

Mary Durland, Author/Researcher

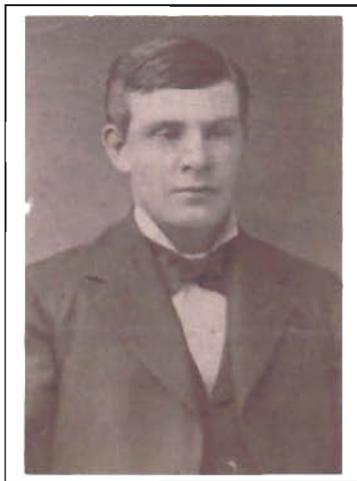


KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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

VOLUME VI ISSUE 4 -KUHNER/T/WIGGENHORN- OCTOBER 2001

CARL KUHNERT



"MENA" WIGGENHORN KUHNERT



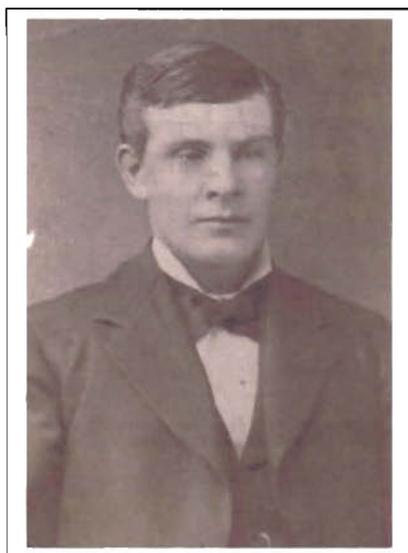
THESE EARLY PICTURES OF CARL AND MENA WERE PROBABLY THE WAY THEY BOTH LOOKED AT THE TIME OF THEIR MARRIAGE

THE PICTURE OF CARL IS KNOWN AS A "CARTE-DE-VISITE ", A 2.5 X 4 INCH PHOTO MOUNTED ON THE SAME SIZE CARDBOARD VERY POPULAR BETWEEN 1859 AND 1890. CARL IS WEARING THE PREVAILING SHIRT AND TIE STYLES OF THAT PERIOD.

THE PICTURE OF MENA IS AN AMBROTYPE, WHICH IS DETERIORATING RAPIDLY. AN AMBROTYPE IS A GLASS NEGATIVE WITH A BLACK BACKGROUND THAT MAKES THE IMAGE APPEAR POSITIVE. IT WAS INVENTED ABOUT 1854. TINTYPES AND CARD MOUNTED PAPER PRINTS REPLACED IT.

NOTICE THAT NEITHER OF THEM IS SMILING. MEMA LOOKS A LITTLE CROSS BUT IT IS BECAUSE SHE HAD TO HOLD THE POSE A LONG TIME WITHOUT MOVING. A SMILE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE LOOKED FORCED. THESE ARE INDEED TREASURES TO HAVE.

TRACKING CARL (CHARLES) KUHNERT.



This is the earliest picture I believe to be of Carl Kuhnert, my great grandfather. He is identified on the back of the photo in German. Fortunately for us, Carl liked to have his picture taken so I have several subsequent ones.

For many years I have been trying to find where he was born in Germany and who his parents were. The paper trail since he arrived has been comparatively easy because all the property he purchased and sold in Lake and McHenry counties has been well documented.

But finding his birthplace and parents in Germany has been impossible. It is as though his life before he arrived in the U. S. never existed. Family legend has it that he either deserted from the military in Germany which was compulsory or that he left because he wasn't willing to serve. So far I haven't been able to confirm which is correct. My mother did have some coins from that time but they disappeared.

All of the census accounts listed only Germany as his origin, nothing else.

The first official date in the U. S. I had was his arrival in McHenry County August 10, 1848. This fact is documented in the "Old Settlers Association" in the history of McHenry County. My mother gave this to me many years ago. So far this is the earliest date I have had as I could not find his permission to leave Germany or his passage in any ship's records.

