Ninety-one descendants of John Jacob Astor, founder of the oldest multi-millionaire family in America, are living today.

The first foundation stones of the Astor fortunes were laid, six years before the beginning of the last century, by a German lad of 21, who, like thousands of other immigrants, had been driven from his own home because there seemed to be no room for him in the Old World. Yet he was able to win vast fortunes in the New.

He came from a peasantry whose lives and notions were crude in the extreme, whose measure of wealth was and, in some parts of Germany still is, the size of the stable manure pile before the front door. The lot of the best of these was hard enough in the 18th century; his had been more rigorous and less promising than that of almost any other lad in his own village,

He reached the city of New York, where his descendants are now the heaviest individual landlords, when it was only a big backwoods colonial village, set on the point of an island composed mostly of rocks, swamp and scraggly woods.

His only capital was represented by a few musical instruments, and his first employment yielded a wage of only \$2 a week, but he had unconquerable energy, nerve and determination, and these lasted him till he had gathered a reluctant \$2,000,000 profit from the fur trade, though much of that sum became his because he did his own transportation, whenever and wherever he could

The fifth generation of the descendants is now on the stage. None of them has ever shown more than a glimpse of the splendid courage and energy of the family's founder. Some of them have displayed lofty ambitions, but they have all been held down by the incubus of great wealth, and the highest achievement of any has been either the timid, orderly following of his footsteps in real estate, or the accomplishment of social leadership. Yet the Astor history, though presenting some sordid details, is full of romance, passion and strivings beyond the history of most families.

First John Jacob Starts Out to Seek His Fortune.

T IS just 125 years ago, in the Spring, that a husky youth of 17 sat in the shade of a tree in the German principullty of Baden and took a long last look at the village of Walldorf, where he was anos." leave. He was not alone while looking his farewells. The village schoolmaster (who had taught the lad to read, to write, to cipher and to sing hymns so loudly that the windows were in danger when he lifted up his voice), and one or two others sat leave. He was not alone while looking his ed up his voice), and one or two others sat under the tree with him. When the boy had strapped upon his back the little packet of clothing, which, with the equivalent of \$2 in cash, formed his entire worldly wealth, the schoolmaster turned to one of the other, and said:

to one of the other, and said:
"Hanyakob" (for thus they nicknamed the future New World multi-millionaire)
"will make a good journey through the world, for he has a clear head, and his skull is thick behind his care." In English this doesn't sound very complimentary, but it is a common form of laudation to this day among the German poasants of Baden.

The lad's father, half-farmer, half-butcher, and wholly shiftiess, had been driven to drink and laziness by his second wife. As stepmother, her treatment of the boy had been cruel and disheartening, and owing to the father's increasing idleness and brutality there had lately been many days when John Jacob had literally to go hungry, and more than once he had

and Henry, who had come to America and set up a butcher shop in New York. The revolution of the British colonists was still in progress but Henry had written John Jacob that the colonists were sure to win some time, and that when they did the New World was bound to be the best place on earth for any one anxious to better himself. It was John Jacob's ambition, therefore, to come here.

His brother George had said he would be welcome in London, and the lad planned to make the British capital a place of sojourn upon his Western jou ney. He expected to walk to the coas and to use his little stock of cash to buy passage across the North Sea, but, luck-lly, he got a chance to work his way down the river Rhine on a lumber raft. He reached London in just three weeks, and was set to work at once in his brother's pinno factory.

John Jacob worked hard in London a little more than three years, by day at In September, 1783, he heard of the sign-

ing of the treaty of peace between Great Britain and the United States, and got ready to leave London at once. He had managed to save 15 guineas, or about \$75, out of his small wages; the passage (on a sailing ship, of course) cost \$36, and he had a little less than \$50 left. His notion was to be a dealer in musical instruments, like his brother George, and he invested about half of his remaining capital in seven German flutes, so that when the ship sailed away he had about \$55 in his

The vessel on which he embarked, buffeted and tossed by tumbling seas, did not reach this side till January, 1784. She was bound for Baltimore, as the mouth of the Chesapeake Bay, being farther south than the harbor of New York, was not so likely to be ice-bound. When the ship reached the capes which guard the Chesa-peake, however, much ice was found, and It was still two long months before the passengers were able to land. One of them, German, like John Jacob, had made some money in the fur trade, and the two y were together, talking of its possi-

Began Beating Furs at Two Dollars a Week.

