

# Our Family News Letter

Issue 129

Greendale, Wisconsin

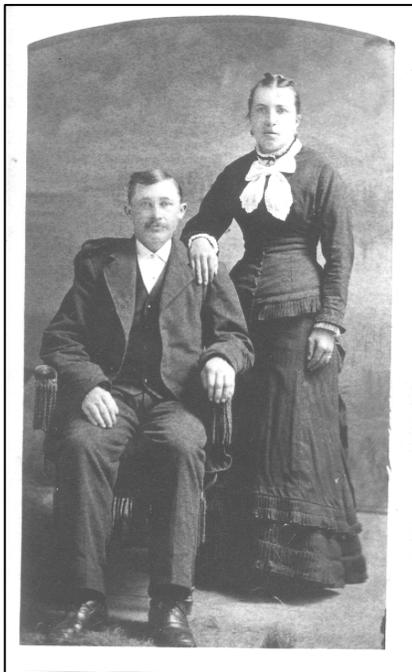
June 2025

## A look back at farm life in 1910-1960

While doing some research and while cleaning up some old documents that we had “hidden” in a closet, I ran into some things that I thought that I would share with our readers.

Gloria is my wife and her maternal grandmother was Caroline Sophie Amelia Olsen, known to her family as Carrie. Caroline was born in Holway, Taylor County, Wisconsin, on 13 August 1882 and died at the age of 91 years in 1974. Caroline had two sisters, Ella Sabine Olsen born 20 December 1887 and Clara Marie Olsen born 22 September 1891. There were two other siblings but both died within a month of their births.

The Olsen daughters were children of Peter Johan Olsen and Mary Justa Wilhelmina Agrista Fiedler. Peter Johan Olsen was born on 14 October 1848 at Halsted, Lolland, Maribo, Denmark, and died on 19 February 1941 at Marshfield, Wood County, Wisconsin. His wife Mary was born on 8 September 1855 at Pewaukee, Waukesha County, Wisconsin, and died on 2 July 1916 at Medford, Taylor County, Wisconsin. Shown at right are Peter Olsen and his wife, Mary Fiedler.

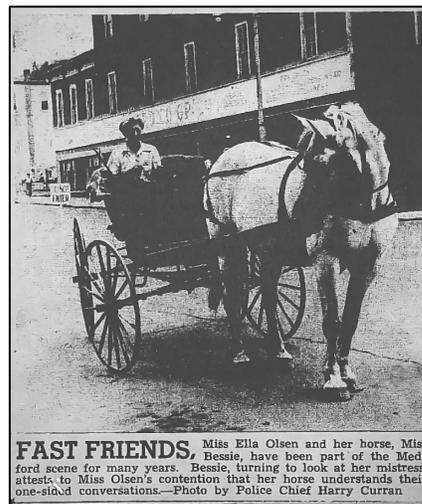


This photo taken in February 1941 shows the three sisters from left to right: Caroline, Ella, and Clara. This was taken on the Peter Olsen farm following his funeral.



The photo at left shows Peter Johan Olsen feeding the chickens on his farm prior to 1941.

What caught my attention was a series of newspaper articles written between 1910 and 1960.



**FAST FRIENDS** Miss Ella Olsen and her horse, Miss Bessie, have been part of the Medford scene for many years. Bessie, turning to look at her mistress, attests to Miss Olsen's contention that her horse understands their one-sided conversations.—Photo by Police Chief Harry Curran

This photo, taken by a Medford, Wisconsin Chief of Police in 1960 shows Ella Olsen in her buggy guiding her old horse Bessie down the modern streets of Medford.

Following is the newspaper article from a Medford newspaper in 1960.

## **Horse and Buggy Days Never End for Ella Olsen.**

“I just couldn’t stand it if I didn’t have my horse, Bessie, and other pets to take care of and love,” is an often repeated statement by Ella Olsen, her eyes moistening at the thought of being without them.

A young 72 years old, Miss Ella prefers the rustic life to other modern conveniences as well. Along with her spurning the automobile, she finds she can do nicely without electricity on her small 10 acre farm a mile west of the city. Neither does she have running water. Her telephone, she explained, is a necessity in the event of an emergency, and a battery powered radio is the only other concession to modern invention.

The kerosene lamp on the kitchen table provides an island of soft light for Miss Ella to browse through her scrapbooks full of pictures of her horses and other pets raised through the years. She recalls the years, not by decades, but by life spans of former horses with pleasant sounding names like Prince, Lady Dainty, Brilliance Pet, and Gentle Breeze.

