

Our Family News Letter

Issue 9

Greendale, Wisconsin

June, 1995

Letters From 1857, Brighton Farmers, Found at Madison, WI, State Historical Society

While I was doing some family history research on the Internet I found my way into the catalog index of the Wisconsin State Historical Society. Their Internet address is Telenet: Silo.adp.wisc.edu Port 5034.

For those of you who are not into surfing the Internet, this is a system that allows a computer user to connect to other computers anyplace in the world through the use of a modem and the telephone. You may have heard our Vice President refer to it as the "Super Information Highway."

Once I was into the catalog section I did a search for Alendorf, which is where the Heck and Schaefer families came from in 1852. Much to my surprise I found that in 1936 a research student at the University of Bohn, in Germany, was working on his thesis on German influences in the West. He was concentrating on people who came from the Eifle Mountain district of Prussia in the mid 1800's and settled in the community of Brighton, Kenosha County, Wisconsin. Alendorf is in the Eifle Mountain district.

The researcher was collecting letters written by German immigrants from Brighton to their friends and relatives in Germany. He was collaborating with the head of the Wisconsin State Historical Society on the project and was providing him with English translations of those letters. The research took several years and consisted of about 420 letters filling seven boxes.

In April of this year I was able to drive to Madison for the purpose of viewing those 420 letters. While I didn't find any letters from my great-great grandfather Johann Heck (1810 - 1885), I did find some that I thought gives us a real insight into what things may have been like in 1857. That is the year that Johann and eight other German families left Brighton, Wisconsin for Swan Lake, Minnesota.

Letters from Christian and Peter Bovy (Bovey) from Brighton, Wisconsin to their brother-in-law at Alendorf, Germany. March 5, 1857

"I wish you all much joy in the new year. Your esteemed letter of March 28, 1856, was received, and we see from it that you are all well as we also are, God be thanked. We regret that we have not written to you earlier. You probably have long thought that we are all dead or that we did not want to write you any more, which is in no wise the case. For we are still, God be thanked, all in good health. But that we have not written you sooner, you can understand, for in a business like ours there is much writing to do every day, particularly in harvest time. We are rejoiced at the prosperity of your business, and wish for you success, and blessings in your work.

In our family affairs there have been many changes this fall. Katherina has been married to F. Rosh from Alendorf and Peter to Luisa Schaefer of Alendorf, and they are both highly contented. F. Rosh has rented a farm along with my son Mathias for \$250 per year. And Johan with his wife is with us, and we with him. Michael last summer, from the first of April to the first of October, was hired out for \$91. If he had waited just two days, he might have had \$112 for the same period.

Johan is doing well. This year he has produced, in addition to his business, 220 bushels of wheat, 60 bushels of oats, the same amount of corn, and about 50 bushels of potatoes. And I can truthfully say that in my

whole life I have never seen such potatoes. With two of them we five have a full meal. You must not suppose, however, that they are all like that. For the present year we have means of subsistence in superfluity.

No other news has come to our attention here save that H. Wolf of Schmidtheim went to sleep in the Lord this fall and is greatly missed here, for he had done much good and was beloved by all. In conclusion we greet you all and your family. Greet for us all relatives and acquaintances, particularly my brother-in-law Mathias and his family, my sister-in-law Gertrude, uncle John Vogelsberg and his entire family, also the family Vogelsberg in Alendorf, particularly our uncle and our aunt. M. Joseph has bought himself 80 acres, moved on to it this fall. He is four and a half miles from us, and things are going very well with him. I remain....

