

# Our Family News Letter

Issue 131

Greendale, Wisconsin

December 2025

## Shirley Frances Heck 1935-2025



Shirley Frances Heck of Racine, Wisconsin passed away peacefully surrounded with family and prayers on Monday, September 1st. She was born in Racine, Wisconsin on July 14, 1935, the sixth of 10 children of Frances Pier and Clarence Heck. She graduated from St. Catherine's High School and got her bachelor's degree at Dominican College majoring in elementary education. She served as a Dominican nun for seventeen

years. She left the convent to pursue a Doctorate of Education from University of Wisconsin, Madison. She then went on to become a professor at Ohio State University.

Shirley's passion, dedication, and innovative approaches to teaching were recognized in academia and proved successful in the classroom. She also started the Discovery School in Mansfield, Ohio which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary this month. Upon retirement, Shirley returned home to Racine, Wisconsin, where she volunteered endless hours to co-found and develop the John XXXIII educational center. Many of the students enrolled in the center came from challenging backgrounds. Nevertheless, Shirley was determined to see them graduate from high school.

Shirley was also very devoted to her extended family and friends. She cherished spending time with her siblings and many nieces and nephews. She loved hosting family and friend celebrations and there was never a shortage of delicious food and good times. Although Shirley has many achievements in her name, she is perhaps best remembered for her caring heart and giving spirit that touched so many lives.

Surviving are her sisters, Mary K. Hansen and Donna J. Benedict; sisters-in-law, Cecelia Heck, Lorraine Heck, and Mary Heck; numerous nieces, nephews, other relatives and dear friends. She was preceded in death by her parents, and siblings, Richard Heck, Marjorie (Donald) Johnson, Robert Jerome Heck, Lawrence (Nancy) Heck, Dolores Gibson Kunka, Clarence Heck, Eugene (Carol) Heck; brothers-in-law, Jack Gibson, Bernard Kunka, David Hansen, Albert Benedict.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Friday, September 12, 2025, 11 a.m. at Sacred

Heart Catholic Church, 2200 Northwestern Ave., with Rev. Anthony Thomas officiating. Entombment will follow at Holy Cross Cemetery, Hwy 32. Relatives and friends may meet Thursday at the funeral home 5 to 7 p.m. and on Friday at the church 10:30 a.m. until time of Mass at 11 a.m.



The family would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to all the staff at St. Monica's Memory Care Center for the wonderful care she received.

Memorials may be made to John 23rd Educational Center ([john23educationcenter.org](http://john23educationcenter.org)), St. Monica's Senior Living Center ([stmonicasseniorlivingcenter.com](http://stmonicasseniorlivingcenter.com)), or Discovery School, Mansfield, Ohio ([discovery-school.net](http://discovery-school.net)).

#### MARESH-MEREDITH & ACKLAM FUNERAL HOME



Shirley seated with Tiny in Racine. Tiny was the pet of Mary and Robert G Heck.

My parents, Mary and Robert G Heck, usually went out every Saturday evening and my brothers, Gary and Don, and I had several "baby sitters" over the years. Our favorite sitter however was Shirley Frances Heck. She was the only sitter that we had that would let us watch the entire movie playing on The Schlitz Saturday Night

Theater that played on Channel 4 from Milwaukee. We were supposed to be in bed by 9:00pm but Shirley always let us stay up until the movie ended at 10:00pm provided that we would never tell our parents that she let us stay up that late.



Photo of Mary and Robert G Heck holding Shirley Frances Heck in July 1935, a month after their wedding.

On the following page you will see a family photo from the Robert G Heck photo album 2, showing from left to right: Laurence, Richard John, Robert Jerome, Shirley Frances, Delores Mary, and Marjorie Jean Heck in 1936.



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## Using AI (Artificial Intelligence) to solve a mystery in our family history.

For at least 25 years my cousin Cheryl Ann Heck and I have been trying to find a small Village in Germany. We read the name of the Village as Hissingsen or Hiffingsen. We learned from a 1745 hand written marriage record from the Village of Westonnen, that our ancestors Adolphus Duncker married Catharine Juncker. The document was written in Latin.

The document stated that Adolphus was from Hissingsen and Catharine was from Westonnen.

Adolphus Duncker is the 5<sup>th</sup> great grandfather of Robert John Heck. Catharine Juncker is the 5<sup>th</sup> great grandmother of Robert John Heck. That means that they were the 6<sup>th</sup> great grandparents of Cheryl Ann Heck.

We could not find Hissingsen or Hiffingsen anywhere in Germany. None of our Internet searches or any historical maps yielded a Village with those spellings. Our initial conclusion was that a lot of Europe changed since 1745 and that the Village was likely absorbed into a larger community.

