

Our Family News Letter

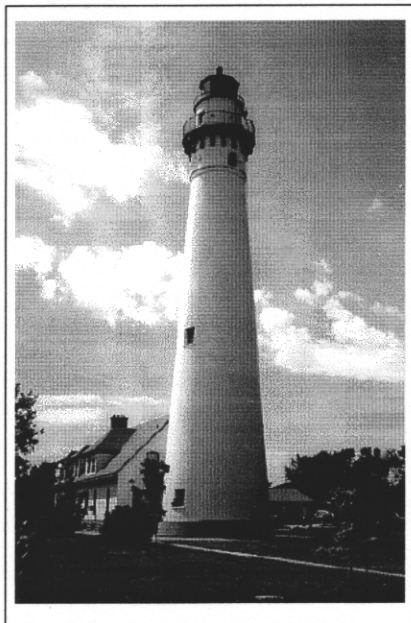
Issue 1

Greendale, Wisconsin

June, 1993

Heck Picnic - July 18th

Twenty-six years ago a tradition of family picnics was started at Lincoln Field at Racine, Wisconsin. The reunions were intended to keep the descendants of Margaret Henningfeld and Robert Steven Heck in touch with each other.



Wind Point, Racine, WI

The Heck family, descendants from Henry Heck and Mary Ann McNulty, parents of Robert Steven Heck, had been holding reunions at Browns Lake and Burlington up until 1948 with the Heck's from Burlington, Racine and Waterford in full participation. The Polio epidemic of 1949 and 1950 put an end to the gatherings.

In the late 50's and early 60's the grandchildren of Margaret and Robert were establishing their own families, and there was an increasing concern that cousins were losing touch with

cousins. Thus in 1967 a new tradition was established..... The Heck family picnic.

The family picnic has grown over the years to include a breakfast and golf outing for the not-too-serious-golfers. A lot of great relationships have been established over the past twenty-six years. Many of us have become not only close relatives, but good friends.

A planning party, usually held in January, has been an excellent excuse for us to get together. (This year we were a bit late with the planning party, and it was held in early June.)

For the past several years the family picnic has been held at the Wind Point lighthouse. The setting is perfect for fun and games, casual chatter, and a lot of good eating.



The 1991 family picnic group photo

On July 18, 1993, we will once again have a gathering of the clan beneath the light house at Wind Point. Won't you join us?

This News Letter is written and published by Robert J. Heck, 4910 Steeple Drive, Greendale, WI, 53129.

And Now For Some Family History Lessons.....

We already established that our family is descendant from Robert Steven Heck and Margaret Frederika Henningfeld. Their children in order of birth were as follows:

Clarence Henry Heck	1905
William Harold Heck	1907
Robert Gerald Heck	1909
Alvin James Heck	1911
Lilly Heck	1915
Rose Heck	1915
Edward Heck	1916
Bernice Mary Heck	1919

Robert Steven Heck was born on December 14, 1879 at Brighton, Kenosha County, WI. He was the sixth of eight children born to Henry Heck and Mary Ann McNulty.

Henry Heck was born at Alendorf, Prussia, now known as Germany, on February 10, 1839. He was the son of Johann Heck and Anna Barbara Schaefer. Johann and Anna had five children.

In May, 1852, Johann Heck, along with his wife Anna Barbara and their children arrived in America. The family settled in Brighton, Kenosha County. Their original home at Brighton lies just outside of the Bong Recreation Center on the northern edge.

In 1855, Anna Barbara Schaefer Heck died and was buried at the St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church at Brighton. Johann remarried in 1856 to Susannah Sebenbrunner Zeren, a widow of Nicholas Zeren.

Where On Earth Is Alendorf?

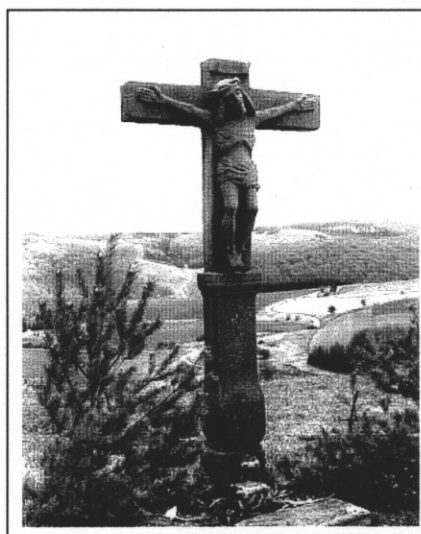
Generally the most difficult part of genealogical research is finding the "bridge" to the ancestral home of the early immigrants. More often than not American references for birth, marriage, the

census and death simply indicate the place of birth as Germany or Prussia for our German-born ancestors. This was also the case for many of the records used to trace the origins of the Heck family.

