

Our Family News Letter

Issue 95

Greendale, Wisconsin

December 2016

Our Family News Letter now on-line

My son, Bill Heck created a web site containing all issues of Our Family News Letter.

Our Family News Letter

Written by Robert J. Heck



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Welcome!

Posted on [October 6, 2016](#) by [Bill](#)

Hello and welcome to the official Our Family News Letter website! You will find all of the news letters under the year it was published.

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Thanks to Bill Heck, all 94 issues of Our Family News Letter are now available to you on-line and for free. They are available to you at the following web address:

<http://ourfamilynewsletter.com/>

Just select a year and then an issue. For example, following is the list for 2015.

2015

- [Issue 88, March 2015](#)
- [Issue 89, June 2015](#)
- [Issue 90, September 2015](#)
- [Issue 91, December 2015](#)

Left click on an issue and the newsletter will open as a PDF document. You can then read it on-line or print a copy of the eight page newsletter.

The web site starts with issue 1 which was written in June, 1993 and ends with issue 94 written in September 2016. I will update the web site with new issues of Our Family News Letter as they are written.

Bill created a Domain name and the web site and said that it was an early birthday present from Michelle and him. What a nice gift.

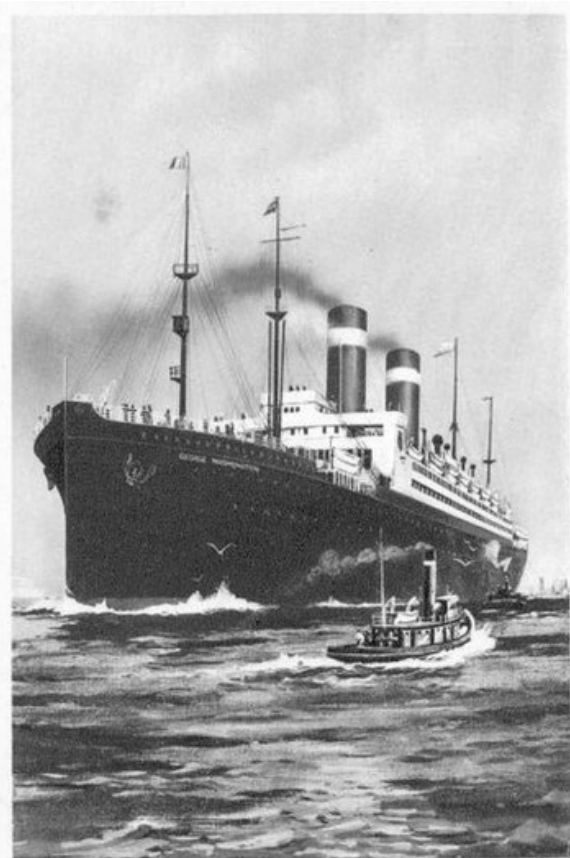
Please feel free to share the web address with your family members. The newsletter is a history of our family and it should be shared with all.

My Grandpa, John Mikel, Missed the Iceberg that Sank the Titanic.

My Grandpa, John Mikel, left Uhersky Brod, Moravia, Czech Republic in the spring of 1912. He boarded the ship the SS George Washington at Bremen, Germany on March 9, 1912 and arrived at the Port of New York and Ellis Island on March 18, 1912. The fast moving ship took only nine days to make the trip across the Atlantic Ocean.

His final destination was Racine, Wisconsin, where he would establish a home and find a job. In the spring of 1914 he sent for his wife Anna, and his two children Bohumil age 3 years and Mary age 11 months, my mother.

Back to 1912: The SS George Washington returned to Bremen, Germany and on the very next voyage to New York, reported an iceberg to all ships at sea. Following is a report on the sighting.



S.S. "GEORGE WASHINGTON," 23,788 TONS
UNITED STATES LINES

“While headed to New York on the morning of 14 April 1912, the crew aboard the George Washington observed a large iceberg as the ship passed south of the Grand Banks of Newfoundland. By noon the ship passed within a half mile of the iceberg, estimated by the crew at 112 feet above the waterline and 410 feet long. After recording the ship’s position, the George Washington radioed a warning to all ships in the area. The White Star steamship Titanic, some 250 nautical miles east of the George Washington’s position, acknowledged receipt of the warning, one of several her radio operators received.”

