

# Our Family News Letter

Issue 12

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## Stories and memories passed down to me by my grandparents. By Robert J. Heck

John Mikel, my grandfather, was eleven years old and living in Uhersky Brod, Czechoslovakia when his father, Jan Mikel, died. His mother was still alive at the time. At the funeral of Jan Mikel in 1894, my grandfather was afraid that the church bells would wake his father from the dead. He cried from fear. Jan Mikel was cruel, unpredictable, and a mean man. He would often drink and when he was drunk he would beat his children. The children had a great fear of their father. My grandfather had nothing good to say about his father.



*John and Anna Mikel with son Bohumil in 1911 at Uhersky Brod, Czechoslovakia*

My grandfather, John Mikel worked in a coal mine as a youth in order to help support his family. The work was hard and the pay was small. He felt that his short height was caused by the fact that he worked in the mines at such a young age. He was a very strong man and his arms were well developed and muscular.

John Mikel arrived in the United States in 1912, and his wife and two children followed in 1914. Grandma was pregnant with my mother, Mary, at the time but she didn't tell grandpa until he had arrived in America. She was afraid that if he knew that she was expecting, he would have canceled the trip and they would never have emigrated to this country.

The story told to me by my grandmother was that in order to celebrate the start of their new life in America, John spent his last \$7.00 to have large pictures taken of himself and his wife. The pictures hung in the dining room of their home for many years. Grandpa had the neatest handlebar mustache and grandma had tightly woven braids coiled on top of her head. One day in 1971, as I was visiting, I found the pictures in the trash can at my grandparents home. When I asked about the pictures, my grandmother told me that they were old and nobody really wanted them. She told me that I could have them if I wanted them. That was when she told me the story behind the pictures. Those original pictures, which are now 82 years old, are hanging on the wall in my recreation room watching me type this news letter.

Grandma Mikel told me many stories over the years about the "Old Country", but many of them have slipped from my memory. I remember her telling me about the first time that she tasted chocolate. She was about five or six years old and one of the neighboring families received some

chocolate candy as a gift and gave some to her. She took one bite and promptly spit it out because the sweet taste expected wasn't there. The "candy" was bitter cooking chocolate. She told me that it was many years before she tasted real sweet chocolate.

My grandmother told me the story about her first orange. In Czechoslovakia oranges were a rare thing, and grandma had never seen one at the farmer's market in her village of Rudimov. Her uncle returned from a trip to Greece and brought an orange for her. She looked over the strange fruit, smelled the rind, and then bit into it as if it were an apple. She spit it out quickly when the acid taste of the rind hit her tongue. That was the worst tasting fruit she had ever tasted. She was convinced that her uncle had played a trick on her especially when he was laughing so hard that he fell down. She was so mad that she threw the orange away. Grandma didn't taste an orange again until she was married with two children and living in America.

My grandfather and my uncle Harvey were the hunters of the family. The two of them would often hunt for rabbits and squirrels together on Sunday morning after the early Mass. Grandpa had an old double barrel twelve gage shotgun with exposed hammers. I remember that the gun had fancy engraving on the sides. Grandpa sold or gave it away after he quit hunting. It seemed that grandpa always had the best luck with the rabbits and Uncle Harvey had the best luck with squirrels. I can remember waiting for the hunters to return home with their game. Grandpa would let me help him skin the game and salt the furs. If they had a squirrel, I would get the tail for my hat or to hang on my bike. By the time I was old enough to hunt, grandpa had already sold his gun. My brother Don and I spent many hours hunting with Uncle Harvey.

### **MY GREATEST DAY OF ICE FISHING**

Grandpa Mikel loved to fish but was a warm weather fisherman only. Uncle Harvey Nelson, on the other hand, enjoyed ice fishing. As a youngster, I spent many long and cold hours with Uncle Harvey watching for the red tip-up flag to alert us

to a big fish. I would like to say that we caught hundreds of fish and only had to return home because we had limited out, but I can't. The truth is that I don't ever remember catching a fish through the ice with Uncle Harvey.