WHEN, at last, the ship was moored at Baltimore, John Jacob had not enough money left to pay the fare by stage coach to New York, so he tramped part of the way, packing his flutes and his spare clothing. After selling the flutes at a profit, instead of going to work for his brother in New York, as he had in London, he got a job with a Quaker furrier, named Bonne, beating skins at 2 a week. Bonne found young Astor's judgment good, and sent him North through New York state and into Canada to buy pelts and skins of all sorts. Bonne died in 1786 and then Astor decided to start out for himself.

How to get money enough to do so was a problem. Finally he went to his broth-er Henry, who had often lent small sums

him, and stated the case.
'I'm tired of lending you money," said enry, "and I won't be bothered any

with such a capital he could run alone, and as soon as he got the money he set about proving his case. In 1785 he had married a young woman

named Sarah Todd, collaterally a Brevort. She brought no money, but she was strong, clever, and willing to work. They established themselves in Gold street, now away down town in a mixed-up jun-gle of new skyscrapers and ancient two and three-story brick buildings, and hung out a sign, "J. J. Astor, Furs and Pi-anos.". Then the couple went to work born, and which, though his life there had been everything but pleasant, he hated to leave. He was not alone while looking his Beating raw furs is a highly odorous oc-

> band spent weeks and months in the in-terior buying skins, and every year went personally to London with a consignment

> clety leader. The aristocratic old colonials knew her only as the pelt-dealer's wife, though they must all have met her; it was to her little shop that they had to go when they wanted pinnos for their drawing-rooms, or furs for their backs, for, though there were other dealers in furs and munical instruments, "that German, Astor," and his wife kept the best in

both lines. While Sarah Todd-Astor was nursing her children, and selling pianes and furs. John Jacob was learning more about his adopted country than many men of his day were able to acquire. He drove, rode, and traveled all over New York State and that part of Canada just north. He was familiar with the hills and valleys and streams and lakes 13c know that and streams and lakes. He knew just where the best furs were to be had, and at the lowest price. He met and studied been obliged to leave the house at night and sleep under a shed or in a barn.

There were two older brothers, George, who had gone to London, where he was a madest bargainer, and his 5500 capital and allowed by the sheep leaves and studied both the pioneers and the indians, whom they were gradually displacing. He was a madest bargainer, and his 5500 capital and the sheep leaves and the lowest price. He met and studied both the pioneers and the indians, whom grew rapidly. By 1809, when Sarah Todd's oldest child was a lass of 12, he was worth \$250,000 at least, and was looked upon with respect by all who knew him

In 1807, when he was 44, four years older than the age which Dr. Osler sets as the limit of productive human enort, the first John Jacob planned the biggest operations in fur trading, save those of the Hudson's Bay Company, that were

Reaching Out Into the Vast Unknown West.

ALREADY he had gone much farther west than the boundaries of New York State in search of pelts, and had established headquarters at Mackinac, where the waters of the great lakes, Superior, Michigan and Huron, join. manual labor in the piano factory, by night at his books, and all the time picking up the English tongue. He never learned to get his p's and b's and th's right, but his knowledge of it when he reached America was quite sufficient.

Sometime Moria and Huron, join This was a wonderful place for the collection of furs. They could be brought from almost every direction by water and by water they could be taken away. He procured the most valuable skins, This was a wonderful place for the col-He procured the most valuable skins, sometimes, for the most insignificant articles of barter, such as bits of paint, or beads, or pleces of colored glass. When he exchanged real commodities for furs he always got good prices, and, as was shown by an old set of his Mackinac books discovered a few years ago, he used to charge \$3 a tea, \$10 for a quart whisky, \$8 for a blister plaster, and the

He would make three or four profits about everything he handled. a beaver skin, say, that he got in change for trinkets costing a dollar, would bring him \$8 in London. With this he would buy cutlery that would fetch \$40 in New York. Independent traders had to pay him a bonus of from ten to 25 per cent for the privilege of buying from him and selling to him

It is really no wonder that his wealth rolled up with the rapidity of a big snowball when such profits as these were possible; but they were not so big that they mightn't be bigger, the German thought. There were expenses that had to be deducted, especially the of carriage over sea to London, and from thence to China, then the world's great fur market, as Ameri-ca was the great fur producer. It seemed to John Jacob, indeed, that was suffering great loss in not being able to deal directly with the Chinese at Canton, instead of selling his furs to the London dealers. Constant thought along this line led him to plan the American Fur Company.

