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KNOW YOUR ROOTS

A Family That Doesn't Know Its Past Doesn't Understand Itself

VOLUME V ISSUE 4 KUHNER/WIGGENHORN OCTOBER 2000

THE KUHNER FAMILY PHOTO ALBUM



THE KUHNER FAMILY BEFORE 1871

*In the back row the three Kuhnert Brothers Carl Jr., Louis, August
In the front row Wilhelmina, Wilhelma, mother, Carl Kuhnert, father, Josephine*

MENA'S MEMORABILIA NEW INFORMATION ABOUT HER FAMILY

Just recently received from Germany is information about the parents of Mena, her mother, Josephina Brockhaus, and her father, Wilhelm Wiggernhorn. The information just received is about the parents of Josephina and her 11 brothers and sisters. The record is in Latin and comes directly from the church in Stadtlon. Her father Benelbertus Henricus Aloysius Bechkauhs was born in 1755 and her mother Maria Anna Gertrudiss Kemper in 1766. They were married in 1787. The long list of

children names seven sons and five daughters including Josephina. Five of them died before age 10, one was illegitimate and two, including Josephine immigrated to America. Her father was 52 when the last child was born and her mother was 41. She had had these 12 children in 21 years. Neither of her parents lived to be very elderly. Her father died at age 77 and her mother at age 59. Maybe this was considered old at this time. See more about Josephina in the Kuhnert newsletter of July 1996.

Also received recently from a Wiggernhorn who sent this memorabilia through the Internet. He is not directly connected to this family and was not willing to disclose how he came about these items. See other stories in the previous newsletters about the hotel and cigar business of this Wiggernhorn family.

Brother of Mena, Constanze



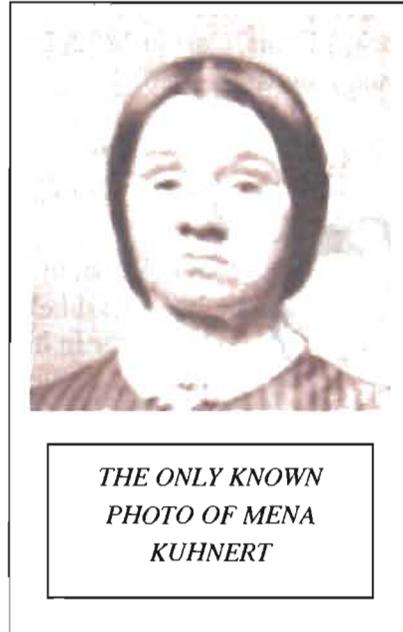
Hotel in Watertown, Wisconsin



**Wiggernhorn
Cigar
Memorabilia**



CARL AND MENA



Father and mother of the five children on the cover. (This same photo was introduced to you in the 1998 KNOW YOUR ROOTS Kuhnert issue.) Carl who later used the name Charles has been featured in several other issues. Obviously Carl (Charles) liked to have his picture taken for there are many in existence. That is the reason for all the stories about him including the mystery of his birthplace in Germany.

The date on the cover was able to be determined because Mena or Wilhelma (Wilhelmina) died in 1871 and Carl remarried in 1872. Her death was just a short mention in the Waukegan Gazette. It read as follows "DIED in Waukegan, Illinois, on Friday morning, July 14th, 1871, after an illness of seven months Mrs. MENA KUHNERT, aged 49 years and 20 days." Charles was buried February 14, 1895 at age 72. They are both buried in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery in Waukegan, Illinois. Only the record remains as there are no headstones or footstones to be seen.

Some have speculated on the expression of Mena wondering why it was so sad. In examining the full photo that is on the cover, one could surmise that the picture was taken when she was ill and the expression could have been due to pain.

Carl was a very handsome man with an aristocratic face. There is no doubt that he did come from a very genteel background. Mena, also, was from a family of substance and culture. Her mother and father were both well educated in Germany. In past stories you learned that her father, Wilhelm Wiggerhorn, who brought eight children to Watertown, Wisconsin in 1848, bought a hotel which became well known in the area. However, Mena and a sister Rosalia left the family to marry and moved to Woodstock, Illinois. This was the beginning of the Kuhnert family history in the United States.

THE THREE KUHNERT BROTHERS

The three Kuhnert brothers, Carl, Louis, and August were all born in Woodstock, Illinois, Carl in 1852, Louis in 1854 and August in 1856.

CARL JR.



When the family lived in Waukegan in 1874, Carl helped his father in his father's vinegar factory. Although he had the same residence as his father, he was

listed separately as a vinegar maker. In 1879 he married Margaret Henry in Chicago at the Cathedral of Notre Dame. The marriage certificate also states that Carl too lived in Chicago at that time.