In chronological order of my search, the next official record that I found was his marriage to Wilhelmina Wiggernhorn in 1850 in Watertown, Wisconsin. There is a record of that marriage on June 10th, in Watertown, Wisconsin officiated by an Irish priest, Fr. Healy. I could never understand why an Irish priest married them. This was a puzzler until my most recent trip to Watertown.

The newly married couple traveled to Woodstock, McHenry County shortly after their marriage with Mena's sister, Rosalia, who married Rudolph Diesel at the same time. Since Carl was already documented as having arrived in McHenry County in 1848, he must have been planning to return after his marriage because now, using the name Charles, he bought many pieces of property in Woodstock. (See another issue for the story of Woodstock.)

This begs several questions. He must have brought money with him when he arrived from Germany. He was never a farmer as so many were. Did his family in Germany underwrite his trip? How did he meet Wilhelmina Wiggernhorn? Was it on the boat trip from Germany? Why did he go to McHenry County first? Most of the Germans in that area spoke Low German whereas Carl spoke High German.

There was a dialectal difference in the language. We may never know the answers to these questions.

The next record I was able to uncover was in the Salt Lake City Mormon Church Records. He was naturalized on November 26, 1854 in McHenry County. Surprise, surprise! This record of his naturalization was under my nose all the time! It was in an old ledger in the McHenry County Circuit Court records. To become naturalized, one must have resided in this country five years, so he must have thought about it immediately when he arrived

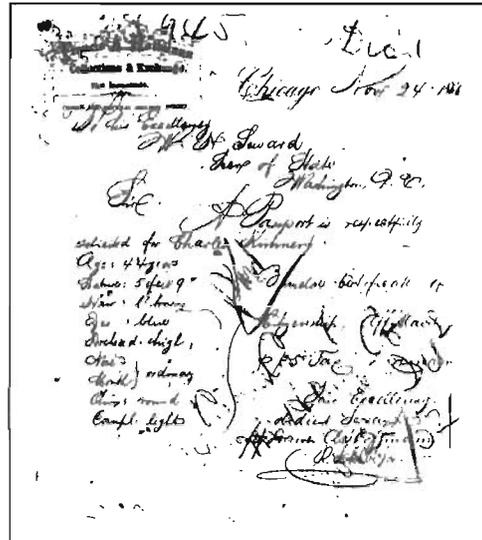
As of just this year, I know he came from the Grand Duchy of Brunswick because as a subject, he had to renounce his allegiance to that Duke. I still didn't know his exact birth date.

However, continuing with the movements of Carl, now Charles, the first deed of property that I found in McHenry County was 1855. One deed listed his address as Greenwood. His five children were all born in Woodstock, according to my grandmother Minnie who was the youngest of the five. (See past Kuhnert stories for location of property.)

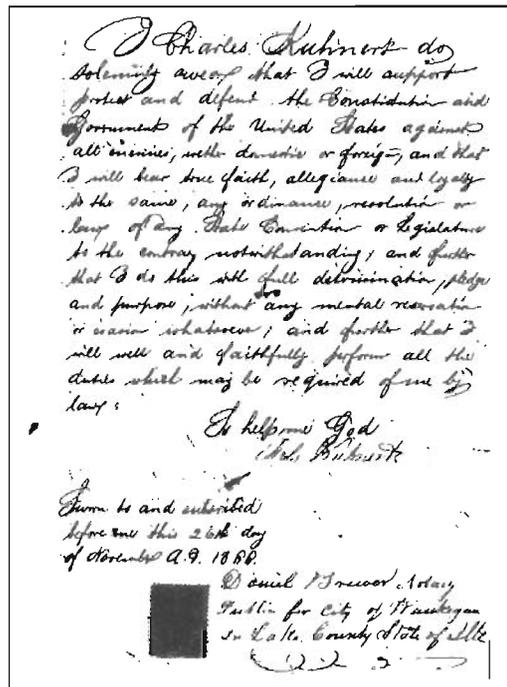
However, for whatever reason, he sold his property in Woodstock and moved his family to Waukegan where he bought more property and was listed in the Waukegan directory of 1874 as having a vinegar factory. (1996 Kuhnert issue) He and his first-born Carl Jr, ran the vinegar factory.