(Signed Christian)

In the year just past, when everything was so dear, we realized the same here. For, instead of wheat last year bringing \$1.50, this year it brings 80 to 85 cents, very little of it being sold for as much as \$1.00. Oats is sold for about 35 cents, potatoes 50, corn 25. Horses were sold for from \$300 to \$350 a span; and a yoke of six-year old oxen for \$113 to \$130. We bought a yoke, four-years old, at \$75 and they are not yet properly broken in. During the past year we bought two cows one at \$26 and the other at \$15. This year we bought one at \$26 and the other at \$22. Otherwise everything with us is pretty much as formerly. I will not say, however, that we shall die here. For we are inclined to remove 300 miles farther, namely to Minnesota. There land can still be had for 50 cents an acre. And there it is even better and healthier than here. Poor people cannot buy land here any more. People pay 25, 30, and as high as 39 dollars an acre. There is too much cheap land elsewhere in America to justify remaining here. There is much talk here again about a new European war which it is supposed will break out in the new year and be worse than the last one.

Mathias worked for himself this year, also Jacob. Katherina has been in Kenosha the past winter and earned \$1.25 per week. This summer she was at home on account of the amount of work. And this year we have rented 20 acres of land in addition to our handicraft for which we bought the oxen, and on this land we can grow from 250 to 300 bushels of wheat. We are about as far from church as you are and a perfectly level road.

According to your letter you have wished to give me a sting. If this is incorrect you will pardon me for taking it up, namely, that we are in the ante room of Heaven. You must not believe, however, that I want to make a long mouth at anybody about coming here. Oh, no! That should not happen to me. For it is not necessary for us here to do that, God be thanked. For I shall never call to any one as I also was not called.

And to say the truth, there is no one to call. For it is not as though one were to be called from Waldorf to Alendorf. Not so. Hardships of all kinds arise which one cannot foresee. With me everybody shall be permitted to follow his own desires. It does not suit me to bring wishes and lies upon my head. Whatever I write may be believed, for I have no interest in enticing anybody with fine words or with lies. For the most part the first year does not satisfy people. Why? Because so many things are wanting and particularly money. But when they have been here a year and have raised something for themselves, then under no circumstances do they wish themselves back. Those who have no property have also no taxes and have nothing to care for except their own living. Even children can be taught the English language free.

This winter was very severe. In November it froze up and remained so. Very heavy frosts and much snow. But in spite of this business did not suffer.

Cattle here are in the open in winter as in summer. There is only a little shelter provided in winter under which they can go in stormy weather. Even then they usually stand outside. (Signed Peter)"

Editors Note: Lucia Schaefer, referenced in the first part of the letter, was the daughter of Johann Schaefer and Maria Katherina Lux. Lucia married Johann Bovie on November 13, 1856, at St. Francis Xavier Catholic church at Brighton, Wisconsin. Johann Schaefer was the brother of Anna Barbara Schaefer Heck. The Schaefer and Heck families traveled together from Alendorf, Prussia to Brighton, Kenosha Co., Wisconsin in 1852. Both families moved to Swan Lake, Minnesota later in 1857.

This news letter is written and published by
**Robert J. Heck, 4910 Steeple Dr., Greendale, WI
53129 Phone: (414) 421-7143**

The 28th consecutive Heck family picnic to be held July 16, 1995

The 28th consecutive Heck family picnic is scheduled to be held at the Wind Point light house on Lake Michigan near Racine, Wisconsin on July 16, 1995.



1994 Heck family picnic at Wind Point, Racine County, Wisconsin

Festivities begin at 7:00 AM with breakfast at Hammez restaurant located on the corner of High Street and Douglas Ave. in Racine. Everyone is invited even if you are not golfing. Please consider joining us for eggs, toast, coffee, sausage, or whatever turns you on.

The golfers then meet at Shoops's Park, located on Lake Michigan next to the Wind Point light house at 8:30 AM for their tee off time. None of us, except for Marv Pfeiffer and Don and Gary Heck, take the game all that seriously. Many of us only golf once a year at the picnic. We play nine holes, have a beer, and then wander on over to the picnic

area at the light house. If you are interested in joining us for golf, please call Marvin Pfeiffer at (414) 639-4482 for reservations. The fee for golf is \$2.00 plus the green fee. The \$2.00 is used to purchase some neat gifts and prizes.