By this time his mother had died and his father had remarried. There is a gap in his residence and occupation after his marriage. His father moved to Johnsburg, Illinois but there is no indication that Carl Jr. followed the family.

His wife died in 1924 and is buried in the Kuhnert plot in Waukegan.

When his sister Josie moved to the Town House in McHenry, Illinois, Carl moved with her. At the time of his death at age 91 in McHenry he was known to be McHenry's oldest resident. This seems to be his only claim to fame.

When he died in 1942 in McHenry, he was buried in Waukegan on the same plot with his father's family and with his wife.

The pictures that exist always show Carl smiling. He was the shortest of the three brothers and although the oldest, he outlived his two brothers.

Any records of his life from the vinegar factory in 1874 in Waukegan, to his marriage in Cook County in 1879, and his death in 1942 are not in existence.

He lived a long time as a widower, from 1924 to 1942. While he is not a mystery man, it would be nice to know what he did with his life from the time he worked with his father in the vinegar factory to the time he and his sister Josie lived in the Town House in McHenry. He left no children to tell his story.



LOUIS



Louis seems to have been the most successful of the three Kuhnert brothers. He began his career as a wallpaper

salesman in Chicago and when he died was the part owner of a very prestigious wallpaper company, Remien and Kuhnert. He also belonged to an elite club. An invitation of this club which showed him as one of the arrangers was printed in the Kuhnert 1999 issue.

He married Lena Lassman but their marriage date or place is not known today.

There was an unfortunate incident in the lives of Louis and Lena. Their only son, Louis Jr., committed suicide in 1917 leaving behind his wife, Leota, and an eight year old child, Virjean. This child is still living today. The son was in business with his father.

The death certificate reads suicide by shocking while temporary [sic] insane. There was an inquest. He was only 33 years old. No other reason is listed.

Louis and Lena had another child Carrie. There is no information on Carrie at this time.

Louis died three years after the death of his son. His death is listed as lobar pneumonia. He was 66. His probate records reveal that he was quite wealthy. His death must have been unexpected because at first the records said he died without a will but later his wife found a will and his estate was probated.

Louis not only owned property in Chicago but he owned a substantial number of shares in the company of Remien and Kuhnert. Surprisingly he also owned some property in Jasper County, Missouri.

Because there were so many outstanding debts, many shares of the Company had to be sold along with the property on Harrison Ave in Chicago and also the shares in the Missouri property.

The money owed was substantial. Interestingly, his sister Josie was owed over \$6000. He owed a Wiggernhorn nephew over \$2000. There is a claim for \$400 by Mrs. B, Kuhnert. Among all the other debts one of the largest by far was to his brother August for almost \$8000. The widow's award

was only \$7000. From a very large estate, there was a deficiency of \$3000.

This is the story of a financier who wasn't expecting to die.



AUGUST



August is the last of the brothers. All that was known about him until just recently was that he died in San Diego before his wife Imogene

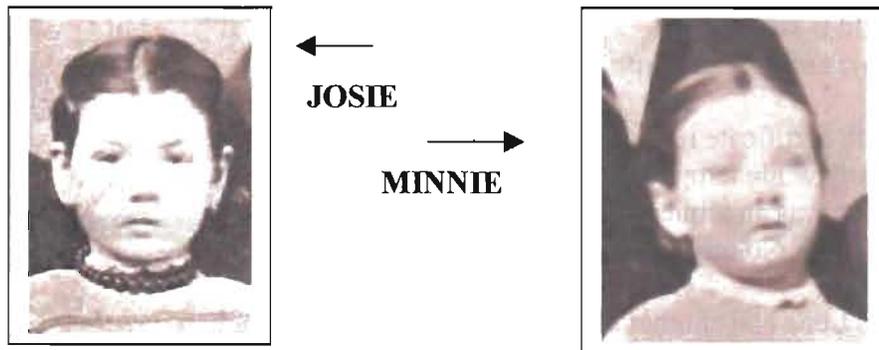
who when she died left her possessions to the last remaining sibling Minnie Schueneman.

August died May 5, 1930 in San Diego of carcinoma of the stomach. He was 74. His death certificate lists his profession as Retired Capitalist. From his brother Louis' estate he received quite a sum. It is conjecture that he went to California at that time.

He owned real estate because when his wife Imogene died June 17, 1933 Minnie inherited the property that was left. There were no children from this marriage.