“On 14 April, the George Washington received garbled transmissions that informed them that the Titanic had struck an iceberg at 11:40 pm less than twelve hours after the George Washington reported it, and nearly at the same position as the one that the George Washington had reported.” The Titanic sank at 2:20 am on April 15, 1912. There were 1,514 who perished.

How much did it cost in 1912?

The cost for passage on the SS George Washington in 1912 was \$53 plus food and drink. To put that in perspective, the average wage in the United States was \$530 per year in 1912. Unskilled labor was even less. Non-English speaking men were even less.

Rules on board sailing ships in 1853.

Johann Heck and his family came to America in 1853 on board the ship, the Peter Hattrick. What was life like for their family on that month long voyage?

Ship Rules:

1. The fire will be lit on the fire place (stove) each morning at 6 o'clock a.m., and every passenger not hindered by sickness or some other valid reason shall get up no later than 7 o'clock a.m.

2. The fire shall be put out at 8 o'clock p.m. and passengers must be in their bunks by 10 o'clock p.m.
3. The deck in the passengers' quarters and under the bunks shall be swept each morning before breakfast, and the sweepings be thrown overboard. Once a week the deck in the passengers' quarters shall be scraped.
4. Each morning before the fire is lit, necessary fuel and water will be distributed to the passengers. This task, and cleaning of the deck and the cabins on deck, will be carried out on a daily basis by a suitable number of men on a rotation basis. This group is also to check the cleanliness of the passengers and adherence to all other regulations.
5. Lamps will be lit in passengers' quarters after dark and be kept burning until 10 o'clock in the evening.
6. Tobacco smoking is not permitted below deck, nor is the use of open flame or hay or straw permitted.
7. All cooking utensils must be washed after use and always be kept clean.
8. All bedding must be taken up on deck once or twice a week and be aired out, and the bunks cleaned each time this is done.
9. Clothing may not be washed or hung up to dry below deck, but each week, as conditions permit, a day will be determined for general washing.
10. All passengers who bring spirits or other alcoholic beverages on board are obligated upon embarking the ship to hand over the same for safekeeping. These passengers may receive a reasonable daily portion. Passengers are forbidden to have gunpowder in their possession, and this as well as guns or other weapons brought on board must be placed in safekeeping with ship's officers. These will be returned to passengers at journey's end.
11. Cards or dice are not allowed on board since these can easily lead to quarrels and disagreements. Passengers should treat each other with courtesy and respect. No quarrelsome or disputatious behavior will be tolerated.
12. No seaman is allowed on the passenger deck, unless he has received orders to do specific work. Nor is any passenger, under any circumstances whatsoever, allowed in the cabin of a

crewmember or the ship's galley. It is not permitted to drill holes, do any cutting, pound nails or do any other kind of damage to the ship's beams, boards or decks.

13. It is expected of the passengers that they appear on deck each Sunday in clean clothing and that they, as much as circumstances permit, keep the Sabbath.

14. All manner of games and entertainment are permitted and recommended as contributing to the maintenance of good health during a long journey. Personal cleanliness also contributes a good deal to this and is therefore highly recommended to the passengers.

15. Passengers must not speak to the man at the helm.

16. It is taken for granted that every passenger is obligated to obey the orders of the Captain in all respects.

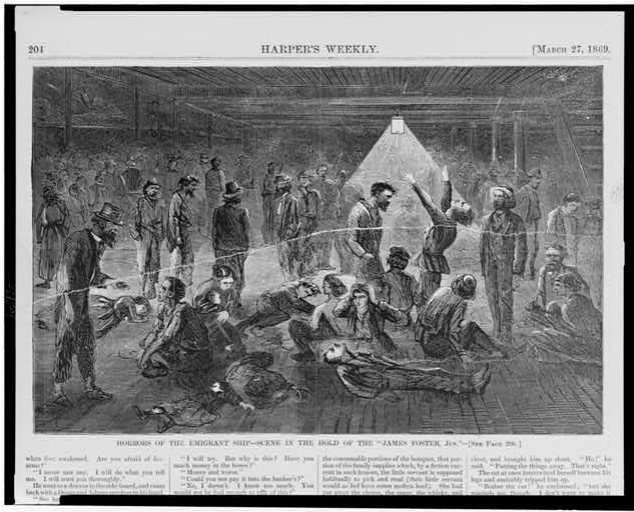
What was it like on a ship immigrating to the United States?



