

Our Family News Letter

Issue 134

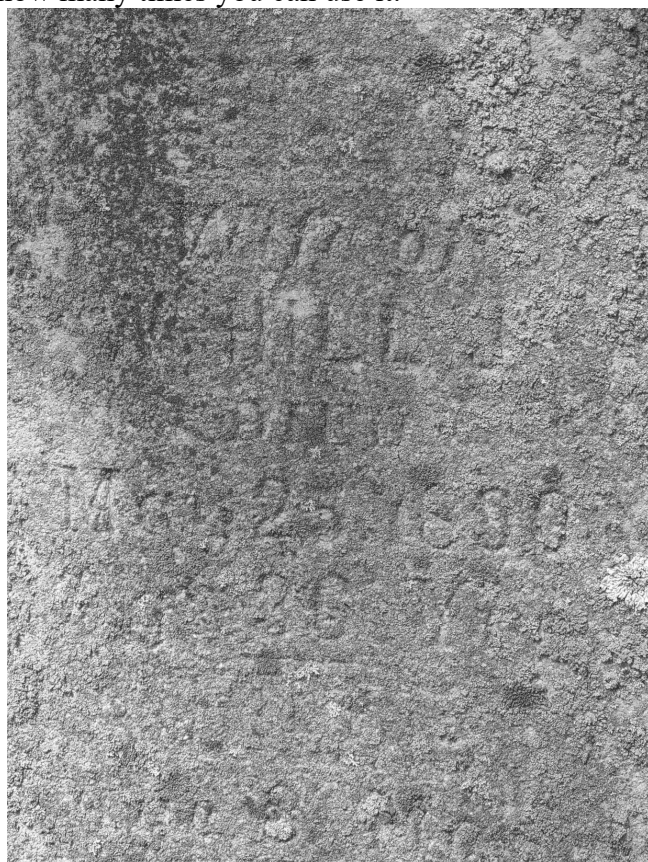
Greendale, Wisconsin

SEP 2026

A Search for early family history using Google's GEMINI

I have written in the past about using AI or Artificial Intelligence to assist in family history research. There have been some significant improvements over the past months for GEMINI to dig deeper into early records. In addition, the most significant improvement is its ability to improve images.

There are several AI sites available such as Google's GEMINI, ChatGPT, and Co-Pilot by Microsoft. GEMINI is completely free while the other two charge a fee to use or are limited in how many times you can use it.



I had decided to test GEMINI and its ability to improve a photo.

The photo at lower left was taken in July of this year at the St. James Cemetery in Kenosha, Wisconsin. It is a close-up of the tombstone for Ellen Hill, nee McNulty, who died in 1890 in Kenosha. I asked GEMINI if it could enhance and read the writing which was almost impossible to read because of the growth of lichen over the past 136 years.

The photo below is from GEMINI and clearly shows the writing on the tombstone. I was so impressed with this new tool that I am planning a presentation of it at an upcoming meeting at our MPAFUG Computer Genealogy Group.



I decided to test GEMINI further by asking if it could find more information on Peter McNulty and what ship he was on when he came to America in 1834.

Here is the information that I provided:

“Peter McNulty departed WarrenPoint, Northern Ireland on 10 April 1834 at the age of 27. He arrived at St. John, New Brunswick, Canada and then in Boston, on 8 June 1834.

Peter McNulty may have been living in Eastern New York State near Bennington, Vermont after leaving Boston, since that is where the Burgess family lived. The Burgess family then migrated to Hannibal, New York. In December, 1835, the father and step mother of Patience Burgess sold land at Hannibal, Oswego County, New York. The Burgess family then migrated to Southport, now Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin in the spring of 1836.

Note, Peter was Catholic and Patience was Methodist Episcopal. The marriage was probably not popular with the Burgess family. The McNulty family remained Catholic.”

Here is the response from GEMINI:

The name of the vessel that Peter McNulty traveled on was the Cupid.