MINNIE AND JOSIE WERE INSEPARABLE



They were not twins but they might as well have been. They were only a few months apart in age. Josie was the elder, born 16 April 1858, and Minnie was born 17 August 1859, both in Woodstock, Illinois. Josie was named Josephine after her maternal grandmother and Minnie was named Wilhelmina after her mother.

When their father went back to Germany because of the illness of his mother, they were both enrolled in a convent school in Waukegan, remaining there until their education was completed.

Later their father moved the family to Johnsbury, Illinois where for many years he operated a general store, which included the post office. For four years Josie taught in St. John's parochial school before the arrival of the nuns.

The picture of the two of them is from an earlier Kuhnert issue.

They were married together in a dual ceremony on 22 May 1882. From the wedding pictures, their dresses were not alike but they were certainly similar. Their pictures show them both in the same poses. Both of their spouses were local young men of McHenry County

Josie married Joe Heimer and Minnie, John Schueneman. There is an unconfirmed story in the family that Joe Heimer was really in love with Minnie but the custom was that the oldest girl be married first and that was Josie.

Both couples went to live in Chicago for a short time. They both



named their first child after their father, Carl Kuhnert, who by this time had changed his name to Charles. However, Minnie changed the name of her son just a little. He

was John Charles, the John after his father. But always he was called Charles in the family.

Josie only had one child born in 1885 but unfortunately Josie's son Charles was the victim of a terrible accident. As an adult he had taken a job as the mail carrier on the railroad. The railroad at that time had a special car dedicated to carrying the mail from town to town and sorting it as the train rolled along. It was a post office on wheels. To protect the mail, he was permitted to carry a gun. On one of the trips, in 1934, the gun discharged accidentally and Charles was killed. Josie never had any more children. Charles was 49.

Minnie, on the other hand, had three sons and one daughter, Charles, Henry, Leo, and Elvera, all born in Chicago. However, Minnie also lost a son in his 40s. Leo died one year later in 1935 at age 48.

After a few years, Josie returned to McHenry, where she and her husband Joe Heimer purchased the McHenry House, known today as the Town House. He operated it with much success until his health forced him to sell it and retire. He died in 1908. During the time Josie was in McHenry she was very active in the town. She was instrumental in organizing the Lady Foresters, a church organization, and was elected the first chief ranger in 1906.

In later years Josie and her brother Carl became the first tenants of the newly remodeled and renamed Town House where she lived until she died in 1948.



When John retired, he and Minnie also returned to McHenry and purchased a house on Riverside Drive. He died in 1928. Minnie kept the house and was joined by her daughter and Elvera's family until she died in 1950.



While the sisters were both living in McHenry they were inseparable. They played cards together. Josie was always at Minnie's home. Aunt Jo always had candy to give to her grand-nieces so it was great fun to visit her.

Both sisters were avid readers but their reading tastes differed. Minnie liked novels and Aunt Jo liked detective magazines, which had very lurid stories. Besides the candy it was great fun to steal a glance at this forbidden reading.

Yes, they disagreed but never to the degree of being angry with each other. Even when they had their pictures taken in a group, they stood together as you can see.



Minnie always shared her only daughter, Elvera, with her sister. To repeat, Aunt Jo was automatically included in every family event. On Sunday, Aunt Jo was picked up, taken to mass with Minnie and then had Sunday dinner at Minnie's house with her family.

Yes, they played cards together. They did everything together. It was a foregone conclusion that Aunt Jo and Grandma were a team.

This bond obviously began when Minnie was born and it strengthened throughout the years by many shared events.

First they were only sixteen months apart in age. Notice in the picture on the cover, their mother dressed them both alike. But there is one anomaly. Can you pick it out? It illustrates that their personalities were not the same. Josie has on a necklace. Minnie does not. Josie was much more flamboyant than Minnie.