This enterprise, he thought, could be young man. financed for a million dollars, and he had so much falth in it that, although he tried, at first, to get Government backing, he engaged to furnish all the money when the company secured its

The American Fur Company was organized, primarily, to deal in furs, but, incidentally it was to do a great many other things. It was to carry furs in its own ships. It was to have one port on the Oregon coast of the Pacific

Stretching over three thousand miles between these two ports, and largely along the line of Lewis and Clark's cony of his home 185 Broadway, and expedition, in which Astor had been much interested, there was to be a strike of furctiveling stations. Salling Stretching over three thousand mile *a it could be written. He felt sure that | when founded at the Columbia's mouth, sponse to the pleadings of Irving and families. whose

pers working in the interior. From As-

The cargoes thus obtained were to be brought by the way of the Cape of Good Hope to New York, thus completing the circuit of the globe. From New York, as soon as its cargo was discharged, to Astoria, taking a mis go of notions and other things for bar ter with white and savage trappers From Asioria a new civilization to radiate, in time covering all the Padorsed the plan in a long and enthusiastic paper, written and signed by his

Astor's fur trade was at flood tide an army of traders traveling for him.

HE first ship sent around the Horn was a small vessel of 90 tons, named the Tonquin. She carried in her hold the wise navigation, seeds, arms, tools, and a full equipment for building of Astoria, She reached the mouth of the Columbia in stormy weather, and after several mishaps involving loss of life, succeeded in making Astoria. A storehouse was built the vessel sailed northward to Vancouver Island, where her captain and crow were killed and the ship destroyed by savages. This tragedy is well described by Washington Irving.

Soon after that the /War of 1812 broke out, and it, added to the first disaster, killed the American Fur Company. Astor feared at its beginning that the war would wind up the enterprise, but he went ahead with all the nerve in the world. Ship after ship salled away from New York for the Western Ocean never to be heard of again, some being lost as but more being destroyed by the sh. Finally the British frigate third of what it had cost, and the Astor dream of world-wide fur trading came to When news was received of the loss of the last ship sent round the Horn, Astor took it quite as a matter of course

"What do you want me to do?" queried "United States.

John Jacob, "cry my eyes out?" Then he Two children be amused in the evening. He sighed a little, saying that, had there been no war,

in the world, but that was all.

He had begun to buy real estate very early in the game. From the beginning he saw that New York was bound to be the greatest city on this side of the At-The completion of the Eric Canal enfirmed his faith, and he saw New York catch up with and pass other American cities, such as Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore, while still a comparatively

He went completely out of the fur busi-ness in 1834, when he sold his Mackinac trading post, 46 years after he had bought the first pelt on his own account. It was time then, he thought, to let someone else deal in furs. The country was settling up and the fur-bearing animals were disappearing. The day was not far distant, he foresaw, when even the famous Mackinac station would make no profit.

During John Jacob Astor's later life as a real estate buyer he rose early, and almed to be at business by 7. At 3 he was home again for dinner. After dinner he played three games of checkers

in the United States.

U NDOUBTEDLY John Jacob Astor was an able man. Washington Irving. who wrote a book on Astoria, leaves word that Astor himself gathered, arranged when he started the company. He had and knit together all the documents bearing on the American Fur Company, in cluding the correspondence with the Government, while the book was in preparation, and existing letters written by Astor to Albert Gallatin, though with frame of a schooner for river and coast- style of an Addison, are very well com-

The first Astor was pever very prom nent in politics, but he had strong party views, being a Whig, and was on terms of close intimacy with Henry Clay, Daniel Webster and others. A few times he presided over political meetings, and he was there and supplies landed, after which a steady and for those times liberal contributor to the campaign funds of his