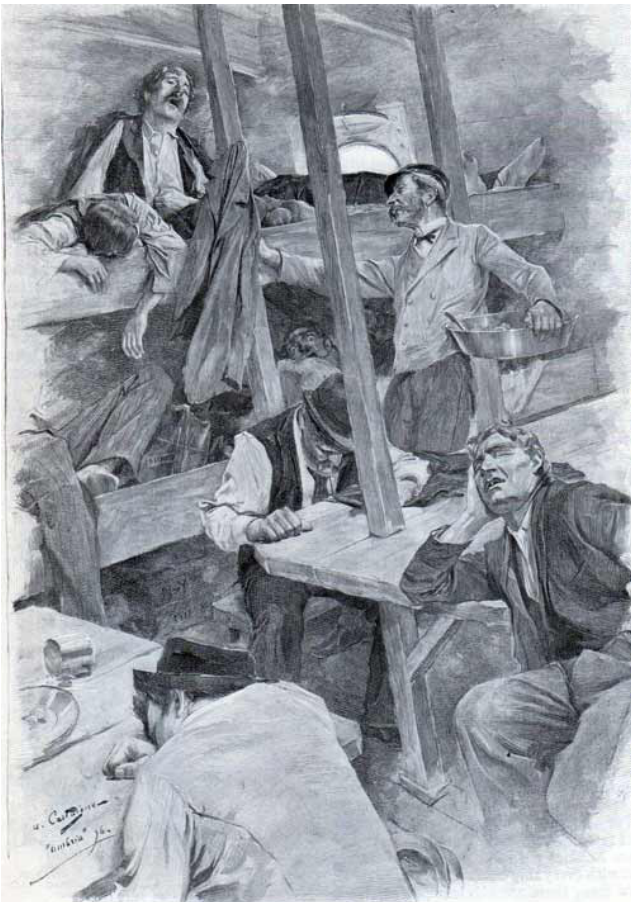
Many of our readers have taken cruises to Alaska, the Caribbean, and maybe even to the Mediterranean. Modern ships today have all the amenities and the passengers are pampered and waited on hand and foot. The meals are out of this world and the choices are many.

Now think back to what life was like when our ancestors left home and sailed for weeks on board a crowded ship crammed between decks in what was called Steerage. Take yourself back to

1853 when the Heck family immigrated to the United States or to 1869 when Anna Maria Elizabeth Guthoff Stratmann Heitkemper immigrated in that year.



The image above appeared in the Harper's Weekly on March 27, 1869 and shows passengers in Steerage.



The sketch at lower left shows what traveling in Steerage was like in 1879. This sketch appeared in the Pall Mall Gazette, a London newspaper, in an article about steerage passengers. Part of the article follows.

“I found myself in the shed or wharf, amid the noise, hurry, and confusion attending the embarkation of some 250 passengers. There was no going on board her until the cabin passengers and their luggage had been taken in.”

“Meanwhile, the steerage passengers (I was told) might wait anywhere. Looking round, I noticed some 50 or 60 persons gathered at the near end of the shed. Their appearance, and more particularly their packages, unmistakably indicated steerage passengers. Beds rolled up, mattresses huddled together, blankets in bundles, tin pans, cans, knives, forks, and spoons sticking out here and there among the parcels, denoted pretty clearly, my fellow travelers.”

“In front of the wharf were any number of Irish-women eager to dispose of such steerage necessities. For 50 cents, I bought a mattress -- filled, I found after investigation, with wood shavings; for another 50 cents, I acquired a tin pan, a tin pot, and a tin wash-hand basin about the size of an ordinary soup plate; for a third half-dollar, I received a knife, fork, and spoon. My outfit was complete.”