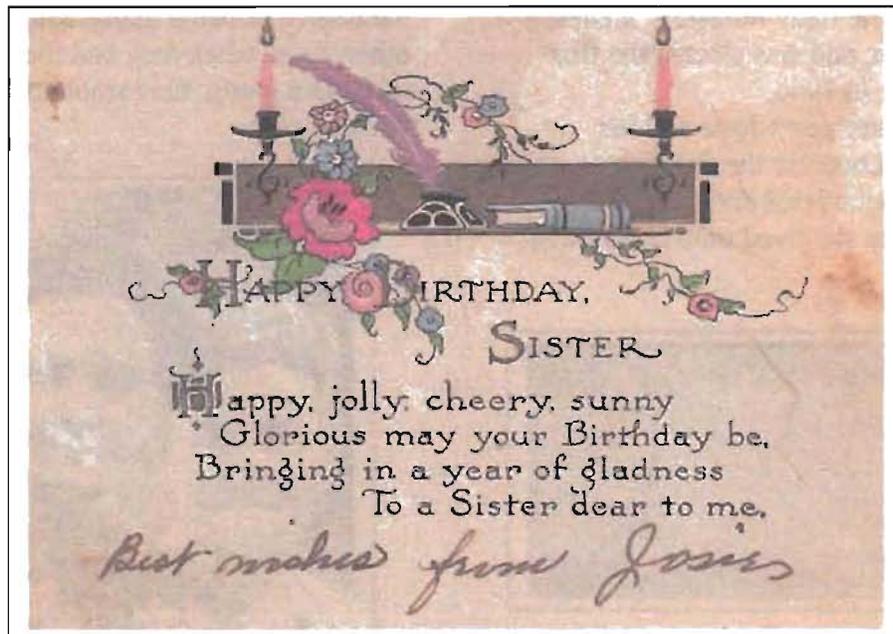
As mentioned, while they both liked to read, Josie preferred the more exciting detective stories, which were

lurid and descriptive. Minnie liked romance novels, which were more passive.

They married on the same day. They moved in and out of Chicago and McHenry during their lives. They both lost their husbands after their children were grown. They both lost a son in his 40s.

There were probably many other similarities but those mentioned are the ones that are remembered. Below is a card Minnie saved which illustrates how they felt about each other. It was found in Elvera's effects after she died. It is the only memento of Josie that is in the family.

Josie died the 11th of May 1948, almost age 90. Minnie died the 6th of November 1950, age almost 92. Each is buried in the same cemetery. They weren't separated very long.



THE SECOND KUHNERT FAMILY

Carl Kuhnert had a second family after Wilhelmina (Mena) died in 1871. He married Bertha in 1872 and then had several children. His first child named Bertha Otilia was



born April 1875. She is the one in the group picture. Following was Helena born in 1876 but who obviously did not live much longer than 1880 when she was baptized. Then there was Adelia Emilie. Neither of these two girls lived to maturity. The last child of this union was Rudolph who was born 15 August 1882 also pictured here.

Josie and Minnie were quite proud of Otilia. She is the only one they talked about. It seems that Otilia was the organist in St. John the Baptist church before the nuns came. Otilia died very young in 1903.

Rudolph was but a baby when Minnie and Josie got married in 1882 yet the descendants of the first family knew nothing about him. All these children were buried in Waukegan with their father and their stepmother Mena who never knew them.

After the group picture in 1908, Bertha and

Rudolph must have moved away from the existing family.

Minnie only spoke with derision about her stepmother Bertha. She said Bertha didn't like her and was mean to her but remember that Minnie was the baby of the first family. She did talk about Otilia but never about her stepbrother Rudolph or the other children who must have died while Josie and Minnie were still at home.

In researching the family and finding the burial plot of Charles, the father, it was a shock to learn of the other graves that were there. The question remains. What happened to them? How long did they live? Where did they go? Are they buried some place else? The tintype below was always a favorite of mine. When I asked Minnie who it was, I was told it was Otilia. That is why I knew she existed and why I was not surprised to find her buried in Waukegan. This story will not end until I find out more about Bertha and Rudolph. After all he was a half brother. Why did no one ever speak of him?



BERTHA IN 1908



RUDOLPH IN 1908



THE 1908 KUHNERT FAMILY REUNION



BACK ROW L TO R LOUIS KUHNERT-LENA-AUGUST KUHNERT-IMOGENE-
MARGARET-CHARLES HEIMER-CARL JR KUHNERT.-LOUIS JR.-LEOTA
CENTER ROW JOE HEIMER-JOSEPHINE-BERTHA KUHNERT-MINNIE-JOHN
SCHUENEMAN
FRONT ROW SCHUENEMANNS-EL VERA -HENRY-HELEN-LEO-LIL-CHARLIE

*BACK ROW
L TO R*

RUDOLPH
KUHNERT

LOUIS JR
KUHNERT

*HENRY
SCHUENEMAN*

CHARLES
HEIMER

CHARLES
SCHUENEMAN



*MIDDLE ROW
R TO L*

JOE HEIMER

CHARLES JR.
KUHNERT

AUGUST
KUHNERT

LOUIS
KUHNERT

JOHN
SCHUENEMAN

LEO SCHUENEMAN

IDENTIFYING EVERYONE IN THE MYSTERY PHOTOS

The group pictures included had been a mystery for many years. Only a few in the groups had been identified.