Our Genealogy Group, MPAFUG, was working on a presentation on using Artificial Intelligence

for family history research. I thought that this would be a good opportunity to test AI in a real research problem.

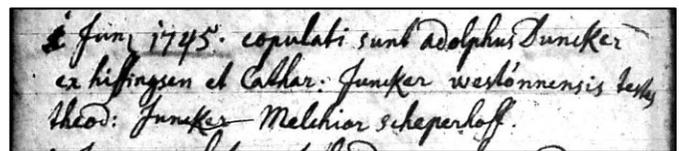
I decided to use an AI system called Google Gemini. Gemini is a free on-line system and you can access it at the following web address: <https://gemini.google.com>

## How Gemini Works

Gemini starts out by asking you to ask Gemini to do something such as create an image, write something, build something, or do deep research.

I asked Gemini if it could translate the text in a photo document? Gemini stated that it could not translate from a JPG photo but suggested that I type out the text from the image and they would be happy to translate it.

Instead I made a copy of the text portion of the document and sent it to Gemini. This is shown below.



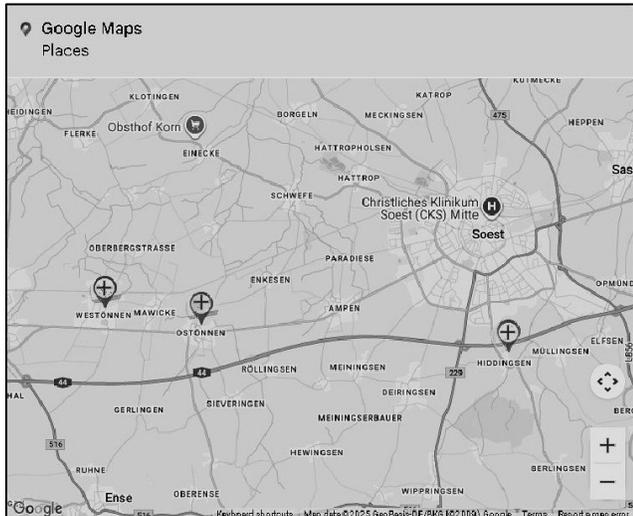
Gemini instantly translated the text as follows: June 1, 1745: were joined in marriage Adolphus Duncker from Hisingsen and Catharina Juncker from Westonnensis. Witnesses: Theodorus Juncker, Melchior Scheperhoff.

Gemini went on to say ex Hisingsen means from Hisingsen. It also stated that Westonnensis means from Westonnen.

I stated that the text was from the Saint Cecilia's Catholic Church records from Westonnen which was located South West of Soest.

Gemini then came back with the following: A possible, but unconfirmed, variant could be Hiddingsen (or an earlier form of it). Hiddingsen is a Village located just south of Soest and is a well-

known area in the district. It is highly probable that Hisingen is the phonetic or script variant of Hiddingsen recorded by the priest for a settlement in that vicinity. The village is so small that there were no churches in it. However there are three Catholic churches, a short distance to the north of Hiddingsen, in Soest and one in Mohnese located to the south of Hiddingsen.



Above is a modern-day map of the area and I added a circle with a + sign in the center to mark the location of Westonnen, Ostonnen and Hiddingsen. Soest is shown with a black circle with a white H in the center.

Gemini then suggested that I should confirm that Adolph Duncker was christened and is documented in one of the original church books (Kirchenbucher) for one of these parishes.



The photo below left is the present view of Saint Cecilia's Catholic Church in Westonnen.



Entering the small Village of Hiddingsen, Germany.



The center of Hiddingsen showing a war memorial on the right and a small sign on the left pointing to Soest located 3 Km or 1.86 miles away.

The next step in our research will be to search the church records from Soest and Mohnese and look for Adolph Duncker's birth, christening and/or confirmation. That would confirm his home area and hopefully give us the names of his parents.

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### A Gemini generated joke:

Why was the genealogist a bad storyteller?

Because he always had to go back three generations to set the scene!

# **“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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**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 32-1/2 years as of 31 December 2025. It is mailed to

60 family members and posted on-line for any of our family members.

**I encourage all of you to share the link to our “What The Heck” Facebook Group Web Page with all of your 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 131 issues of the newsletter covering the period from June 1993 (Issue 1) to December 2025 (Issue 131).

