawaii. Nothing more is known about the ship, but its other passengers appeared to have Chinese names.

Charles flourished on Maui with increasing managerial responsibilities. He helped build the short-line railroad on the north shore of the island which transported Chinese workers to the sugar cane fields in the central valley of the island. On another list, Charles is shown as the superintendent at one of the sugar refineries.

By 1890, Charles is recorded with a family in the Census of the Kingdom of Hawaii.

He ran for sheriff of Maui in 1893 and lost. His picture as a candidate is also in the State Archives. He then was appointed **Inspector of Animals** for the island. A very important job. He had his own stable of horses and was a founding member of the **Maui Jockey Club**. It held an annual race holiday which drew spectators and horses from the other islands. There are newspaper stories which report frequent victories of Charles' horses.

In 1894, Grandpa became the **Traffic Manager** of the **Pacific Mail Steamship Company** in Yokohama, Japan. His poker games were legendary in the shipping community. My mother was born in Yokohama in 1905 when her father was 57 years old. He retired to Hawaii in 1920 and died in Honolulu a year later. That life was a long journey for a man who witnessed the devastation of the young city of Chicago **half a century earlier**.