The last time that I remember ice fishing with him was the time that I was convinced that we were about to catch the biggest and the most fish ever caught in the history of ice fishing. You see, I had read an advertisement about a secret method of catching fish known only to the Gypsies. It was called Gypsy Fish Bait Oil! And I was probably the only kid in the entire state of Wisconsin to have this inside knowledge. The ad explained that Gypsies were never in one place long enough to learn the layout of a lake or the hot spots on a body of water. Therefore they had to resort to other methods of providing food for their families and so they invented fish bait oil. The ad went on to say that the oil was so effective that the fish would fight each other to determine which one would win the bait. Naturally the biggest fish would always win and thus the Gypsies always caught the biggest fish.



Sounded logical to me, so I sent off for a bottle of the stuff. In about two weeks my \$1.00 investment arrived in the mail just in time for Uncle Harvey and I to test it on Silver Lake. I read the instructions over and over and had them committed to memory. When we got to the lake I chopped a hole through the ice, put a chub on the hook, and dipped it into the bottle of Gypsy Fish Bait Oil. It was the God awfullist smelling stuff I had ever had the displeasure of smelling, and it



made me wonder why any fish in it's right mind would want to fight over it. But the Gypsy people knew what they were doing.

When the bait slipped through the hole in the ice it left rings of multi-colored oil film on the surface of the water. Obviously, I surmised, the strange smelling oil was strong enough to survive this dunking and the bulk of the special oil would travel to the lower depths of the lake with my chub.

I waited and waited but nothing happened. I reapplied the fish bait oil several times, but again nothing happened. I even poured a little down the throat of the chub, but again nothing.

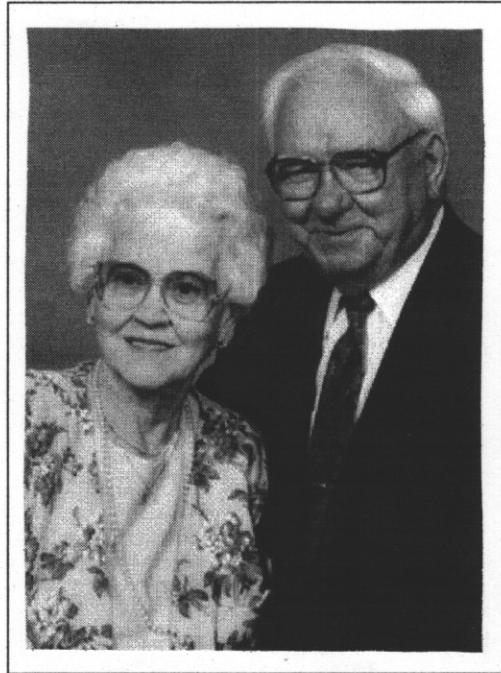
Uncle Harvey summed it up several hours later as we started to pack up our equipment when he said that the fish were probably so busy fighting each other that they were all dead or near dead. As we walked off of the ice I remember dropping the bottle of Gypsy Fish Bait Oil into an old rusted trash barrel. While the oil was gone, we had many a good laugh over the years about our greatest day of ice fishing.

### From The Photo Album .....



*Who took a bite out of my chicken? That seems to be what Don Heck is asking of Lee Heck. We won't tell.*

## Alvin & Bernice Heck Celebrate 10th Wedding Anniversary



Alvin and Bernice Heck are celebrating ten wonderful years of marriage together with a Mass at St. Joseph's Parish in Racine, Wisconsin on March 23rd. I'm sure that all of our readers will join me in wishing the happy couple much love and best wishes on this special occasion. If you get a chance, drop them a line at 445 Graham Street, Racine, WI, 53405. Better yet, just drop in once in a while and listen to some of the interesting stories that they have to tell. Uncle Al has one of the best equipped wood working shops that I have seen in a long time. It's amazing what he can do with a piece of wood.

### A SPECIAL THANK YOU ...

This news letter is written and published by Robert J. Heck, 4910 Steeple Drive, Greendale, WI 53129. There is no charge for the news letter but it is supported by the generous contributions of many of our readers. My special thanks go out to each of you for your support.