The Civil War records of Henry Heck and two of his brothers gave the first real clue to the name of their place of birth in Germany. These records listed the place of birth as Alendorf in Prussia, however several spellings were to be found which added confusion to the search. Variations of the spelling included Alendorf, Allendorf, and Ahlendorf. In the early stages of research the correct spelling was unknown.

Usually one would only need to know the name of the German village and then consult an Atlas or a gazetteer to locate it on a map. Armed with that information one could then check several other sources such as Mayer's Ort, to determine where the official records were kept for that particular village.

An initial search through an Atlas yielded one Alendorf, however a further search through records at the Milwaukee County Library indicated that there were 11 Alendorf's. An additional search of LDS (Latter Day Saints) records added another 11 Alendorf's to the list which had now reached 22! It seemed that the more we searched, the bigger the list grew and the further we were from finding the "real" Alendorf.



Crucifix Overlooking Alendorf

Howard Heck, from Minnesota, had sent letters to the Catholic church pastors at nine or ten of the Alendorf's but each letter was either unanswered or answered with regrets. Robert J. Heck, of Wisconsin, sent for microfilms of three of the Alendorf's through LDS but again without luck. Howard and Bob were co-researchers of the Heck family history.

The final breakthrough came on December 27, 1982 after two years of searching. An original copy of the marriage record of Henry Heck was found in a file box at the Kenosha County Court House by Bob. The 113 year old record was brown with age and crumbling at the edges. Carefully he opened the thin pages of the record of Henry's marriage to Mary Ann McNulty. He could hardly believe his eyes when he came to the section listing the place of birth. There, in crisp ink was the inscription "Born at: Alendorf, Lois Aachen, Bizerk Kreis Schleiden, Prussia". Translated, it proclaimed the birth place of Henry as Alendorf, near Aachen, in the district of Schleiden, in Prussia.

marriage and deaths from 1700 through 1800, while the civil records listed birth, marriage and deaths for the period 1800 through about 1880.

Overlooking the village on a high hill is a crucifix with the date 1675 inscribed on its base. It was erected by the devote families of the village. Nearby the old church is partially covered with vines and surrounded by trees. The church is no longer used for regular Masses since a new one was built in the center of the village in 1939. Funeral services are occasionally held in the old church.

The exact date of construction of the old church is unknown but it appears to be from the early 1600's. A church yard cemetery surrounds the old church and several old broken tombstones were found with dates from the late 1600's.

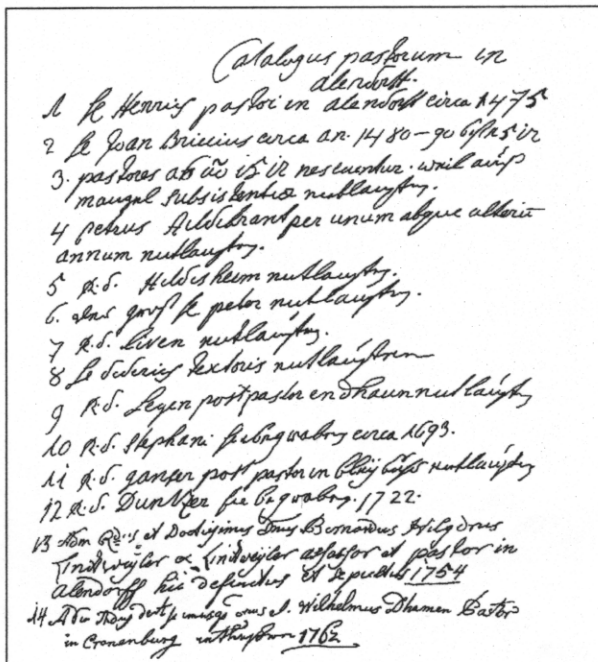
The Heck family living in Alendorf today bear a very close resemblance to the Heck family members from Wisconsin. While the common progenitor between the Heck's of Alendorf and the Heck's of Wisconsin lived in the 1780 to 1800 period, the two families treated each other as if they were first cousins.