“Pushed along by someone in authority, I soon found myself between decks. In front of me was an open hatch with two ladders leading to some unknown place below. Down one of these ladders, I was half thrown, half hustled, at the risk of a broken neck, for the steps were as nearly as possible perpendicular. Valise, tin pot, pan, and basin in hand, I reached the bottom.”

“Now I was in the steerage. Words are incapable of conveying anything like a correct notion of the kind of den in which I stood among 60 fellow passengers. A glance around filled me with dismay and disgust”

“A description of the den dignified by the name of steerage will show the disregard of the steamship company for the comfort of poor travelers. Imagine a wooden cell some 36 feet or so in length, 12 feet wide at one end, but narrowing to about 5 feet at the further extremity; instead of a ceiling, a hatchway opening on to the main deck; two dirty ladders, placed almost perpendicularly, forming a staircase.”

“On two sides, running the length of the den, a wooden partition had been constructed of bare boards, reaching to within 10 inches of the top. At intervals in this boarding were eight doors, numbered, showing that behind these were our sleeping berths. The boards had once upon a time -- evidently a very remote time -- been painted. The floor was strewn with sawdust. A dozen thin iron columns running up to the ceiling served to support some deals, (the use of which we soon ascertained,) and at the same time effectually impeded locomotion.”

“That salt and cured fish were among the items carried below was therefore immediately apparent to one at least of our senses. This dirty boarded space -- not nearly so large as an ordinary room -- was the ‘saloon’ dining room, and living room for steerage passengers; and it was certified to accommodate 150 persons.”

“The stench, combined with the heat, was simply intolerable. I scrambled up the nearest ladder on to the main deck -- not the upper deck be it understood -- and there, close to the hatchway, which of course was the entry into the steerage, stood three barrels, each of them half filled with kitchen refuse. These were standing directly under the rays of the sun the temperature being over 99 degrees in the shade. And there were foul stuff remained during the whole of our voyage, receiving daily additions from the kitchen and scullery.”

“Opening on to this hatchway, and without any partition whatever, were three lavatories which directly faced the passage. What wonder that the atmosphere of the steerage was unendurable.”

“One by one we were directed to proceed up stairs. My turn came and, ticket in hand, I walked up. Grasping me by the shoulder as if I were a convict, the official stopped me and took the ticket, at the same time demanding to know my name, age, and calling. The particulars were duly noted in a passenger list for the information of the emigration agents in New York and Liverpool.”

“Again we were called below, and the allotment of sleeping places was proceeded with. In the construction and fitting of the berths I found the architect and manifested the same regard for the comfort and convenience of the passengers as in the design of the "steerage" itself.”

“The arrangements for separating the single men from the single women, and the married people from both of these, were extremely simple and primitive.”

From the Pall Mall Gazette, August 9, 1879

Norway to New York in 1851

The following article describes experiences on a voyage from Norway to New York and then to Milwaukee and finally to Beloit, Wisconsin in 1851. The author was 11 years old in 1851 and the article was written by him around 1905.

“The kitchen where the cooking was done for about 259 passengers was a board shanty about 12 by 16 feet in size and was built on deck near the middle of the ship. Along the back side of this shanty a box or rather a bin was built about 4 feet wide and about 1 1/2 feet high, and this bin was filled full of sand, and on top of this sand the fires were built and the cooking done.”

“The kettles were set on top of a little triangular frame of iron with three short legs under it, and this people would set anywhere on this bed of sand where they could possibly find or squeeze out room and then start their fire underneath. There was no chimney where the smoke could

escape, only an opening in the roof the width of a board over the fire where smoke could go if it wanted to, but most of the time it did not want to because the wind kept it down.”

“The first week out their appetites did not require much of any cooking, and the lunch baskets that people brought with them from home lasted several days. But they finally had to get on with it. Then every morning at a certain hour one from each family had to go down into the bottom room or hold of the vessel where the food and water was dealt out to each family for the day. The wood had to be split very fine before they could use it to any advantage, and the water had to be put into jugs or something similar to prevent it from spilling.”