Continuing to look for some record of his parents, I found a document, which I am sure was his application for a passport. Other than the pictures that I have, this is the first description of his physical characteristics. The date on the paper is

November 24, 1866. It gives his age as 44 years.



As you can see, he was not a tall man, 5 feet 9 inches. His hair was light brown and his eyes were blue. He had a high forehead and an ordinary nose and mouth. His chin was round and his complexion light. This application was sent to W. H. Seward who was then Secretary of State, Washington, D.C. How wonderful that we have a physical description of a forefather!



The date on the oath is two days after the application for the passport. Best of all I had a copy of his signature so any future documents with a signature would be authenticated. This is exactly why I knew I had the correct Charles Kuhnert on his naturalization paper. They were identical.

Both the request for a Passport and the oath are through the courts in Waukegan, Illinois. At this time in 1866 Carl had sold his property in Woodstock and began buying property in Lake County. This is why I have been searching to no avail in Lake County.

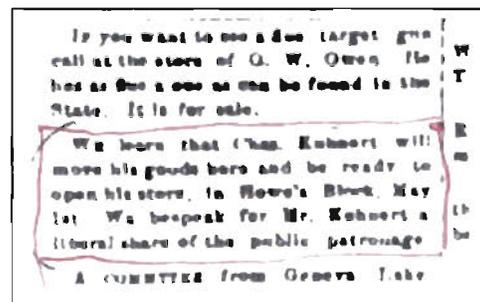
Mena, his wife, died July 14, 1871 after an illness of 7 months. According to his daughter Minnie, it was then that he went back to Germany because his mother was very ill. At that time, he put both Josephine and Minnie in the Immaculate Conception Convent where they finished their education. I have not found a record of that voyage because he traveled as a citizen of the U.S.

At this point, I still did not know where his destination was in Germany nor where his mother lived. It seemed that I was never to learn more about his birth in Germany.

Just a few months later on May 25, 1872 he married Bertha Zeese in Waukegan. Again Carl moved. He took his family back to McHenry County but to Johnsburg, a very small German village where he bought property and opened a general store, which also was the post office. Minnie and Josephine were married at St. John the Baptist church there in 1882.

He had several children with Bertha, only two which survived, Bertha Ottilia who died when she was 18 and Rudolph who was living when his father died.

According to cemetery records, Carl (Charles) died February 14, 1895. He was buried in the family plot in St. Mary's Cemetery in Waukegan. If there is a headstone, it is now buried because it obviously was not a large one and it is overcome with brush and grass. The fact that he was buried in Waukegan led me on many wild goose chases in Waukegan until while going through the Plaindealer records in the McHenry library, the sharp eyes of Joan Larkin found this record in the McHenry Plaindealer of March 15, 1883.



It reads: *'we learn that Chas. Kuhnert will move his goods here and be ready to open his store in Howe's Block, May 1st. We bespeak for Mr. Kuhnert a liberal share of the public patronage.'* So a part of the mystery was cleared up. He had stayed in Johnsburg even after the marriage of his daughters Josephine and Minnie in 1882. Perhaps if we could find Howe's Block we would find more information. Since the paper was the McHenry Plaindealer, it was safe to assume that it was in McHenry.

It would take us (Joan Larkin was still helping me) through many years of the paper before we found the next reference to his moving from Johnsburg to McHenry.

Then we found the one below dated February 13, 1895.



“Chas. Kuhnert, who has kept a general store in Johnsburgh for many years has sold out his entire business in that place, including his store building, to Mr. Lay, formerly of the firm of Lay & Adams and has rented the Henry Colby Brick Block, in this village, where he will immediately open up a general store. Mr. Kuhnert will be welcomed as an honorable acquisition to the ranks of our business men.”

From 1883 to 1895 our ancestor had been planning this move. Whether the Henry Colby Brick Block was the same place as the original notice saying he was moving to Howe’s Block would take more searching the deed. We have yet to find the Henry Colby Brick Block in McHenry.

But ironically after twelve years of preparation this move would not take place. On the day after the above notice appeared in the paper, Charles Kuhnert died. He would never open his new store in McHenry. His obituary was in the following week’s Plaindealer, dated February 20, 1895.