Little has changed in Alendorf over the past three hundred years. The village remains almost the same size although only a few of the older buildings remain. Many of the original buildings were probably destroyed during the last two wars. The original Heck home is still standing and it has remained in the family for generations.

The Heck family traditions are deeply rooted in the history of that little farming village known as Alendorf, Lois Aachen, Bizerk Kreis Schleiden, Prussia.

Little Known Facts

Margaret Frederika Henningfeld Heck had 100 descendants on the 100th anniversary of her birth. Margaret was born on April 2, 1880. She died on April 24, 1963 at the age of 83.



The Pastors of Alendorf 1474 - 1762

The church records of Alendorf listed all of the pastors of the church from the year 1475 through 1762. The church records listed all of the birth,

Heck Family Lands In America In May, 1852

Johann Heck and Anna Barbara Schaefer had five children born at Alendorf. Peter, the oldest, was born on November 5, 1834; Anna Lucia was born on December 24, 1836; Heinrich was born on February 11, 1839; Joseph was born on February 17, 1841; and Clara the youngest was born on July 19, 1843.

France, under the rule of Napoleon, took control of Western Germany in wars with the Netherlands and Prussia. With the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, part of the Rhineland, the state in which Alendorf was located, was made part of Prussia. An agricultural depression gripped the country in the 1840's and there were many peasant uprisings in the rural areas. There was a social revolution in most West European countries in 1848. Initiated by the French Revolution, many of the people developed a desire for democratic rule and individual liberty.

Europe also was faced with a widespread crop failure in the late 1840's, overpopulation and a lack of work. This, coupled with the economic stress and failure of the 1848 revolution, led to the widespread immigration to America.

For whatever reason, Johann and Anna Barbara decided in 1852 to start a new life in America. No doubt they were lured by the glowing reports from friends and relatives in Wisconsin. The thought of rich land at \$1.25 an acre was hard to believe. The men of the village gathered at the local Gasthouse and shared letters from America over a stein of beer. They dreamed of the opportunities ahead of them and made their plans.

Wisconsin had a large established settlement of Germans in Racine and Kenosha County. In particular the area around Brighton in Kenosha County had a large collection of people from the Alendorf area. Many of the families came over in large groups and formed extensions of their old homeland. Customs were maintained and the German language was preserved.



Most immigrants were in their early 20's when they came to America, however Johann and Anna Barbara were old in comparison. Johann was 41 and Anna Barbara was 51. Peter was 17, Anna Lucia was 15, Henry was 13, Joseph was 11 and Clara was eight years old.

We will never know what was in their minds that spring day of 1852 as they bundled their five children and what few possessions they could carry and started their journey to the port of embarkation. It must have been difficult to say goodbye for the last time to their friends and relatives and start the slow ascent up the slight rise out of town past their church at the edge of Alendorf. They probably looked back once more with sadness as the road turned to the right, and all they could see of their home as they rode along a ridge was Calvary Hill and the crucifix silhouetted against the sky.

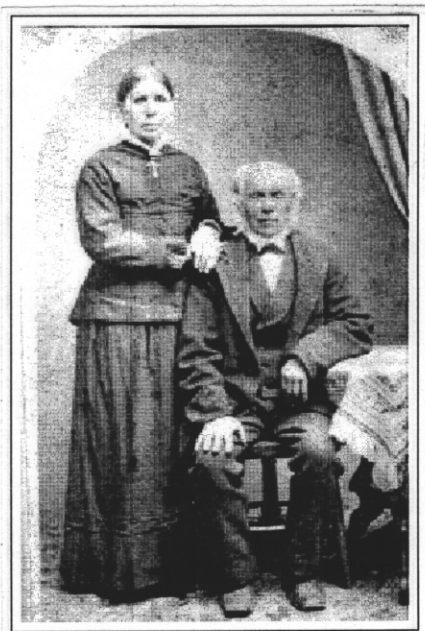
No doubt Johann and Anna Barbara stopped at the foot of the crucifix and said a silent prayer for a safe journey to America. They probably hugged each other surrounded by their children and turned away for the last time. A new life and a new world was before them.