“Early in the morning you could see the women coming up from below with a little bundle of fine split wood in one hand and a little kettle of some kind or a coffee pot in the other, heading for the kitchen, eager to find a vacant place somewhere on this bed of sand large enough to set their kettle on and build a fire under it. But it would not be very late in the day, if the weather was favorable, till every place in the kitchen was occupied, and there would be a large crowd outside waiting for vacant places, which were generally engaged already.”

“If you sat outside watching the kitchen door you could in 18 minutes time see perhaps half dozen women come out with their aprons over their faces, wiping tears, coughing and almost strangled with smoke. They would stay outside long enough to get their lungs filled with fresh air and the tears wiped out of their eyes, then they would crowd themselves back in again. Perhaps to find the fire and wood removed from their kettle under somebody else's. Then, of course, broad hints and sharp words would be exchanged, and the loser would have to watch the opportunity when

her next neighbor would have to go outside for fresh air to get her wood and fire back again.”

“And these were not the only adversities and troubles in the kitchen because it was hardly ever so stormy but that somebody tried to cook something, and if it was too stormy for the women to be on deck the men would generally volunteer to steep tea, cook coffee, or even make a kettle of soup. They would start their fire, put their kettles on, and in a little while the cook shanty would be chock full of men. Some would be on their knees, some sitting flat on the floor while others would be standing outside peering in. Then imagine an oncoming big wave striking the vessel and almost setting it on end, and in a wink of an eye every kettle, coffee pot, and teapot is upset and spilled in the fire and hot ashes. This of course made them scramble for the door and you could see that coming out like swirling bees from a beehive.”

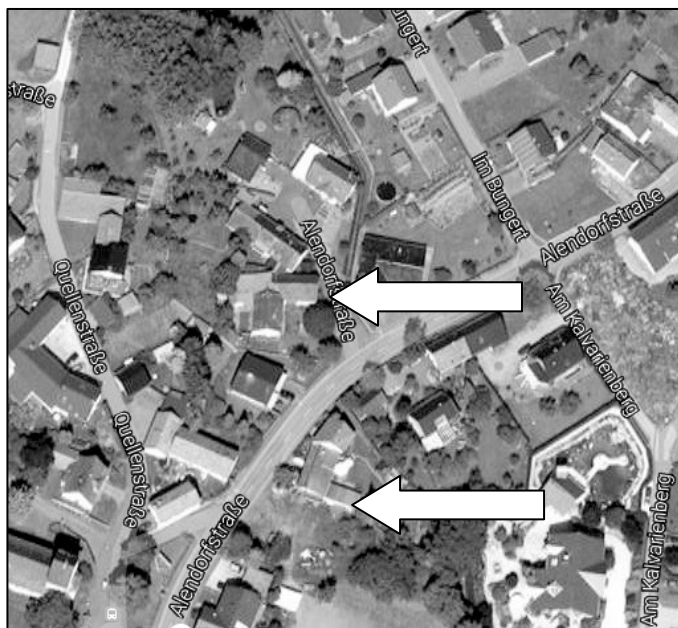
“Some would swear, some could laugh, while others would say they might have known better than to try to cook anything this stormy day, but in less than an hour the shanty would be full again and perhaps going through the whole performance.”

“This was how we came to America in an early day. And thus we worried and suffered for nearly 8 weeks until we finally arrived in the City of New York about the 11th of July and everybody soon forgot the troubles and trials they had on the voyage by seeing the beautiful green fields being thawed out by the warm rays of the sun after they had been a constant target for the cold and raw winds of the Atlantic.”

“In New York City we stopped two or three days, and then we were put on board quite a large and nice steamboat that took us up the Hudson River to Albany, and from there we were transported by the Erie to Buffalo, and

from there we were carried by a steamer over the Lakes to Milwaukee, where we arrived about the 25th of July and there hired a man and a team to take us west into Rock County near Beloit, which was then only a small village; and there we arrived July 28th, 1851 at the home of a friend who had come to this country about three years before us, and there is where our life in the United States began.”