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 encourage all of you to share this link to our family history newsletter with all of your family members.**

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## **Church of the Visitation at Brighton Township, Nicollet County, Minnesota.**



The photo above shows the Catholic church where the Heck and Schaefer families worshiped. This photo was taken about 1939 and was found in the collections of the Nicollet

County Historical Society. The school is at left and the church is at right. Both buildings have been removed and only the cemetery remains.

Following is a listing of the Heck and Schaefer burials.

**St Marys Catholic Church of Visitation,  
Brighton Township, Nicollet County, MN**

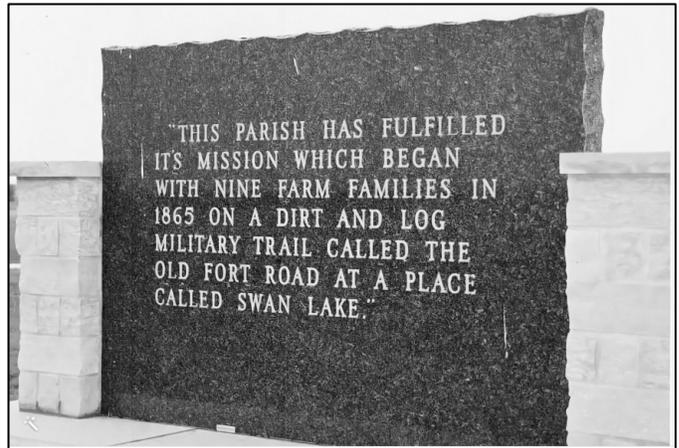
- 32. Schaefer, Marjorie L. 1916-1973
- 33. Schaefer, Henry R. 1913-
- 34. Schaefer, Amelia 1883-1957
- 35. Schaefer, Leo N. 1878-1964
- 62. Schaefer, John W. Jul 16 1910-Oct 28 1910
- 63. Schaefer, Catherine 1871-1954
- 64. Schaefer, John 1869-1945
- 65. Schaefer, J.P. Aug 05 1826-Sep 16 1911**
- 66. Schaefer, Elizabeth Mar 01 1845-Mar 27 1932
- 82. Schaefer, Mary K. Jun 03 1867-Jan 04 1895  
Alter 27 Jahre 7 mo 1 tal (Gatlin Von H. Mueller)
- 86. Schaefer, Mathias Aug 28 1841-Nov 27 1892
- 97. Schaefer, Joseph Mar 04 1890-Nov 06 1891
- 98. Schaefer, Peter Jul 27 1881-Jul 17 1887
- 99. Schaefer, Susanna Nov 01 1884-Jul 20 1887
- 100. Schaefer, Philip Apr 27 1880-Jul 15 1887
- 101. Schaefer, Maria Kath Jan 31 1901-Mar 11 1883
- 102. Schaefer, Maria Cecelia Nov 22 1878-Mar 16 1880
- 155. Heck, Susanna Gatin von J. Heck Gest den Jan 05 1892 in alter von 71 jahre 6 monte 19 tages**
- 156. Heck, Johann geb den 17 Feb 1810-gest den 22 Juni 1885**
- 157. Heck, Elizabeth Aug 31 1864-Apr 17 1886  
wife Joseph Heck
- 158. Heck, Joseph Apr 04 1859-Nov 20 1908

Number **65 Schaefer, J.P.** was John Peter Schaefer and he was the brother of our Anna Barbara Heck nee Schaefer, the first wife of our Johann Heck number 156. Johann's second wife is number 155.

I used Google Gemini an AI (Artificial Intellegence) tool to translate number 155 and 156. Here is the translation:

**Translation of Genealogical Records**

- **155. Heck, Susanna (Gatin von J. Heck)**
  - **Translation:** Heck, Susanna (Wife of J. Heck)
  - **Details:** Died on January 05, 1892, at the age of 71 years, 6 months, and 19 days.
- **156. Heck, Johann**
  - **Translation:** Heck, Johann (John)
  - **Details:** Born on February 17, 1810 – Died on June 22, 1885.



Historical monument showing that the Church of the Visitation was started in 1865. Johann Heck's family was one of the nine farm families. The initial celebrations of Mass took place on a rotational basis in the farm family homes before the wooden church was built.

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**Guess Who???**



The picture on the previous page shows Grace Heck, the youngest daughter of Judi and Dave Heck, on her way to Kindergarten, on her first day of school in September, 2013.