Familiarly called Ella “Pete” Olsen by Medford area natives, Miss Olsen said the “Pete” nickname has a practical origin. “There were so many Olsen’s down in the town of Holway where my father lived until 1919, that folks began to identify us by father’s first name,” she explained.

“Bessie and I grew gray together,” said Ella, laughing gaily since age is a relative thing to both of them. The 20 year old mare was brown when Ella acquired her 16 years ago. The gentle platinum gray horse has made countless trips to town. Ella estimates that the trips to town through the years have put more than 30,000 miles on Miss Bessie--- not counting the extra trips visiting friends.

In another article written in about 1911 or 1912, Ella Olsen wrote, “I am a farmer’s daughter and am twenty-four years old. I love farm life and

can do any kind of farm work. I saw in the Agriculturist about girls helping their parents. I am one, and am sorry to say that I am the only girl in our town that does this. I have worked hard all my life for father and shall continue to do so. I work in the hay field, take care of all the farm animals and do the house work, etc. I do not do all the work alone as I have a sister nineteen years old who takes part in it. I have been in poor health for eleven years and was operated on for appendicitis January 19, 1911, and am still working hard for father. We have a lovely home of 120 acres. We raise all kinds of garden food, apples, plums, currants and strawberries.”

Peter Johan Olsen’s parents were Ole Larson born 12 October 1796, and Sophia Amelia Pedersdatter born 11 December 1809. Both were born in Maribo County, Denmark and both are buried there.

In Denmark, patronymic surnames traditionally derive from a person's father's first name, with suffixes like “-sen” for sons or “-datter” for daughters. Examples include Nielsen (son of Niels), Olsen (son of Ole), Hansen (son of Hans), and Petersdatter (daughter of Peter). While the practice of using patronymics has largely faded, many Danish surnames reflect this historical naming system.

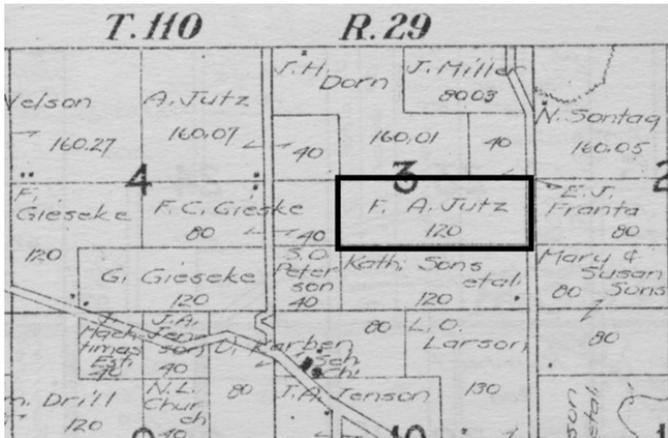
I decided to do a search for more information about Ole Larson and was pleasantly surprised when I found the following photo.



Ole Larson 12 Oct 1796 – 4 Jun 1881.

NOTE: Dave and Bill, this is your great-great-great-grandfather.

**In the last newsletter Issue 128, I stated:**  
 “Maybe someday I will find a photo of the Johann Heck home in Swan Lake, Nicollet County, Minnesota.”



In the first image above, which is a 1913 plat map of Brighton Township, Minnesota, the highlighted land just below the number 3 belongs to F. A. Jutz.



In the second image, this is a 1913 plat map, the highlighted land, which is difficult to read, states “John Heck Estate 120 acres”.

I then went to Google Maps and brought up a modern image of the same land and zoomed in on the farm buildings and house. The building at the lower left is believed to be the home where John Heck lived up to the time of his death in 1885. John Heck was born Johann Heck and he was my great-great-grandfather and the first of our Heck family to come to America in 1853.



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## “What The Heck” Facebook Group Web Page

### How To Join “What the HECK”

If you would like to learn more about our family, join our Heck Family Facebook Group. Log onto Facebook and search GROUPS for “What the HECK.” You can then request to join the Group. All we ask is that you state how you are related to the Heck family. For example: My grandfather was Alvin Heck or I married Jim Heck. Either Cheryl Heck or Bob Heck will approve you for access. There is no charge to be a member of the Heck Family Facebook Group. Included in the “What the Heck” site are many photographs, document images, video clips, and family news.