The road soon took them through the villages of Ripsdorf and Dollendorf. As they passed the City Hall, they must have remembered their

marriage bands posted on the main door 19 years earlier. They continued on through Blankenheim and on to the northern port cities of Prussia.

In May of 1852 the Heck family arrived on board ship at the port of New York after a month long journey. The family traveled by train to Wisconsin to join other German families already settled in the area. The trip from New York to Wisconsin took about five days.

The Heck family settled in the Brighton, Kenosha County area in the town of Paris, but tragedy soon struck the family. Anna Barbara Schaefer Heck died at the age of 55 on November 23, 1855 only three and a half years after leaving Alendorf. Her final burial place is in an unmarked grave at St. Francis Xavier church at Brighton, Wisconsin. Her grave was probably marked with a wooden cross which has since crumbled into dust.



Johann Heck and Susannah Zeren, 1880

Johann Heck married a second time soon after the death of Anna Barbara. Johann was too busy with the farm to look after the children and could ill afford a housekeeper and tutor. Johann married a widow named Susannah Sebenbrunner Zeren on June 26, 1856 at Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Brighton, Wisconsin.

The Heck Family Moves West

The Sioux treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota in 1851 opened the Minnesota territory west of the Mississippi River. Immediately, thousands of land-hungry easterners and immigrants flooded into Minnesota eager to acquire the rich, fertile soil offered by the government at \$1.25 per acre. Enterprising promoters set up land companies to encourage people to come to the new territory. Among these was the Chicago Land Society, formed in 1853, specifically to bring German people to the Minnesota Territory.

In response to this effort, nine German Catholic families from the area around Brighton, Kenosha County, Wisconsin, filed their claims for the rich virgin prairie land in 1857. The land was just north of Swan Lake in the Brighton Township of Nicolet County, Minnesota. This small group included the families of Johann and Susannah Heck, Johann's son-in-law Leonard Boor and his wife Anna Lucia Heck and Johann Peter Schaefer and his wife Kathrine Lux, a brother-in-law of Johann Heck by his first wife Anna Barbara Schaefer Heck.

Johann and Susannah purchased a 160 acre tract of land from the Federal Government that had originally been given to a veteran for his services in the Seminole Indian War in Florida in the 1840's. The veteran chose not to claim the land and it was then purchased by Johann. The bounty patent for the land was dated April 1, 1861 which would have covered the required five year homesteading period. The document was authorized by Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.

On April 4, 1859 Josiah Joseph Heck was born at Swan Lake to Johann and Susannah Heck.

The family must have labored very hard to clear the land and turn the stubborn virgin prairie soil into productive farm land. They also had to be concerned about the receptiveness of the Sioux Indians who were becoming restive after being pushed off their hunting grounds and into poor

river bottom land. The Heck's tried to maintain friendly relations with the Indians and fed them whenever they appeared at their house. In turn, the Indians taught them how to cure diseases and ailments with herbs found in the woods. The Heck and Zeren boys became playmates with the young Indians and would Indian wrestle with them.

By 1862 the Indians were near starvation. The traders would grant them no further credit. The allotment of gold coin as payment for their land, long overdue, had not arrived because Congress was preoccupied with the impending possibility of a Civil War and had not made an appropriation in time. The gold finally arrived, but the Indians went on the warpath before the money could be distributed. By August 20, 1862, the entire frontier was aflame. Trading posts were overrun and agents killed. Farms were burned, the men and children killed and many women were abducted.

Friendly Indians warned Johann Heck's family of the imminent attacks and they, with their neighbors, packed as much of their possessions as they could crowd on their wagons and fled east. With their livestock following the wagons they traveled along the military road that passed through their area and took refuge at the military fort in Saint Peter, Minnesota.

Johann wanted safety for his family so he sold his land in Minnesota and returned to Wisconsin. The exact date of his return to Wisconsin is unknown but may have been after the Spring of 1863.

In 1863 Andrew Heck was born in Brighton Township, Kenosha County, Wisconsin to Johann and Susannah Heck.

On October 17, 1864 Johann and Susannah Heck purchased 80 acres of land in the Brighton Township, Kenosha County, Wisconsin for \$500.00. with the interest rate of seven percent per annum until paid.