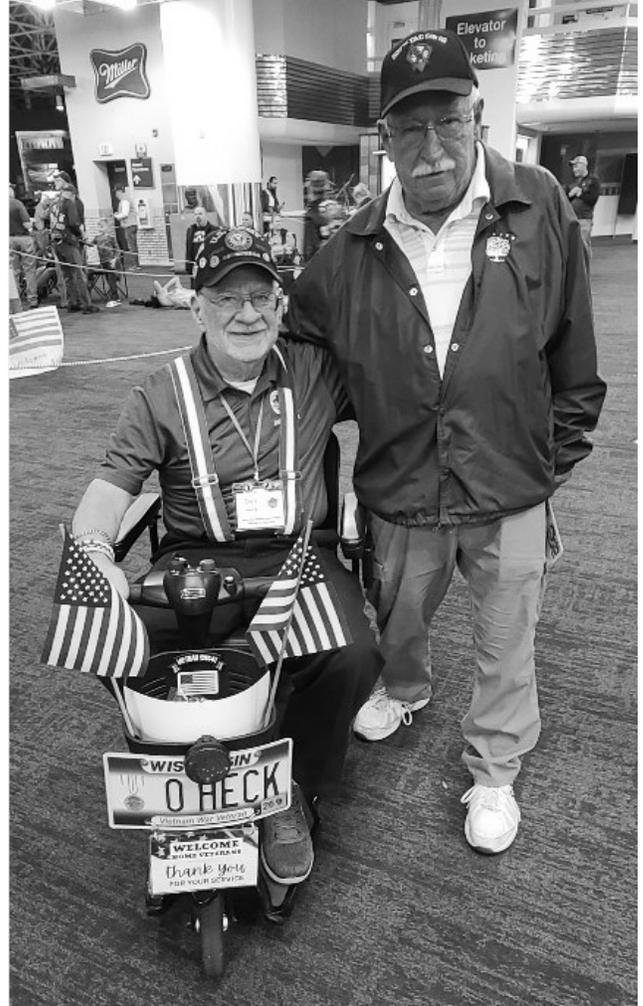


The picture above was taken in September 2025, and shows Grace, on the right, on her first day as a senior at Franklin High School with her best friend, Abby.

## More pictures from the photo album...

The photo at upper right was taken on November 1, 2025, at Mitchell Field in Milwaukee. Shown left to right are brothers, Don and Bob Heck. We were there to greet the returning Honor Flight.

Don served in the U.S. Army and Bob served in the U.S. Air Force. Don served in Viet Nam and Bob served in Germany. Don is there to greet each returning Honor Flight. Bob was there with Gloria to greet a good friend and member of our Steering Committee from our Computer Genealogy group.



Shown at left is a Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) medal worn by Civil War veterans from Union units. My great grandfather, Henry Heck, wore one as a member of the Burlington, Wisconsin GAR veteran's organization. A picture of

him, in uniform, is on display at the Burlington Historical Society museum, located across the street from the Burlington Public Library.

Records	Resources	Galleries	Articles	Publications	Sites
Burlington & Vicinity Marriages	Burlington & Vicinity People				
Burlington Events: 1835 - 2006	Burlington 1842 Census				
Burlington 1846 Census	Burlington 1850 Census Index				
Burlington 1860 Census Index	Burlington 1870 Census Index				
Burlington 1900 Census Index	Burlington Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Burlington Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Bloomfield Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Bloomfield Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Brighton Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Brighton Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Dover Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Dover Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Lyons Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Lyons Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Rochester Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Rochester Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Spring Prairie Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Spring Prairie Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Waterford Township 1905 Census Index - Alphabetical				
Waterford Township 1905 Census Index - Numerical	Civil War Deaths - Burlington & Vicinity: 1861 - 1865				
References and Sources					

The Burlington Historical Society has a great web page with a lot of resources. Shown above is a list of records. The best ones are Burlington & Vicinity Marriages, Burlington Events 1835-2006, and Burlington & Vicinity People. Here is their web address:

<https://burlingtonhistory.org/>

The website is free.



The photo shown at lower left can be found by entering the web site and clicking on Galleries and then selecting Civil War Veterans. You can then scroll through the photos which are in alphabetical order. The photo on the web site is in sepia color rather than the grayscale that I use in this newsletter. The sepia version is really nice to see. You can also print the photo of your ancestor who was born in 1839 at Alendorf, Germany and died in 1920 at Waterford, Wisconsin.

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L-R: Marjorie (nee Heck) and Don Johnson with Jerald Johnson, the first grandchild of Clarence Heck and Frances Pier. Jerald was born on 23 September 1953.



Four generation photo: Sharon and Don Heck are the great grandparents, Amy nee Heck and Adam Tappen are the grandparents, Katelin nee Fritz and Nathan Tappen are the parents and the baby is **Theodore Donald Tappen**. He was born on 26 August 2025 in Iowa.



You can see from the photo that he is being properly trained to be a loyal Packer fan. **Theo** is his nickname.