



Tell Us Your Story

Don Pinkerton

When I meet someone else with the last name “Pinkerton”, I often assume we are related. The most famous Pinkerton, Allan, was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1819 and immigrated to America in 1842. He is credited with establishing the Secret Service and the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. But I am not related to THAT Pinkerton.

Exhaustive genealogical research revealed that my direct ancestor, James Pinkerton, was born in Yorkshire, England around 1732 and immigrated to America around 1750. James lived in Bedford, New York and was enrolled in the Westchester County Militia near the end of the French and Indian War in 1761.

James’s descendants thrived in the early days of the Republic, and spread out from New York to Michigan, Illinois and Iowa. His great-grandson Jacob was born in 1829 in Guilderland, New York and in the 1860s ran the Central City Ale Depot and Bowling Saloon in Syracuse, NY. He and his brothers produced a “tonic beverage” called Pinkerton’s Wahoo and Calisaya Bitter in small brown bottles.

My grandparents, Don and Irene Pinkerton, lived in Lapeer, Michigan, a small town north of Detroit, and I have fond memories of visiting them there.



PHOTO: Grandfather Don can be seen as a child at the right foot of his grandfather John, who was the great-great grandson of James Pinkerton.

A vintage advertisement for Pinkerton's Central City Ale Depot and Bowling Saloon. The text is arranged in a vertical column with various headings and descriptions. The main heading is "PINKERTON'S CENTRAL CITY ALE DEPOT" followed by "AND BOWLING SALOON!". Below this, it lists the location: "No. 1 cor. South Salina & Water Streets, Jacob Pinkerton & Co., PROPRIETORS." The ad describes the facilities, including a bowling alley and a bar, and lists various beverages available, such as "PURE BLENDERS, RUMS, GINS, MONO-GAROLA, SCOTCH AND IRISH WHISKY, PUREY, BRANDER, SWEET, AND CLARET WINES." It also mentions "THE ALE VAULTS" and "LONDON PORTER, ALE AND LAGER." The ad concludes with a note: "The public are cordially invited to give the Central City Ale Depot and Bowling Saloon a share of their patronage - Syracuse, Sept. 14, 1861 - 1862."