At his death, aged 84, in 1848, the Astor fortune was generally estimated at from \$20,000,000 to \$30,000,000, the balance of opinion leaning to the smaller figures. There were others, however, who held that his wealth had been much overestimated; that \$7,000,000 was an outside figure. It is highly probable that the Astor real estate, disposed of at forced sale at that time, would have brought no more than the last named amount, and that on a 5 per cent basis the income derived from it would have indicated a property of much less than \$20,000,000, but, it must be remembered, very large blocks Phoebe set out to sweep the Pacific clear of Yankee ships, and that ended all. One of Astor's partners, named McDougall, sold out the Astoria trading post for a third of what it had coat and the Astoria trading post for a though even then it was worth a good deal of money.

Considered with the future in view, the

Astor property in 1848 was probably worth no individual of that family was as rich all of \$40,000,000. Whatever his wealth, as John Jacob Astor III at his death, he was the richest man then living in the William Astor was never so rich, by

"What do you want me to do? queried John Jacob, "cry my eyes out?" Then he sent out for theater tickets, that he might be amused in the evening. He sighed a little, saying that, had there been no war, he would have become the richest man for in the will, but the great bulk of the fortune was left to William B. Personal-ly, the son had none of his father's characteristics shown when he was building up the family fortunes, being conservative, and anything but venturesome, though by no means being so close, nor so trans-parent in his closeness as his father had

en in his later years. William B. Astor was well educated. having been sent to the University at Goettingen, Germany. His life was a humdrum one, devoted sedulously to the he and his family held a respectable place though they, were by no means leaders.

Beginning of Famous Astor Social Leadership.

T HOUGH the William B. Astors stood very well in the society which the original John Jacob's wealth had been so instrumental in creating, they were by no means its most eminent members. But, through the genius for social leadmore. But if you will sign a piece of pamer, on which is written a promise never to ask me for money again. I will give you 500 cutright."

Solution ask me for money again. I will give you 500 cutright."

John Jacob signed the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the promise never to bring furs from the north to the Oregon port, which, and will with nix rienas, who included Washington Irving and Fitzership developed by Mrs. John Jacob Aspendic of a reader after his boyhood days, he sels were to bring furs from the north to the Oregon port, which, and will sign a piece of pamer and of the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which, and the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which the paper as soon to the south to the Oregon port, which the paper as soon to the south the paper and the paper as soon to the south the paper and the paper as the pape

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strict exclusiveness as long as ever they

TOR THE CHEST CITY WOLDRO IN

the real, genuine, Simon-pure leader of the rich and smart society of her day. It was during her reign that the aston ishing Ward McAllister came into social existence, and smart society in New York today is the same circle, only extended hat crystalized about her, albeit it is a Mrs. Astor of the other family branch that is now the leader. It was Mrs. John Jacob Astor who made it so hard for the Vanderbilts to get in when they went -knecking at the door.

This Mrs. Astor died in 1888. Her hus. band, who had been far less fond of so wealth had been overtopped by Comm Vanderbilt's, but the wealth had been so split up by 1890 that William Astor was never so rich, by millions, as his older brother, nor did he

try as hard to increase his wealth. He went to his office daily when in America, but he spent a great deal of time out of the country. He followed his brother's practice of walking to his office, and the scoffers attributed it to parsimony; but the truth is that he suffered from the twin diseases of the rich, dyspepsia and gout, and walked a good deal, in the futile hope that he might stave them off. The hope was vain, and he died in 1892. William Astor was in Paris when death ertook him. He spent much of his later life there, largely, it was said, because he did not care to enter into the social war that broke out in the Astor family soon after the death of his brother's wife

AFTER Mrs. John Jacob Aster III had passed way three aspirants to New York's social leadership developed. They were the late Mrs. August Belmont, mother of the present subway man; Mrs. William Waldorf Astor and Mrs. William Astor. Really, Mrs. Belmont divided the leadership for a time, but soon there were only two contestants for the honors, Mrs. William and Mrs. William Waldorf Astor. The situation came to the knowledge of the vulgar public when a letter marked "Mrs. Astor, New York," with no street address, was put in the postoffice. Mrs. William, because she was the oldest living Mrs. Asior, claimed the right to all letters so addressed. Mrs. William Waldorf claimed, or her husband claimed for her, the same right, because she was the

older Astor branch. She was a Miss Paul, of Philadelphia, before marriage, a beauty, and as a matron was a lovely roman. The dispute stirred society to its