## The MATTESON Connection To Our Family

Henry Matteson b. 1646

Henry Matteson b. 1670

Hezekiah Matteson b. 1720

George Matteson b. 1742

Zilpha Matteson b. abt 1767

Benjamin Burgess b. 1794

Patience Burgess b. 1823

Mary Ann McNulty b. 1844

Robert S. Heck b. 1877

Robert G. Heck b. 1909

Robert J. Heck b. 1940

Henry Matteson, the emigrant, lived on Prudence Island, in the town of Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island where he lived in peace with the local Indians. He was a good friend of Roger Williams, founder of Rhode Island. Henry first came to Rhode Island in 1666, and later moved to Greenwich, RI when the town started in 1677. On June 12, 1678, he was granted 100 acres of land by the Town Assembly in Greenwich. In 1670, at the age of 24, Henry married Hannah Parsons, daughter of Hugh and Elizabeth Parsons of England. Henry died in 1690.

Henry Matteson Jr., known as Captain Henry, was born in RI in 1670. In 1694, he married Judith Weaver, daughter of Clement Weaver who was a direct descendant of a long line of Welsh kings. We are able to trace her line back through 44 more generations directly to King Cunedda of Wales who was born about 400 A.D. *(Editors note: This gives me as much of a right to the British throne as the present Prince of Wales, Charles. The only problem is that my brother Gary has first rights to the throne. Based on this, we should probably stop calling him Captain Gary and start referring to him as Prince Gary. On second thought let's just keep calling him Captain Gary.)*

Captain Henry Matteson died in 1752. In his will he left his household to his wife, Judith. He left an iron kettle to a granddaughter, 10 shillings to a grandson, and to his six surviving sons and one daughter, an equal share of his remaining

estate. The estate consisted of 407 pounds, 16 shillings, wearing apparel, warming pan, one cow, one calf, one heifer and a gun.

Hezekiah Matteson was born in 1720, and married Mary Sweet who was born the same year. While on vacation to West Bennington, Vermont, we found the grave of Mary Sweet Matteson. She died there in 1808 at the age of 88 years. We were unable to find the grave of her husband, Hezekiah Matteson. Hezekiah and Mary had eleven children.



*At center is the tomb stone of Mary Sweet Matteson  
1720 - 1808*

George Matteson was born in 1742, and married Luranah Matteson, a second cousin, in about 1766.

Zilpha Matteson was born about 1767, and married Benajah Burgess. The family lived at Hoosick, NY and at nearby Wallomsac, NY. Zilpha died there in 1836 and is buried next to her husband at the Baptist church cemetery at Wallomsac, within site of the battle field of the Battle of Bennington.

## Did You Know ....

That in July, 1985, my brother Gary Heck, also known as Captain Gary, used a six iron at Ives Grove Golf Links to score a hole-in-one. The ace was scored on the 13th hole which is 200 yards long. Unfortunately, he was playing the 12th hole.

The truth is that he really did score a hole-in-one that day but since he can't read fine print anyway, I thought I would just pull his leg.



## More From The Photo Album ...



My cousins Bob & Loraine Heck are enjoying their retirement at 9471 Palm Island Circle, North Fort Myers, FL 33903. They write that they are very active, but still have time for friends and relatives. Bob works part time for H&R Block, is a director on the board of the community, and has taken up piano. Loraine is busy as the publisher of the Palm Island Breeze, studying French, taking piano lessons with Bob, participating in exercise classes, and playing croquet. Together they sing in their local church choir and do a lot of boating in the Gulf. They invite all to drop in when in Florida.



July 1, 1967, wedding of Gloria and Bob Heck (Trust me...That's me without gray hair.). On the left are my grandparents, John & Anna Mikel, and at right are Gloria's Grandmother Burmeister and Grandmother LaBerge.



The Edward Bark family: L-R Susan, Edward, Greg, Jim, Bernice, Allen, and Edward. We just learned that Susan is engaged to be married. She is a nurse in Minneapolis, MN. We hope to have more information in our next issue.



This crumpled up picture was found at Waterford, WI. From L-R: Gwen & Lawrence Plucker, Joe Heck, Liz Plucker, Virginia Plucker, Herb & Alice Heck. Liz was the daughter of Henry Heck. Joe, Herb and Alice are children of James Heck of Burlington. This picture was taken in about 1923.



Bob, Don & Gary Heck with Chuck Cermac in 1946. The Heck's are children of Mary & Bob.

**Franz Arnold Henningfeld (1810 - 1869)**  
**Katherina Elizabeth Richter (1816 - 1900)**

Franz Arnold Henningfeld was born on November 5, 1810 at the village of Vinnun, Westfalen, Prussia. He was the fourth of nine children of Johann Henrich Wilhelm Henningfeld and Maria Catharina Struman.