Here is the web address for our group page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Whattheheckfamilygroup/>  
 Here is the address in smaller letters so you can see that there are no spaces in the web address.  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/Whattheheckfamilygroup/>  
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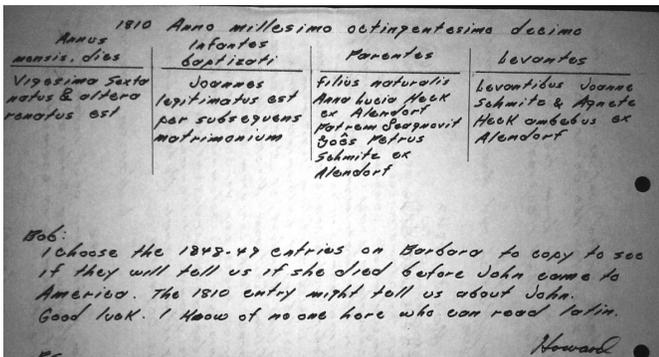
## A Note From Howard Heck...

I'm sure that some of you remember our distant cousin, Howard Walter Heck. Howard and I worked on our Heck family history for many years. He was the author of "The Hecks From Alendorf, Germany" and "The Heck Brothers, Alendorf, Germany To The USA".

Howard lived in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota and died there in 2022.

While cleaning out some past documents I found a note that Howard had sent to me early in our joint research on Johann Heck, our common progenitor.

In genealogy, a common progenitor is the earliest known ancestor that two people have in common. In the case of Howard, his great-great-grandfather was Johann Heck. In my case, Johann Heck was my great-great-grandfather. Howard's great-grandfather was Peter Heck while my great-grandfather was Henry Heck. Peter and Henry were brothers. Howard Walter Heck and Robert John Heck are 3rd cousins. Their common ancestors are Johann Heck and Anna Barbara Schaefer.



The top part of this note is written in Latin. In the bottom part of the note Howard wrote, "Bob: I chose the 1848-49 entries on Barbara to copy to see if they will tell us if she died before John came to America. The 1810 entry might tell us about John. Good Luck. I know of no one here who can read Latin. Howard."

I was able to translate the Latin for Howard way back in those early days but I thought that I would try to translate it now using Gemini in Google. Here is what I got.

### Original Handwritten document:

Annus, mensis, dies	Infantes baptizati	Parentes	Levantes
Vigesimo sexto natus & altera renatus est	Joannes legitimus est per subsequens matrimonium	filius naturalis Annae Luciae Heck ex Alendorf Patrem recognovit Babs Petrus Schmits ex Alendorf	Levantibus Joanne Schmitte & Agnete Heck ambabus ex Alendorf

### Translation to English:

Year, month, day	Infants baptized	Parents	Sponsors
Born on the twenty-sixth and reborn on the [next day]	Joannes is legitimate through subsequent marriage	natural son of Anna Lucia Heck from father acknowledged him Babs Petrus Schmits from Alendorf	Sponsored by Joannes Schmitte & Agnes Heck, both from Alendorf

### Notes:

- "Anno millesimo octingentesimo decimo" literally translates to "In the year one thousand eight hundred and ten."
- "Vigesimo sexto" means "the twenty-sixth."
- "natus & altera renatus est" means "born and reborn on another [day]." In this context, "renatus" likely refers to the day of baptism.

- "Infantes baptizati" means "infants baptized."
- "Joannes legitimus est per subsequens matrimonium" means "Joannes is legitimate through subsequent marriage." This indicates that the parents were not married at the time of his birth but married later, thus legitimizing him.
- "filius naturalis" means "natural son," indicating he was born out of wedlock initially.

Wow! That was really impressive. Gemini used AI or Artificial Intelligence to not only translate Latin to English but it also gave an interpretation of the meaning of the statements.

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**Congratulations to our eldest granddaughter, Lauren Emily Heck, who graduated from The University of Iowa on Thursday, 15 May 2025.**



Lauren was awarded two degrees: a Bachelor of Arts with a major in **English Education** and a Bachelor of Arts with a major in **English and Creative Writing and Publishing**. Lauren accomplished this all within her four years at Iowa. Lauren is the daughter of Judi and Dave Heck.

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**This newsletter is written and published by Robert J. Heck.**

Our Family News Letter is published quarterly and is distributed without charge. My e-mail address is **HECK.BOB@gmail.com**

Please feel free to copy and share this newsletter with your family members. If you have old photos and a story behind them that you would like to see in this newsletter, please contact me.

Contributions to keep Our Family News Letter going are always welcomed and can be sent to: **Robert J Heck, 4910 Steeple Drive, Greendale, WI 53129.**

This family newsletter has been published every three months since 1 June 1993 which makes 32 years as of 1 June 2025. It is mailed to 60 family members and posted on-line to all of our family members.