The picnic starts at noon and runs until about 5:00 PM. There are games for the kids, and the adults as well. Grills, charcoal, plates, napkins, and silverware are provided. Everyone brings a dish to share but each family brings their own meat. The cost per family is \$4.00 and covers the cost of renting the light house. The \$4.00 fee covers your immediate family living in your household so if you have been thinking about having more kids, you should hop to it!

This year we ask each family to search through their old photos and see if they can find some pictures of our early picnics held at Lincoln Field. or Wind Point. Please bring them along and I will copy them at the picnic. If you have some family group pictures from the past that you

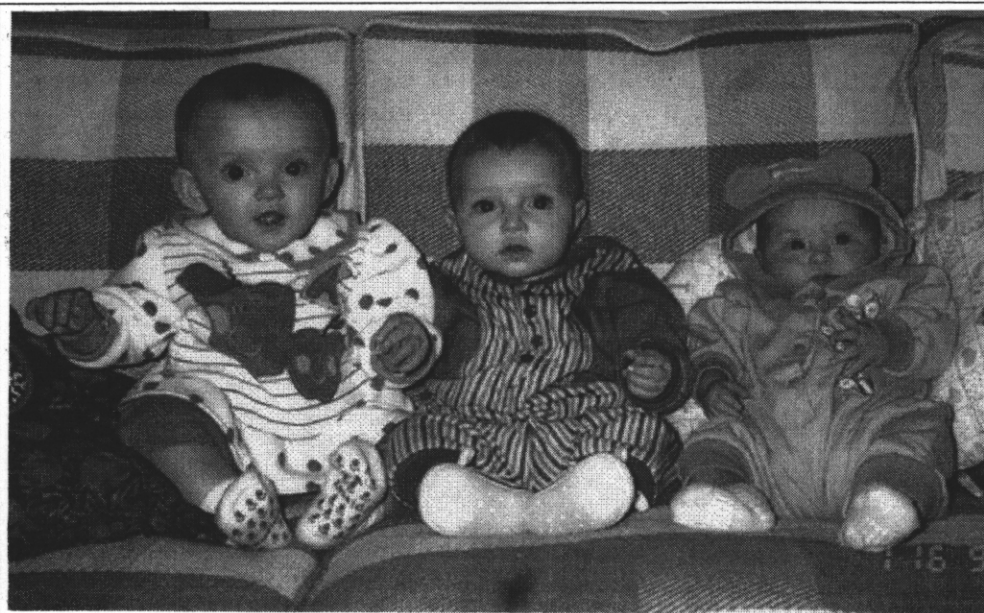
would like to see in this news letter, please bring them along also.



Mary Ann Mikel Heck at age 10 in the back seat of the family Model T in 1922.

From the photo album...

The small photograph shown at



Pfeiffer's additions for 1994: L-R Lauren Joanne Behrendt (Steve & Judi), Andrew John Suchla (John & Lori), Erika May Kelley (Dan & Ann).

lower right is a copy of the wedding picture of Richard and Cel Heck of Racine, Wisconsin. Dick has been carrying that photo in his wallet since 1954. The edges are getting a bit worn and the detail is starting to fade a little, but the smile on Richard's face when he showed me this treasure told it all.

I still remember their wedding and the great reception that followed. I'll never forget dancing with my "Kissing Cousin" Mary Kay.



The Alvin Heck family in about 1952, at Racine, Wisconsin. L-R: Patricia, Alvin Jr., Ronald, Joanne, Stella and Alvin Sr.