Voyage Details

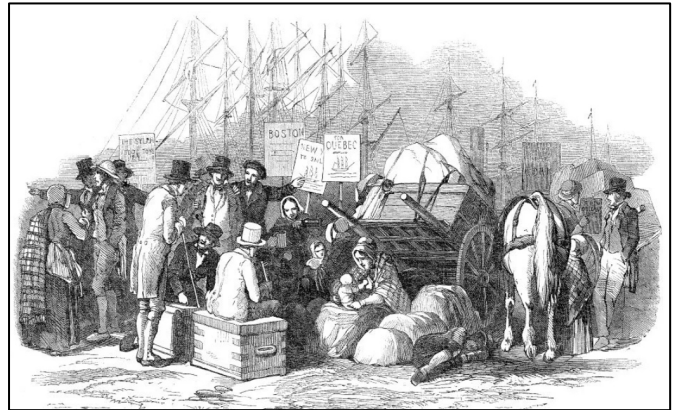
Vessel Type & Size: A 240-ton brigantine or merchant ship.

Ship Master (Captain): Samuel Stephenson.

Port of Departure Customs Verification: The official passenger manifest was processed and certified by the port authorities at the neighboring custom district of Newry/Warrenpoint on 7 April 1834.

The Transatlantic Journey: Peter McNulty boarded the ship just days later, officially setting sail on 10 April 1834. After roughly seven weeks navigating the North Atlantic, the *Cupid* dropped anchor at St. John, New Brunswick, Canada.

The Secondary Journey to Boston



During the 1820s and 1830s, thousands of Irish immigrants bound for the United States intentionally chose Canadian ports as their initial transatlantic destination. This practice, known as the "Nova Scotia alternative" or "St. John route," was highly popular for a couple of practical reasons:

Fewer Restrictions: British passenger laws regulating ships traveling *within* the British Empire (such as from Ireland to Canada) were less strict than American immigration laws, making ticket prices to Canada much more affordable.

The Coastal Shuttle: Once immigrants safely landed in St. John, they would work briefly or immediately buy inexpensive passage on local coastal wood-boats or packet ships heading south down the Atlantic coast to New England ports like Boston.

Peter McNulty successfully caught one of these coastal shuttles right after his arrival in New Brunswick, completing his entire journey when he landed in Boston on 8 June 1834. Because of this multi-stage journey, his presence on the *Cupid* is captured in the historic New Brunswick customs archives and immortalized in local maritime records like Peter Murphy's regional immigration compilation, *Together in Exile*.

Because Peter was a 27-year-old Catholic immigrant from Northern Ireland and Patience was a 16-year-old girl from a deeply established Methodist Episcopal family, their intersection in New York and swift departure for the Wisconsin frontier carries rich historical context.

The historical details of their lives and where to pinpoint their footprints can be analyzed across their journey:

1. The Intersecting Migration Paths in New York

Your family history tracking correctly places Peter in eastern New York near Bennington, Vermont, before he moved westward.

Peter's Route: After landing in Boston in June 1834, Peter likely moved west along early turnpikes or the emerging railroad routes into Rensselaer or Washington County, New York (which border Bennington, VT). This region had a growing workforce of Irish laborers.

The Burgess Family Route: The Burgess family was living in Hannibal, Oswego County, New York (located in Central/Western NY, right on the edge of the Finger Lakes region near Lake Ontario).

The Meeting Point: Peter likely transitioned from Eastern NY to Western/Central NY by working along the Erie Canal corridor or early regional lumbering routes. Hannibal sits very close to the canal network, which was the primary employment hub for newly arrived Irishmen.

2. The Faith Divide and Secret Marriage (ca. 1835–1836)

A marriage between an Irish Catholic man and a teenage girl from a Methodist Episcopal household in 1835 would have faced massive social pushback. It explains why finding a formal church record for their marriage is so difficult:

The Methodist Position: In the 1830s, the Methodist Episcopal Church was experiencing the height of the "Second Great Awakening" in New York (an area known as the "Burned-over District" due to religious fervor). Intermarriage with a Catholic would have been heavily discouraged by the Burgess family.

The Catholic Position: There were very few formal Catholic parishes established in Oswego County in 1835. Traveling priests often administered sacraments in private homes or local halls.

The Search Strategy: Because civil marriage registration did not exist in New York State in 1835, you will not find a government marriage certificate. If they married prior to leaving, they may have eloped to a neighboring town or been married by a local Justice of the Peace rather than a clergyman to avoid family interference.

3. The 1836 Migration to Southport (Kenosha), Wisconsin

The timeline of their move matches the absolute birth of Kenosha County. The very first white settlers arrived in Southport in 1835, meaning the Burgess family and Peter were part of the initial vanguard wave in 1836.

The Pike River Settlement: Historical research shows that Peter McNulty and the Burgess family didn't just settle in town; they built a log cabin and a sawmill on the Pike River, just north of what is now the University of Wisconsin-Parkside campus.