Vinnun is located near the village of Olfen where the family attended Mass at Saint Vitus Catholic Church. It was at Saint Vitus where Franz Arnold Strumann and Dorothea Bokholt witnessed the baptism of Franz.

Franz's father was the shoemaker in Vinnun. There is little doubt that the children helped run the family business. The boys probably helped make new shoes and participated in the repair of the old ones. The young girls would make deliveries and help keep the place clean. The glue pots would have to be cleaned and filled, and the shreds of leather would have to be swept up with the straw broom. The home and workshop would have the smell of freshly cut leather and glue. It would be offset by the smell of fresh bread baking daily in the stone oven.

On October 12, 1839 Franz Henningfeld took a bride. At the age of 29 he married Katherina Elizabeth Richter, the 23 year old daughter of Johann Henrich Richter and Anna Maria Bucker. Katherina lived in the nearby village of Kokelsum and also attended Mass at Saint Vitus where the marriage vows were pledged.

The first child of this union was born in 1840. Mary Catharina Henningfeld was born in Olfen. She married Henry Plate in 1861 in Wisconsin.

In 1843 the second child of Franz and Katherina Elizabeth was born and given the name Catharina Elizabeth. She married Anton Millertz on May 5, 1863 at Waterford, Wisconsin.

Caroline Henningfeld was the third child of Franz and was born in 1845. She married John Wurms in Wisconsin.

In the 1840's most of Prussia suffered through a period of poor crops and high unemployment. New shoes were out of the question for many of the Vinnun farmers, and the earnings from repair work was meager. The future for the Henningfeld children looked weak and dismal if they remained in the Vinnun area.

In 1845 and 1846 some of the family members set out for America accompanied by Johann Theodor Henningfeld, younger brother of Franz. There may have been other family members traveling in the party. While we have not found this group on a passenger list, we do have a record of Johann Theodor Henningfeld as a witness to the marriage of his sister Frances on August 18, 1846 at Burlington, Wisconsin.

The records of emigration from the area of Munster, Prussia lists a Franz Karl Henningfeld, born in 1809 in the Recklinghausen district which includes Olfen and Vinnun. He was thought to be Franz Arnold Henningfeld for a period of time in our research, however a paper published in 1983 disproves that. A publication by Clifford N. Smith was titled: "Immigrants to America (Mainly Wisconsin) from the Former Recklinghausen District (Nordrhein-Westfalen, Germany) Around the Middle of the Nineteenth Century." The record shows him traveling to North America with two family members in his party. His occupation was shown as journeyman tailor. According to the text of the city record he was the first immigrant to America from the City of Recklinghausen. "He put his house near the Viehtor (city gate) up for sale, as well as his tools, and left on 5 May 1845 with his wife and child."

By 1845 Franz Arnold Henningfeld had three daughters which would make it unlikely that he was the Franz Karl Henningfeld listed in the Recklinghausen record.



In 1846 two of the sisters of Franz were married at Burlington, Wisconsin. Marriage records from Saint Sebastian Catholic Church list the marriage of Catherine Elizabeth Henningfeld to John Henry Hoffer on February 22, 1846. The same Burlington church record listed the marriage of Frances Henningfeld to Ludwig Sanders on August 18, 1846.

If Franz traveled to America in 1845, he probably would have established a location in the Wisconsin area and then returned to Olfen to move his mother, wife and three children in June, 1847. Franz was in Olfen on April 15, 1847 when he gave his sister Theodora in marriage to William Kortendick.

On June 26, 1847 the Henningfeld family arrived at the port of New York on board the Anton Schmitz from Hamburg. The ships registration number was AB-5324-447 LDS film number 002314. The persons listed on the ships registration are Franz age 37, his wife Elizabeth Richter Henningfeld age 28, his mother Maria Catharina Struman Henningfeld age 56 [sic 66], and his three children Mary, age 7, Elizabeth, age 4, and Caroline Henningfeld, age 2.

Sixteen days after Franz Arnold Henningfeld arrived in New York he filed a Declaration of Intention to become a citizen of the United States. His declaration was filed on July 12, 1847 at the District Court, Territory of Wisconsin, Milwaukee County. The Declaration of Intention was required for an immigrant to purchase land in the United States.