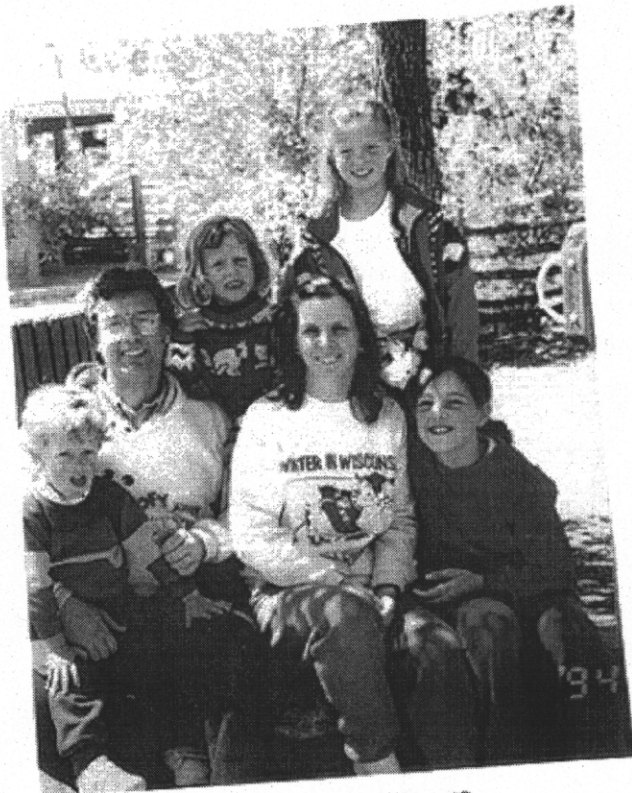


Please feel free to copy this news letter and share it with your relatives. This news letter is still free and relies on the contributions of our readers. Costs have continued to go up so don't forget to help out where you can.

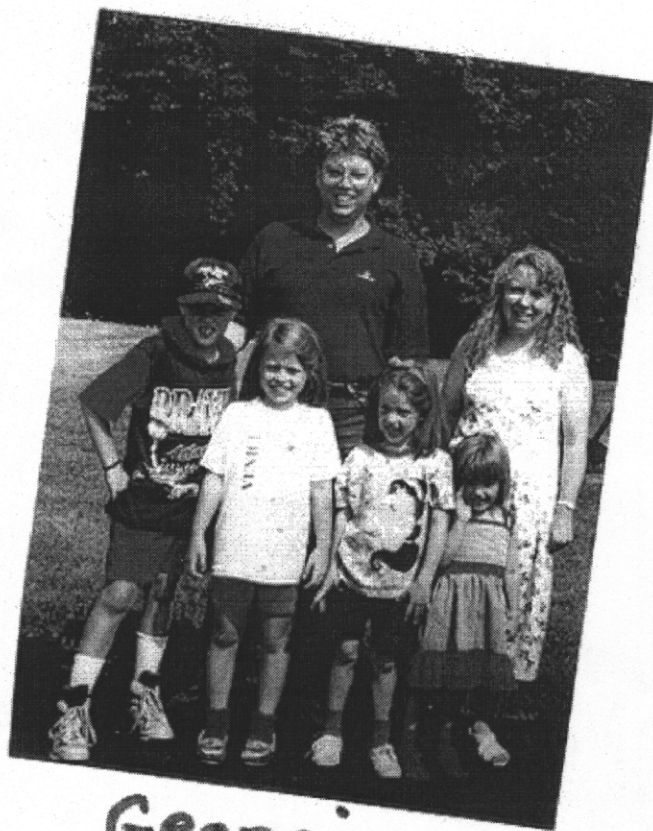
I'm happy to report that several of you have sent copies of some of your favorite pictures to be included in the news letter. Thank you! For the rest of you, won't you please take the time to share your photos with us. This is what a family news letter is all about.

From the photo album... Meet the Marv Pfeiffer family from Franksville, Wisconsin.

The Pfeiffer's from



Texas



Georgia

WISCONSIN



Meet your cousins from the previous page...

