



KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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JOHANN HEINRICH'S BROTHER BERNHARD

OUR LAST ANCESTOR UNCLE OF THIS SERIES

Bernhard Schuenemann is an ancestor uncle about whom nothing much has been said, yet he was very important in lots of ways in the family. From the beginning I knew that he was the brother who arrived in Chicago with Johann Heinrich, Maria Catherine, and his mother. When I first researched the land that our ancestor grandfather held in McHenry County, I also found a deed for land for Bernhard with his wife's name as Maria Catherine, but I knew that he never farmed, and the name of Maria Catherine also appeared on the deed. Fortunately I was able to clear that up.

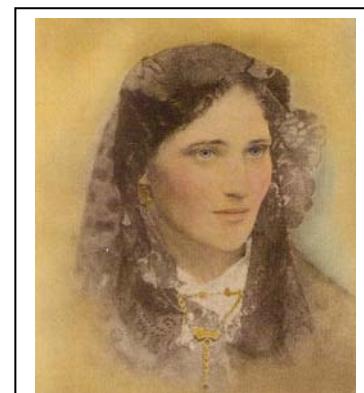


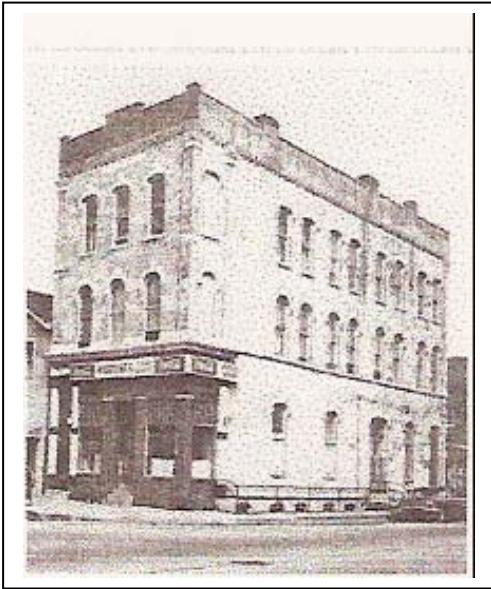
Bernhard was born the 17th of September 1826, although in the Schueneman book you will find the date as the 20th which is undoubtedly his christening date. So he arrived at age 22, unmarried in 1848. It didn't take him long to find a wife because he married Maria Catherine in 1854, and that's why the names of the wives on the deeds were the same. His Maria Catherine was born about 1835 whereas Johann's Maria Catherine was born in 1821.

Obviously Bernhard decided that farming was not for him and he stayed in Chicago. He sold his property and took up residence in

Chicago, but I only found one census about him. This is a retouched photo of his Maria Catherine. All in all they had 11 children, all born in Chicago but not all of them survived. The mother of 11 children outlived her husband. She died in 1906 and he died in 1893.

What is most interesting about Bernhard is that he was to become one of the most influential men of St. Boniface Parish. The picture of Bernhard above is from the Annals of St. Boniface which was printed in 1926 and includes Bernhard with "Men Who Should be Remembered for Their Parish Activity."





Bernhard built a beautiful brick building on Cornell St. in Chicago. It evidently became a haven for others in the family for in the 1880 census I found our grandfather and his brother Albert as boarders with Bernhard and his family. At that time Bernhard's occupation was listed as a grocer so he must have done very well to have supported all the children he and Maria Catherine had.

Incidentally, on this same census our grandfather was listed as a carpenter and Albert, his brother, as a laborer. In 1886, the City Directory of Chicago says that Bernhard had a tavern as well as a grocery in his building.

There was a fire in the tavern around 1893 and it was so intense it burned the roof on the St. Boniface Church. That's how close the

buildings were to each other. I was told by the family that when this fire happened many of the family records were lost.

Bernhard ran the tavern until his death in 1893 and St. Boniface is no longer a working parish, but according to my source Frank Suerth of Chicago, they are working on some type of condo development and planning to keep the outside walls of the church. Bernhard's 122-year-old building still stands and Frank tells me that it has been partitioned into three condominium units, the former tavern is now owned by a company, and even the address has been changed as it is now 1400 W. Chestnut St. He sent me this picture and estimates that the building would be valued at about a million dollars today and property values are still rising in the area.

Bernhard's family is all scattered. To the knowledge of my newest informant, Bill Melton, there is not one of Bernhard's descendants in Chicago.



Isn't it amazing when one considers what our forbears have done after they arrived in this country, specifically Bernhard? Johann Heinrich, with his mother Anna, his wife Maria Catherine, and his brother Bernhard came to Chicago when there were only 20,000 people. Anna was a widow and stayed with Johann (John) until her death. I can only find that Anna's husband was Bernard but I do not have his death in Germany. She left behind a daughter in Germany who probably married and had her own life.

So Bernhard at age 22 began by working probably as a laborer, buying land, then selling the land, and constructing a building which still stands today with his name on it.

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