Nine years later Franz applied for his final papers and became a naturalized citizen on October 27, 1856. The papers were issued by the First Judicial Circuit Court for the State of Wisconsin. Franz was 46 years of age. Louis Sanders, brother-in-law of Franz, was one of the subscribing witnesses.

On May 7, 1849 a son, Henry F. Henningfeld was born to Franz and Katherine at Waterford, Wisconsin. He married Clara Elizabeth Stratman

on May 6, 1873 and died on September 10, 1909 at Burlington, Wisconsin.

On September 28, 1850 Franz Henningfeld purchased 40 acres of land in Norway Township in Racine County, Wisconsin. The land was described as SE 1/4, SW 1/4, Section 30, Township 4, North of Range 20 East. The mortgage was valued at \$55.

William F. Henningfeld was born on April 10, 1851 at Waterford. He was the fifth child of Franz and Katherine. William married Margaret Gruter on October 25, 1874 at Waterford. He died on September 26, 1918 at Waterford.

On February 23, 1853 Franz entered a mortgage on Lot 1 and 4, Block 38 and Lot 2, Block 22 located in the city of Waterford, Wisconsin for the value of \$100. The land had been purchased by Elizabeth Henningfeld on October 9, 1852.

In 1855 Francis Henningfeld was born at Waterford and was the sixth child of the union. He never married and was declared dead by the courts in 1901. In 1888 he wrote to the family from Saint Paul, Minnesota, stating that he was going to the Black Hills. That was the last time that the family ever heard from him. Family tradition states that he later wrote his family that he would arrive home on the train but he never did show up.

In 1857 Mary Henningfeld was born at Waterford. She was the seventh child born to the union. She married John Leber on May 7, 1878.

The 1860 Wisconsin census for Waterford listed the Franz Henningfeld family of seven members. Franz was shown at age 50 with the occupation of shoemaker. His wife Katherine Elizabeth was 45, and the children were Caroline 15, Henry 11, William 9, Francis 5, and Mary 3. Elizabeth, the oldest daughter, was listed as a servant to John J. Govat. Her age was listed as 17.

On April 26, 1869 Franz Arnold Henningfeld died at Waterford. A simple entry in the church record at Saint Thomas marks his passing. Franz

was 58 years of age when he died. We have not found an obituary for Franz. He is buried at Saint Thomas Cemetery in Waterford and his grave is marked by a large iron cross.

Katherina Elizabeth Henningfeld died on March 18, 1900 at Burlington, Wisconsin. Her obituary, which appeared in the Burlington newspaper, follows.

*"Mrs. Katherine Henningfeld died last Sunday of old age at the home of her son, Henry Henningfeld, on McHenry Street in this city, aged 84 years. She was a former resident of Waterford but had lived here for a number of years past. She was a widow and leaves a number of grown-up children surviving her, among them her son Henry and Mrs. H. Plate, both of this city. The funeral will take place this Wednesday morning from the Catholic church."*

Katherina Elizabeth Henningfeld is buried at Saint Mary's Cemetery at Burlington.

### Post Cards From The Past ...

(These three postcards were written by Margaret Henningfeld Heck, wife of Robert S. Heck, to Lizzie Heck Plucker. Lizzie was the sister of Robert S. Heck. These postcards were found at Waterford, Wisconsin.)

Dear Sister,

How are you all? Rec'd the cards this morning. Will send these, hope you get them in time. Was to Mary Hinuns husbands funeral yesterday. He had a large funeral. Mary felt terrible. They have a cute little baby - 2 months old. Will ----- ring off. You are the only one that thinks of us. Love to all.

Margaret

Hello Lizz,

August 6, 1913

Well here we are in Minneapolis. Rob is not feeling so good, but I think when he rests up he'll feel better. Will write to Mary later so you can tell her and John so.

Margaret

Dear Sister and all,

August 26, 1915

How are you? We are all living. I have a terrible cold. Rob is working in a saloon on 6th Street. He couldn't stand the shop. He is bad off with rheumatism. Feels better today. He works 6 hour shift. By-by, love to all. Rose is fine now.

Margaret



Mary Ann Mikel Heck in about 1931 at Racine, Wisconsin.



The wedding party of Clarence Heck and Frances Pier on June 21, 1927. Brother of the groom, Bob Heck is at left.