DESCENDANCY CHART

- 1-- Joanne Mary HECK (Wisconsin)
sp-Marvin PFEIFFER
 - 2-- David Michael PFEIFFER (Texas)
sp-Mary Lori QUADRACCI
 - 3-- Michelle Anne PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Catherine Elizabeth PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Amanda Kelly PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Jonathan David PFEIFFER
 - 2-- Daniel Paul PFEIFFER (Georgia)
sp-Jodene WICHERN
 - 3-- James Alvin PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Joy Christine PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Jenny Lyn PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Julia Ann PFEIFFER
 - 2-- Steven Mark PFEIFFER (Wisconsin)
sp-Cara Lynn ANDERSON
 - 3-- Rebecca Lee PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Thomas James PFEIFFER
 - 3-- Jamie Marie PFEIFFER
 - 2-- Ann Therese PFEIFFER (Wisconsin)
sp-Daniel John KELLEY
 - 3-- Erika May KELLEY
 - 2-- Jeanie Marie PFEIFFER (Wisconsin)
sp-Charles John MRAZEK
 - 3-- Dana Joanne MRAZEK
 - 2-- Lori Sue PFEIFFER (Wisconsin)
sp-John Matthew SUCHLA
 - 3-- Jacob Matthew SUCHLA
 - 3-- Andrew John SUCHLA
 - 2-- Judi Lynn PFEIFFER (Wisconsin)
sp-Steven John BEHRENDT
 - 3-- Lauren Joanne BEHRENDT
-

Marvin Pfeiffer married Joanne Heck on November 24, 1956 at Sacred Heart Church, Racine, Wisconsin. Joanne is the oldest daughter of Alvin and Stella Heck, and granddaughter of Robert Steven Heck and Margaret F. Henningfeld.

Marvin is an electrical contractor and raises children, grand children, and apples as a hobby. Marv and Joanne spend a great deal of their time arranging their descendants for family group pictures. Joanne uses a MAC computer system just to keep track of her family's birthdays and wedding anniversaries.

Meet more of your cousins on the next page...

Photo at top left: L-R: Sylvester and Carlos Henningfeld with their mother Clara Stratman Henningfeld about 1920.

Photo at top right: Mary Henningfeld Brott and her three daughters at Seattle, Washington. L-R: Lucille, Ethel, Mary Henningfeld Brott, and Evelyn.

Photo at lower left: The Vincent Brunner and Clara Heck golden wedding anniversary party in 1912. Clara was the sister of Henry Heck and daughter of Johann Heck. She arrived with her parents and brothers in America in 1852. Clara and Vincent lived in Minnesota. Standing L-R: Josephine, Alfred, Ferdinand, John, Joseph and Anna. Front row L-R: Frank, Vincent, Alvina (John's daughter), Elsie (Anna's daughter), Elenora (Lucy's daughter), Clara and Lucy.

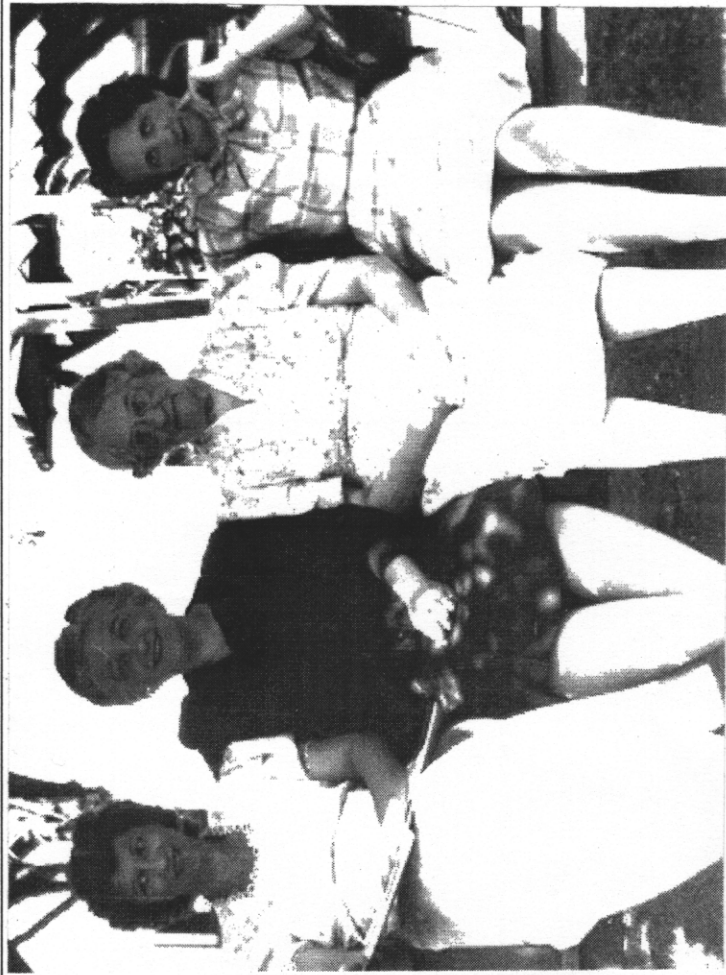
Photo at lower right: A picture of Clara Stratman Henningfeld with six of her seven children taken on May 6, 1927, four days before her death. L-R: Carlos, Margaret, George, Clara, Mollie, Sylvester, and Fred. Clara was the daughter of Anton Stratman and Anna Maria Elizabeth Guthof.