Early Print Footprint: Peter's presence in the early settlement is verified by local print archives. For example, a December 1842 legal notice in the *Southport Telegraph newspaper archives* lists a stray livestock notice explicitly placed by Peter McNulty regarding property in Pleasant Prairie.

“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/>

I encourage all of you to share the link to our “What The Heck” Facebook Group Web Page with all of your family members.

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.**

Many thanks to our many contributors who help keep this newsletter going. Here are the contributors since July 2025:

Don & Sharon Heck, Jim & Karen Heck, Lee Ann Heck, Ellen Steiner, Alvin and Carolyn Heck, Rebecca J Wright, Cheryl Ann Heck. God bless all of you for your generosity and support.

This family newsletter has been published every three months since 1 June 1993. This issue is number 134. That means that I have not missed an issue for the past 34+ years. It is mailed to 60 family members and posted on-line for any and all of our family members.

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 134 issues of the newsletter covering the period from June 1993 (Issue 1) to September 2026 (Issue 134).

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

<http://ourfamilynewsletter.com/>

Each issue is filled with the history of our family. Each issue of the PDF file is searchable. You are free to copy and print any issue of the newsletter for you and your family to use. The newsletters are copyright protected so you may not use them for any financial gain.

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

Some magic from Google Gemini.



I was working on a presentation for our MPAFUG Computer Genealogy group on the subject of AI Gemini and the capability of recovering information from photos.

The upper photo at lower left is of the Johann Heck home in Wisconsin where he lived in 1863 after fleeing the Sioux Indian uprising near Swan Lake, Minnesota.

The photo needed to be enhanced and improved significantly. I asked Gemini to enhance the photo and to remove the trees but leave the tree on the left and the one on the right so I could see the house.

The results are shown in the photo at lower left. Gemini also asked if I would like to see it in color, which I did. It was great but is shown here in grayscale.

If you look at the house, you can see that there were additions made since 1863. The two story structure at the far right is the original house.

Everything to the left are additions.

Many years ago I had found this house while doing some research. I stopped by and talked to the current owners. They were interested in my research and invited me in to look at the original house and the hand dug basement lined with field rocks uncovered while plowing the fields. It was a great experience.

Repairing a severely damaged family photo.

On the following page are two photos from Gloria's family. The first photo shows the Thomas Sullivan family which is badly faded, is missing parts of the photo at upper and lower left and at lower right. There are at least five cracks in the photo. The photo was taken in 1898.

Thomas Sullivan Family: Back Row: Left to Right: Mary Ann, Martin, Isabella, Sarah; Front Row: Left to Right: John Allen, **Ida Josephine**, Father Thomas and baby Marshall, Lydia, Frank

and Mother Ann Margaret Nielsdatter, and Nellie Ann.

Gloria's grandmother is Ida Josephine, the young girl standing in front of the piano.



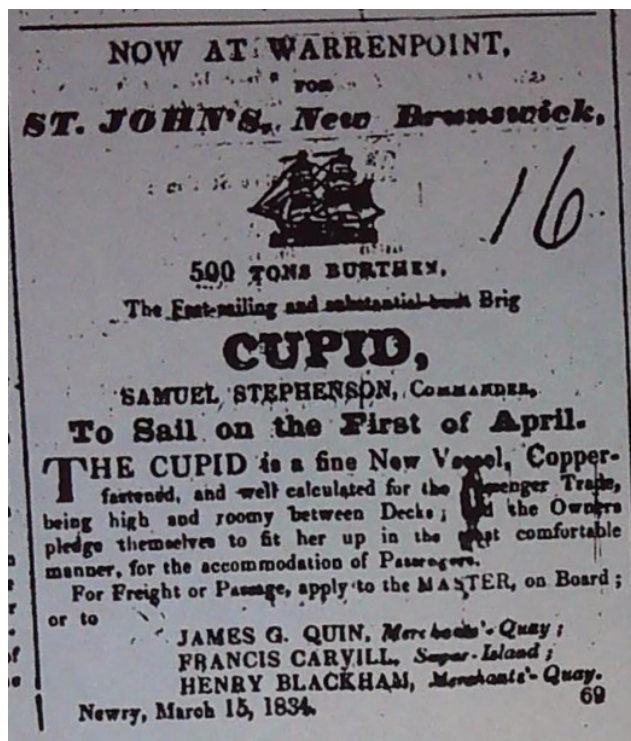
I asked Google Gemini to enhance the faded photo and to fix the cracks and replace the three missing parts. The results are shown in the second photo below. Gemini then asked if I would like to have a colorized version of it. It was Great. The grayscale version is shown here.