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**All Issues of Our Family News Letter are On-Line**

Our Family News Letters are now available to you on-line and for free. There are 129 issues of the newsletter covering the period from June 1993 (Issue 1) to June 2025 (Issue 129).

All of the issues are available now at the following web address:

**<http://ourfamilynewsletter.com/>**

Each issue of the newsletter is eight pages in length and is in PDF format so it can be read and downloaded by any computer, tablet or phone. Each issue is filled with the history of our

family. Each issue of the PDF file is searchable. I actually combined all 129 issues into one single file on my computer so that I can search all of the files for keywords and names. The file size is huge and is 1.6 Giga Bytes in size.

The free program that I used to combine the files is called PDF Toolbox. Just enter PDF Toolbox in Google to find the free download.

Here are just two of the functions available in **PDF24 Toolbox**.

There are 42 different functions available in this free program.

I use **Merge PDF** to create a single file of the 129 issues of this newsletter.

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### More Photos from the Photo Album



**Surprise!** Don Heck turned 80 on May 9, 2025.

What started out to be a simple get-together with Steve Heck, Sharon and Don Heck, and Gloria and Bob Heck at a German restaurant in Kenosha, turned out to be a surprise party for Don.

Steve, son of Don and Sharon, was flying in from Rhode Island and he asked if the five of us could meet for dinner at Kegels in Milwaukee. Steve loved German food and we have gone to Kegels with him in the past. Kegels would be really crowded and noisy on their Friday fish fry day and they had a very limited menu of German food on Fridays, so I suggested that we go in-

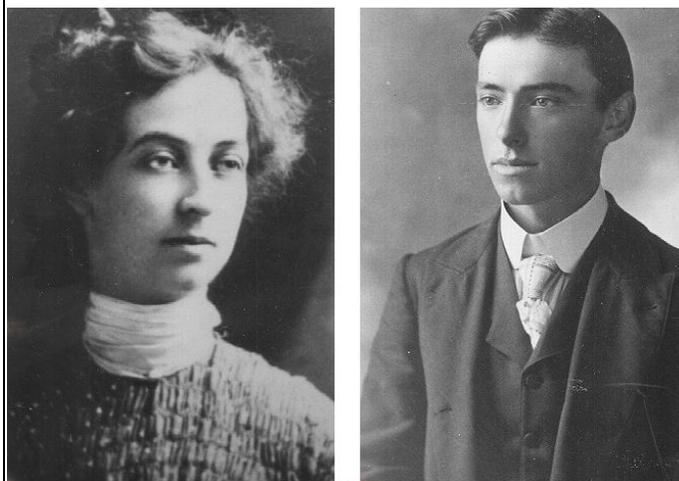
stead to the House of Gerhard in Kenosha. All five of us agreed.

Little did we know, Steve contacted Amy and Adam Tappen in Florida, Nathan and Katie Tappen in Iowa, and Nicholas Tappen in Florida and invited them all to join us in Kenosha. Our simple get together jumped from 5 to 10 people. Don and Sharon and Bob and Gloria had no idea of Steve's plans.

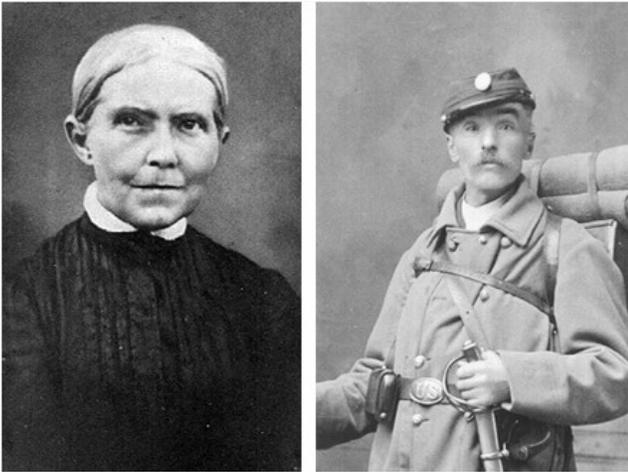
In the photo starting at left and moving clockwise are Steve, Don, Sharon, Nathan, Katie, Amy, Nicholas, Adam, Bob and Gloria.

The entire room joined in on singing Happy Birthday to Don on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## Are you ready for the Heck family Picnic on July 13, 2025?



Margaret Henningfeld and Robert Steven Heck are the **Common Progenitors** for those attending the Heck – Henningfeld family picnic held at the Leisure Center in Racine each year. The original Heck picnic started in Burlington and had Henry Heck and Mary Ann McNulty as the **Common Progenitors**. We don't have a record of the first picnic but I remember the 1948 picnic at Burlington. I suspect that there may have been earlier ones prior to 1920 held at Waterford.