Did you know that

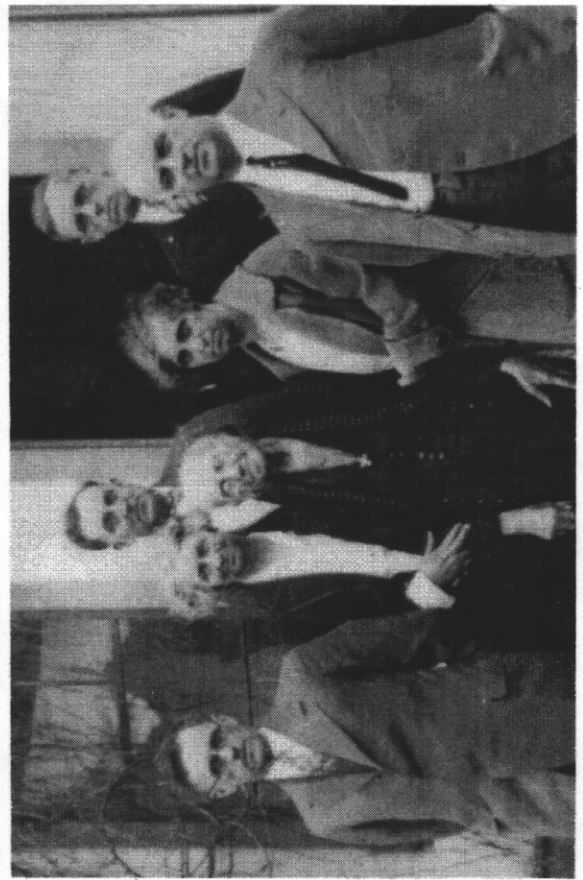
The Compendium Of American Genealogy lists John Burgess (1711-1795) as a Lieutenant during the Revolutionary War. The Compendium also states that he was the husband of Hannah James and that his father was Thomas Burgess (1668-1743) of Little Compton, RI.

Relationship to John Burgess:

- John Burgess (1711-1795)
 - Benajah Burgess (1761-1830)
 - Benjamin Burgess (1799-1838)
 - Patience Burgess (1823-1894)
 - Mary Ann McNulty (1844-1912)
 - Robert S. Heck (1877-1923)



From the photo album...



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Would you be interested in a bound copy of all of the news letters?

This ninth issue of the news letter marks the completion of the second full year of **FREE** news letters. Many of you have asked if you can get past copies, and where I have had extra copies, I have provided them. We have printed 70 pages of news since the start, and included 64 photographs. I would like to run copies of all pages and have them bound into a booklet. I have gone back and reproduced some of the photos in the first few issues in a higher resolution such as that used in this issue. The booklet will be bound in a soft cover and will be mailed to your home. The cost per copy will be \$10.00. If interested, fill out the form on this page and mail it to me.

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Please make checks payable to Robert J. Heck and mail this form to:

Robert J. Heck

4910 Steeple Dr.

Greendale, WI 53129