You may be wondering how long it took Gemini to complete this task. It only took three seconds

From the Newspapers...

Following are photos found in various newspapers.



This is a newspaper clipping from an Irish newspaper published in March, 1834 in Newry and WarrenPoint, in northern Ireland. This was the voyage that brought our Peter McNulty from WarrenPoint to St. John, New Brunswick, Canada. This was a rare find since not many newspapers from that period survived or were never copied.

From the Racine Journal Times 30 October 1944.

After not having seen her sister for 31 years, Mrs. John Mikel, 1212 Hagerer street, is entertaining Mrs. Mary Holosh and son of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, at her home.

Mrs. Holosh is visiting two other sisters, Mrs. Henry Panek and Mrs. John Kriva for the first time in 21 years.

NOTE: There is a name spelling error on the previous page. Mrs. Henty Panek should be **Mrs. Henry Vanek**.

On this page you will find some photos of a very special event. Our granddaughter, Lauren Emily Heck, and Collin Dean Kollasch announced their engagement this past weekend on August 9, 2026. Lauren and Collin graduated from the University of Iowa. Lauren is a high school teacher in Iowa and Collin will graduate from the University of Nebraska in May 2027 with a Masters Degree. The couple plan on being married in Wisconsin in June 2027.



The photo above shows Collin proposing to Lauren at Pewaukee Lake in Wisconsin.



The photo at left is my favorite photo of Collin and Lauren. They both look so happy and so much in love.

Meet your distant relative...

The youngest daughter of Benjamin Burgess and Rebecca Chase was Julia Ann Burgess, born in New York State on 15 November 1827. Her siblings include Sylvia, Benjamin, Nehemiah, Alonzo, Joel, and Patience Burgess.

Julia Ann Burgess and her siblings migrated to Southport, Kenosha County, Wisconsin, in 1836 along with their father Benjamin and his second wife, Amanda Foster. They were the earliest settlers of Southport, Wisconsin.

Julia Ann Burgess married Nicholas LaPoidevin on 15 July 1847 in Wisconsin. In 1856 the family migrated to Nebraska.

OBITUARY.

The following obituary of the late Mrs. Le Poidevin was handed The Express for publication:

Julia Ann Burgess was born in New York state November 15, 1827 and passed on in this city September 16, 1911.

When a child she moved to Kenosha, Wis. July 14, 1847 she was married to Nicholas LePoidevin. In 1866 they moved to Brownville, Neb. and later moved to Beatrice where they have since resided. Her husband passed on May 18, 1891.

Her grandchildren remember of her telling of thrilling experiences in the early days among the Indians, when everything had to be freighted from the Missouri river. She often talked of the improvements and changes that have taken place in and around Beatrice the last forty years.

She took up the study of Christian Science twenty-five years ago and has led a beautiful contented and happy life.

She loved her Bible and loved her God which was the enjoyment of her life.

To know her was an inspiration to lead us to live the better life. She was loved by all who knew her as a mother, friend and neighbor.

She dropped to sleep as peacefully and quietly as the life she led without a murmur or thought of suffering.

She leaves two daughters, Mrs. Elizabeth Buswell of Beatrice and Mrs. Louisa Scribner of Strathcona, Alberta, Canada, who were at her bedside.

The services were held at the Buswell home. They were simple but impressive. Mr. Horace Hebbard of Lincoln read from the Scriptures and the text book "Science and Health with key to the Scriptures," by Mary Baker Eddy, followed by the Lord's prayer repeated by the friends.

Mrs. S. B. Moore sang "Shepherd Show Me How to Go" and "Love" words written by Mary Baker Eddy. Interment was in Beatrice cemetery.

The pall bearers were relatives: Mr. Jude Wallace, Wm. Wallace, Charles Wallace, Earl Wallace, Arthur Elfeldt, Gerald Burgess.