For instance, there was no mistaking sisters Josie Heimer and Minnie Schueneman. The man next to Josie on the end jogged a memory. That was her husband Joe Heimer. Also, it was obvious that Minnie was seated next to her husband John Schueneman.

But who was that older woman in the center?

Some in the front row were fairly easy. Elvera Schueneman was recognizable. So were her brothers, Henry, Leo, and Charles. Who were the other young women?

With magnifying glass in hand, one could see the dimples in the young woman between Henry and Leo. Could that be Helen, Leo's wife who did have dimples? When did they get married? Could the picture be dated from their marriage date? The other young woman between Leo and Charles, could that be the wife of Charles, Lil? Both Leo and Charles got married the same year, 1910. Henry didn't marry until much later. The front row then was easy.

Now we have married couples together in the middle row and married couples together in the front row which seemed more than a coincidence. Still there is no clue as to who the older woman was or the exact date of the photo.

The real mystery was in the back rows. The only one recognizable was the short man who was Josie's and Minnie's brother Carl. Next to him must be his wife. Now we have three Kuhnert family members with their wives and descendants.

If the second row and middle row contained husbands and wives and girl friends, next to one another, why wouldn't the back row also represent husbands and wives?

With that in mind, and knowing that there were two more Kuhnert brothers, the light began to dawn. The back row must be the older Kuhnert brothers, Louis and August with Carl.

Eureka! Those in the back row must also be husbands and wives standing next to each other! From the picture on the front, again with the trusting magnifying glass, Louis was identified with his wife, August with his wife, and Carl with his wife.

So now everyone is identified in the picture including females except the young man and young woman on the right and the tall young man in the back.

Since all the others were next to their spouses, the young man could only be Louis Kuhnert Jr. with his wife and the other, Charles Heimer who probably was not married yet.

So that left only one person not identified, the older woman in the center. The light got brighter. If they were all Kuhnerts, that had to be Bertha, the notorious stepmother. And so there was only one conclusion. This picture was a Kuhnert Reunion.

Just a minute. Who is that extra young man in the all male picture?

There is only one male figure left in the family. Bertha's son Rudolph of course! Compare his picture with his mother in the earlier story and you will see the resemblance.

The approximate date of the photo has to be before 1908 because Joe Heimer died in 1908. The mystery is solved and everyone was identified.

MARY'S MESSAGES



What fun it was to discover that I could place every single face in the family pictures that have been a source of speculation for years. I couldn't have done it without the help of Frank Suerth in Chicago who helped me acquire the probate records and tombstones of Louis Kuhnert. Nor could I have done it without the patience of my daughter Suzanne who helped me find August Kuhnert in San Diego. Ask her sometime to tell you the story of our search in the cemetery. It is hilarious.

The quest for identification of the group pictures began when I noticed that Mitzi, my sister, had the picture of the original Kuhnert family, which appears on the cover. (It is the same picture that appeared in a previous Kuhnert newsletter.) Mitzi was so sure that the cross-looking mother was the stepmother who Minnie had said was so mean to her! I had to make sure.

Through subsequent records and comparing other photos which Elvera, my mother, had given me, I concluded this mother was Wilhelma or Wilhelmina. I didn't know her nickname was Mena until Janet Larkin Smith helped me find her death notice in the Waukegan gazette. How wonderful it is when family members contribute to unraveling mysteries!

Elvera long ago had identified the tintype of Otilia with the doll. Because Bertha was the mother of Otilia and I knew the marriage date of Carl to Bertha Zeese, I had a picture of Bertha

with Otilia; the picture of Mena fell into place. For sure I knew that in the original family picture the mother was Mena not Bertha. Too bad, Mitzi.

The group pictures were a real puzzle. Who were these people I didn't recognize, when was it taken and for what occasion? To date the picture I called Joan who had a picture of Elvera that was dated 1906. Elvera was still in a short dress. She also has on a short dress in the group picture.

Both Jane and Joan helped me find the death of Joe Heimer in 1908 and I recognized him in the picture.

I knew Leo got married in 1910 and I recognized Helen, his wife to be, from her dimples. Since brothers Leo and Charles were married the same year the other woman had to be Lil, Charles' wife to be.

Comparing all the other pictures everyone else fell into place. It was like unraveling a mystery. It sure taught me a lesson. Date and identify all photos all the time.

Almost everyone missed the mystery photo in the last issue except the subject herself. Yes, it was Suzanne. How about this one?

MYSTERY PHOTO