Mary Ann McNulty and Henry Heck

### And now for the 2025 picnic...

We are happy to announce that the Heck Family Picnic is now scheduled for Sunday, 13 JULY 2025 at the Leisure Center in Racine, Wisconsin. The address of the Leisure Center is 101 Bayfield Drive, Racine, WI. Please mark your calendar accordingly. Sherry Heck made the reservations and she will be working on the details for the picnic. She has communicated the plans to our family members and we will post updates on the Heck family website if there are any changes.

A list of what each family is asked to bring for the shared buffet table was put together by Sherry Heck. She used the sign-up list from The 2024 and earlier picnics. If you haven't signed up for an item to bring, please contact Sherry. She would be more than happy to add you to the mailing list and suggest what you might bring to the shared table. Contact Sherry Heck at (262) 639-5370.

A group of golfers usually start golfing at about 8:00am at Ives Grove Golfing Center located at 14101 Washington Avenue, Sturtevant, WI, which is just west of I-94 on Highway 20 (Washington Avenue). We don't have a golf organizer for this casual event but you might want to contact some of your cousins for information. The cost of the picnic is \$10 per individual family, which covers rental of the Leisure Center, silverware, paper plates and napkins.

The picnic generally starts at noon and continues for much of the afternoon. Bring a comfortable chair for sitting under the trees.

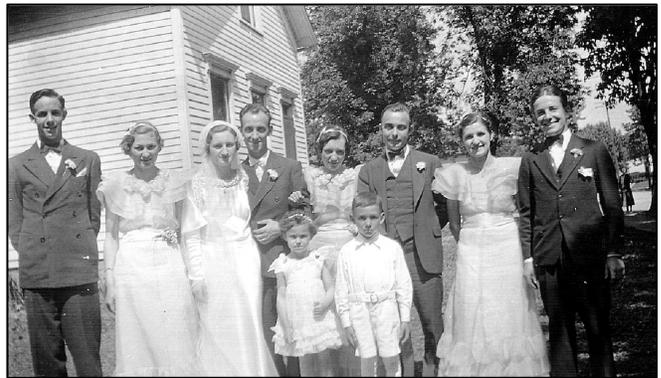
Swimming is available for a small fee per person and can be paid for at the pool. There are changing facilities at the pool. Bring a lock if you wish to lock up your things.

Thank you and please help spread the word.

Bob Heck (414) 421-7143 and Sherry Heck (262) 639-5370.

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### Back to more photos from the photo album...



Wedding party of Mary Ann Mikel and Robert Gerald Heck on 29 June 1935 at Racine, Wisconsin. Witnesses to the marriage were Clarence H. Heck 3<sup>rd</sup> from right, and Mary Hrubos 2<sup>nd</sup> from left. The gentlemen at left and right were Donald Henning born Henningfeld from Milwaukee and Herbert "Hub" Heck from Burlington. The two children are believed to be Marjorie Heck and Jerome Kriva.



The last photo on the previous page is from the wedding pictures of Marv Pfeiffer and Joanne Heck taken on 24 November 1956 at Racine.

From left to right are Margaret Henningfeld Heck, Alvin Heck Sr., Joanne Heck Pfeiffer, Marvin Pfeiffer, Stella Celmerowski Heck, and Stella's mother.



The photo above is of Marvin and Joanne



Pfeiffer.

A close-up of the inscription of Narin Burgess's tombstone at Walloomsac, Rensselaer County, New York. Narin was the younger brother of our Benjamin Burgess.

Benjamin Burgess arrived in Southport (now Kenosha) Wisconsin in 1836. He died two years later from complications from those first Wisconsin winters. Benjamin and his wife Amanda started a saw mill on the Pike River near the town of Somers in Kenosha County, Wisconsin. The site of the saw mill is on the land described as the South West quarter of Section One, Town Two North, of Range Twenty-Two East containing 160 acres. The land was officially transferred to Amanda Burgess by the United States on November 15, 1838 on certificate number 1018. The land was transferred for the United States by President John Tyler. This information is contained in the Abstract of Title number 48533, for the land.



Rudolph Henningfeld, born 6 September 1892 at Yorkville, Racine, Wisconsin, and died 1 August 1963 at Franksville, Racine, Wisconsin. His great-grandfather was Johann Wilhelm Henningfeld, a brother of our Franz Arnold Henningfeld.