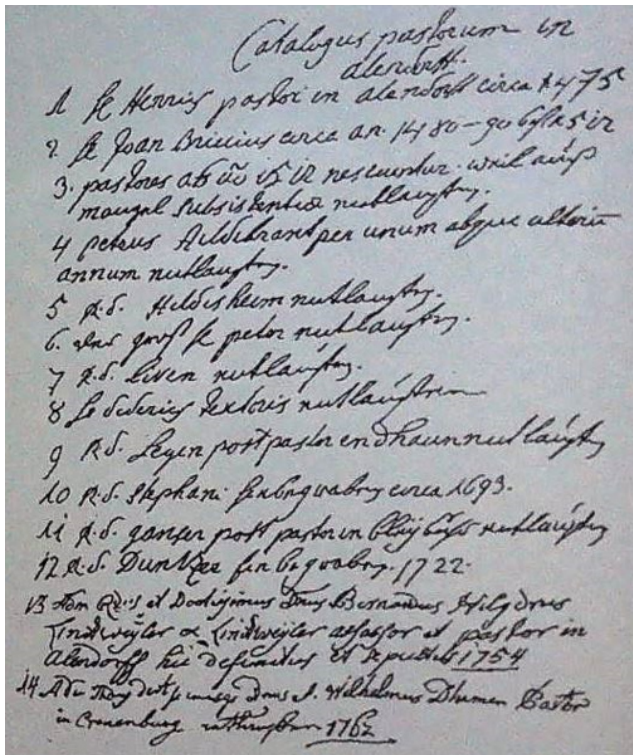
Sept 21, 1911

Julia Ann Burgess is the 2nd great grand aunt of Robert John Heck. Their common ancestors are Benjamin Burgess and Rebecca Chase.

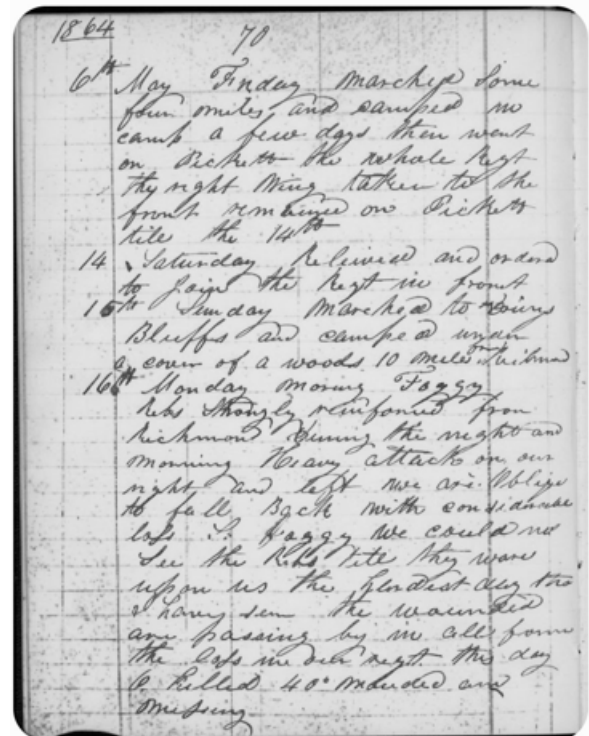


Seated L-R: Marjorie nee Heck and Don Johnson, Clarence and Frances Heck, and Clarence holding their first grandchild, Jerald Johnson in 1953.

Clarence died in Cleveland, Ohio, on 25 February 1955 during heart surgery. Frances passed away on 19 January 2002 at Racine, Wisconsin. Frances, born Pier, was known to us as Aunt Fanny.



Above is a list of the 14 Catholic Pastors who served at Alendorf, Germany from 1475 to 1762. The original church was built in 1475 and is still in use today. Mostly the church is used for funerals and for a few marriages.



This is a page from a diary written by a Union soldier at the battle of Drury's Bluff where Henry Heck, my great grandfather, was wounded on 16 May 1864. The transcription is exactly as written.

1864, 6th May Friday Marched some fourteen miles and camped in camp a few days. Then went on Picketts—the whole Regt. The right wing taken to the front, remained on Picketts till the 14th.

14 Saturday. Relieved and ordered to join the Regt in front.

15th Sunday Marched to Drury's Bluffs and camped under cover of a woods, 10 miles from Richmond.

16th Monday morning foggy. Rebs strongly reinforced from Richmond during the night and morning. Heavy attacks on our right and left. We are obliged to fall back with considerable loss. So foggy we could not see the Rebs till they were upon us. The hardest day that I have seen. The wounded are passing by in all forms. **The loss in our Regt. this day 9 killed, 40 wounded and missing.**