House and Land Owned by Our Family at Alendorf, Germany



The upper arrow points to the house owned by Peter Schmitz (1783-1838) and his wife, Anna Luzia Heck (1778-1849). Their son, **Johann Heck (1810-1885)**, and his wife, **Anna Barbara Schaefer (1801-1855)** lived in that house and raised five children there. The children were Peter born 5 Oct 1834, Anna Luzia born 24 Dec 1836, Heinrich born 10 Feb 1839, Josef born 17 Feb 1841, and Clara born 18 Jul 1843. Johann Heck and his family immigrated to Wisconsin in 1853 and migrated to Minnesota in 1857.

The lower arrow points to the house and land owned by Wilhelm Schaefer (1726-1774) and his

wife Maria Agatha May/Schmitz (1733-1774). The original house was built in 1663. Their son, Balthasar Schaefer (1763-1807) married Anna Margaretha Genners (1761-1824) and raised their family in that house. The children included Agnes born 23 Jul 1788, Balthasar born 16 Jan 1790, **Johann born 15 May 1792**, Peter born 10 Mar 1794 died before 1798, Anna Catharina born 5 Apr 1796, Peter born 5 Apr 1798, Anna Luzia born 9 Apr 1800, and **Anna Barbara born 30 Aug 1801**.

Johann Schaefer married Maria Catharina Lux on 23 Jan 1825 and had six children. In 1852 the family immigrated to the United States.

Anna Barbara Schaefer was the sister of **Johann Schaefer** and as mentioned earlier married Johann Heck on 28 Nov 1833. Johann Schaefer encouraged her sister to emigrate to Wisconsin and later to Minnesota.

Thanks to our Contributors...

My deepest thanks go to all of our readers but especially to those who are the contributors for 2016.

Frank Lamping
 Alvin & Carolyn Heck
 Steve Pfeiffer
 Delores & Bernie Kunka
 Shirley Heck
 Lorraine Heck
 Ellen Steiner
 Cel Heck (Rick, Barb, Jim, and Sherry)
 Rebecca & Brian Wright
 Philip W Heck.

Contributions to keep Our Family News Letter are always welcomed and can be sent to:

**Robert J Heck, 4910 Steeple Drive,
 Greendale, WI 53129.**

From the Photo Album...

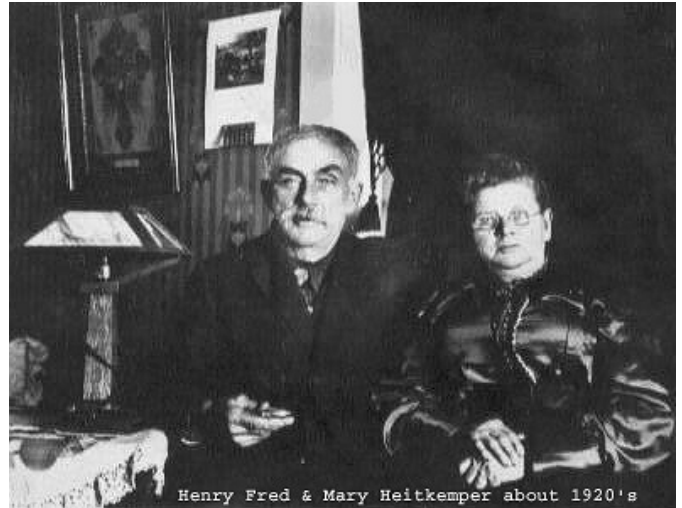


Don Heck with his two grandsons, Nathan and Nicholas Tappen at a 2016 Green Bay Packer game.



Gloria and Bob Heck, your Editor, 49 years ago on 1 July 1967 at Serb Hall in Milwaukee. Gloria was a school teacher teaching second grade at the Grant Street Public School. Bob was an Elec-

trical Engineer and was employed by McGraw Edison Power Systems in South Milwaukee.



Henry Fred Heitkemper, 1862-1923 with his wife Mary (nee Halbach) 1856-1936. The photo was taken in about 1920. Henry Fred Heitkemper was the son of Anna Maria Elisabeth Guthoff, and the step-brother of Clara Stratmann Henningfeld. Henry and Mary are buried in Saint Patrick's Cemetery at Phillips, Price County, Wisconsin. They had ten children born between 1883 and 1898. All of the children were born at Waterford, Racine County, Wisconsin.



Bob Heck & Gloria LaBerge getting ready for an Alpha Mu Sigma fraternity party in 1966.