The contest resulted in victory for Mrs. William Astor, mother of the present John Jacob, though how it would have come out had Mrs. William Waldorf ever cared a fig. personally, who should be known as "Mrs. Astor," no one can tell. But she didn't; it was all the doings of William Waldorf himself. Ever a stickfor precedence, he wished his wife to fill his mother's place in the social world When the battle seemed clearly lost for the William Waldorf Astors, he from America for good and all, and has never set foot on this side of the water

since, save as a transient visitor. Securely settled upon her throne as Society Queen, Mrs. William Astor, who, born Schermerhorn, of a Brooklyn fam-ily colonially descended, removed to the northern half of the new and now celebrated John Jacob Astor residence, at the northeast corner of Sixty-sixth street and Fifth avenue. There she has reigned serenely ever since. Her son, John Jacob, and his family, live in the southern half. This house was one of the first of the modern multi-millionaire palaces in New York. It cost millions. Its decorations were devised and executed by real artists, not artisans, and for years after the housewarming in 1896 it was considered really good.

Mrs. Astor's annual ball, which she has given every year, save when in mourning, nearly a quarter of a century, is held In the big picture gallery connecting the two houses, and the famous Mrs. Astor "dinners of state" are given in its dining-

It is only fair to say of Mrs. Astor that she invites some who are not superlatively rich both to her dinners and her great annual dances. She has recognized the growth of New York and the country at large by increasing her list so that it in-cludes many more than the old McAlifser "Four Hundred."

William Waldorf, Richest Astor Now Living.

WILLIAM WALDORF ASTOR, son of John Jacob, now only two years less than 60, started out in life determinednot to let the possession of great wealth smother his talents, which really are of high order. As a young man he was somewhat noted as an athlete. He was admitted to the New York bar, but never practiced, and early in life set out to conquer fame in politics. He had sense enough to begin near the bottom, and won two or three elections as a Republican

to the state Assembly and then to the state Senate. He was not a conspicuous success, but not be in New York a Democratic city. success, but neither was he a failure. Then he ran for Congrese twice, but was defeated both times, first by Harry Dugro, second by Roswell P. Flower. This discouraged his political ambitions

RESIDENCE

for a time, but President Arthur revived them by sending him to Italy as Minister. President Cleveland let him out, and he returned to this country a year before his father's death. He wrote two or three novels, not bad, but poor sellers. This annoyed him. Then came the row over the society leadership, and the publicity thereof, which made him sore at heart. Mrs. William Waldorf was left out of the Washington Centennial quadrille, and Mrs. William was chosen because she had been born a Schermerhorn. The people read all the Astor gossip so eagerly that the papers repeated the dose as often as they could. He received hints that one of his sons was in danger of being kid-

So, in desperation, he fled to England, in so, in desperation, he hed to England, in 1892, soon after succeeding to his father's estate. The next year he bought out Stend's Pull Mail Gazeatte. He also bought Cliveden for a country house from the Duke of Westminster, with the avowed purpose of getting into the "Al-bert Edward set," winning a commandlng place in English society, and eventunily a peerage. In 1839 he became a naturalized English citizen, and estab-lished the Pall Mall Magazine, as some say, to have a periodical in which his

But, so far, he has failed in his ambitions in England essentially, though, of course, he has a certain social position. The Prince of Wales, now King, seemed inclined to take him up at first, but let him down inter because he "bored" his royal highness. The people got down on him because he closed Cilveden to the general public; thinking men laughed at him because he published abusive arti cles about Americana in his magazine and one showing that he was descended from the Spanish D'Astorgus of Crusader

Not long after he went to London Mrs. Astor died. His daughter, Pauline, married Captain Spender-Clay, whose father made his wealth in ale. Their wedding was so gorgeous and costly that the en-tire British public was aghast, and the British papers made many adverse com-

THE present John Jacob Aster, fourth of the name, now 40, is the only son. He has done the best he could, and ambitions have been high. He was educated at Columbia College, in New

(Concluded on Page 47.)