On November 16, 1867 Johann sold his land in Wisconsin and moved the family back to the Swan Lake area of Minnesota.

On June 22, 1885 Johann Heck died of a heart attack while playing with children at a wedding at his son-in-law's home in West Newton, Minnesota.

Susannah Heck died on January 7, 1892 in Minnesota. She is buried next to Johann Heck at the Church of the Visitation at Swan Lake. Two large head stones mark their graves.

How Would You Like To Help With The Family History?

If You Have any old pictures, family group pictures, or interesting stories about our family that you would like to share, please send them to Robert J. Heck. Original pictures will be returned after I copy them.

Did You Enjoy This News Letter?

This news letter is sent to you free of charge. If you would like to donate a few bucks to help defray the cost of producing it , please feel free to do so.

If you know of others who would like to receive future copies of this news letter, please let me know. Send me their full name, address, zip code, and phone number if you have it.

Lots Of Heck's In USA

Did you know that there are 5,419 Heck's listed in the phone directories of the United States?

This News Letter is written and published by Robert J. Heck,
4910 Steeple Drive,
Greendale, WI 53129
Phone: (414) 421-7143

Pedigree Chart

1 Robert Gerald HECK

Born 9 May 1909
 Place Racine, Racine Co., WI
 Marr'd 29 Jun 1935
 Place Racine, Racine Co., WI
 Died
 Place

Mary Ann MIKEL

(Spouse of number 1)

3 Margaret F. HENNINGFELD

Born 2 Apr 1880
 Place Burlington, Racine Co., WI
 Died 24 Apr 1963
 Place Racine, Racine Co., WI

Prepared by:

Robert J. Heck
 4910 Steeple Drive
 Greendale, WI
 53129
 (414) 421-7143

4 Henry HECK

Born 10 Feb 1839
 Place Alendorf, Prussia
 Marr'd 16 Jan 1869
 Place Brighton, Kenosha Co., WI
 Died 20 Feb 1920
 Place Burlington, Racine Co., WI

5 Mary Ann MCNULTY

Born 11 Mar 1844
 Place Brighton, Kenosha Co., WI
 Died 7 Apr 1912
 Place Burlington, Racine Co., WI

6 Henry F. HENNINGFELD

Born 7 May 1849
 Place Waterford, Racine Co., WI
 Marr'd 6 May 1873
 Place Burlington, Racine Co., WI
 Died 10 Sep 1909
 Place Burlington, Racine Co., WI

7 Clara STRATMAN

Born 14 Nov 1847
 Place Cosfield, Prussia
 Died 18 May 1927
 Place Wausau, WI

8 Johann HECK

Born 17 Feb 1810
 Place Alendorf, Prussia
 Marr'd 28 Nov 1833
 Place Alendorf, Prussia, Germany
 Died 22 Jun 1885
 Place New Ulm, Brown Co., MN

9 Anna Barbara SCHAEFER

Born 30 Aug 1801
 Place Alendorf, Prussia
 Died 23 Nov 1855
 Place Brighton, Kenosha Co., WI

10 Peter MCNULTY

Born 1807
 Place Ireland
 Marr'd Abt 1842
 Place Racine or, Kenosha Co., WI
 Died Aft 1 Jun 1880
 Place Dover, Racine Co., WI

11 Patience BURGESS

Born 1823
 Place Bennington, Bennington Co., VT
 Died 30 Aug 1894
 Place Brighton, Kenosha Co., WI

12 Franz Arnold HENNINGFELD

Born 5 Nov 1810
 Place Olfen, Prussia
 Marr'd 12 Oct 1839
 Place Olfen, Prussia, Germany
 Died 26 Apr 1869
 Place Waterford, Racine Co., WI

13 Catherine Elizabeth RICHTER

Born 27 Feb 1816
 Place Olfen, Prussia
 Died 18 Mar 1900
 Place Burlington, Racine Co., WI

14 Anton STRATMAN

Born Abt 1817
 Place
 Marr'd Abt 1846
 Place
 Died Abt 1855
 Place Germany

15 Elizabeth Anna Maria GUTHOF

Born 8 May 1819
 Place Germany
 Died 30 Nov 1893
 Place Waterford, Racine Co., WI