It was a long obituary running almost a full column in the paper. Here are some excerpts. *“Charles Kuhnert, an old and highly respected German citizen [ed. he had been naturalized.] died*

suddenly at his residence in this village... Mr. Kuhnert had but just moved to this village... and was preparing to open a general store in the Henry Colby block. On Thursday he was on our streets as usual, apparently in perfect health, and several times remarked that he had not passed a pleasanter day for years. In the evening he was at his son-in-law’s Jos. Heimer’s at the McHenry House leaving there about 8 o’clock, going direct to his home... He soon after complained to his wife of a severe pain in the region of his heart. She assisted him to bed and immediately went for the doctor, ...

Chas. Kuhnert was born in Blandenber, [Ed. I think this is Blankenberg,] Germany, August 10, 1822... He was appointed Postmaster at Johnsburgh during the administration of President Hayes which office he held for several years... and held the office at the time of his death. He was a man honored and respected by all who knew him and his sudden demise will bring sorrow to the hearts of many warm friends.

His remains were taken to Waukegan Sunday.”

This obituary was like manna from heaven for me. It cleared up so many questions but still left many unanswered. However, I now know his exact birth date, the place where he was born, and why I had so much trouble not finding him in Waukegan. He was in my back yard all the time. The search has already begun for his parents.

How nice to discover he was a successful businessman but how sad to learn he died just before the fruition of his efforts.

WILHELM WIGGENHORN

What man had such a strong belief in himself and convictions that he would take his wife and his 8 children across the sea to a little town in the middle of a new country? What wife had so much faith in her husband that she would agree to all the hardships that would surely confront them?

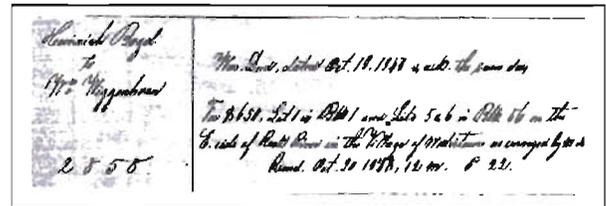
Wilhelm Wiggenghorn was that man and Josephina that woman. He was 51 and Josephina 50. Their children ranged in ages from 26 to age 9. The three eldest were girls, the oldest son was age 20.

In 1848 he left Schoeppingham, Westphalia, Germany where he was a tradesman and a postmaster and traveled by sea, lake and rail to the little town of Watertown, Wisconsin on the Rock River. It is a beautiful town, even today.

How he had known about this remote area at that time is a mystery. (The history of Schoeppingham, the town he left behind was in the Kuhnert 1997 issue.)

The first story of the Wiggenghorns was in the 1996 Kuhnert issue. None of that information has been written about Wilhelm himself. The 1996 Kuhnert issue focused more on Josephine. This story tells you what a brave and strong man Wilhelm, now William, must have been to have transported his entire family to the U.S.

He arrived in Watertown with his family in the month of October. His history tells us that he spent several weeks on a farm before he bought the Buena Vista House and the opposite lot from Henry Boegel. A translation of a German history of Watertown, reads that he paid \$1650 for the hotel and the lot. A deed dated October 18, 1848 records the lot cost \$650.00.



The Buena Vista House was not complete at the time but he soon moved his family into the hotel and it became quite famous as a German gathering place. The food that was served was known to be the best in the area. The building is still standing today although it has gone through many transformations. It even became a church before the German church was built.

In 1850 weddings were being performed in a wooden building on the premises of the hotel. The German church St. Henrys wasn't built until 1853. Charles Wallman in his book, "Built on Irish Faith" writing about St. Bernard's church made this very revealing statement.

For years the marriages of William's daughters, Wilhelma (Mena) and Rosalia have been in question. Even Mena's groom was registered as *Coonheart* by Fr. Healy who married her. Fr. Healy at that time was the Irish priest for St. Bernard's parish and since the German church was not completed it did not have a priest. The only explanation is that he performed the ceremony in the make shift building at the Buena Vista House and he spelled the name phonetically. St. Bernard's, the Irish church, has no record of Mena's wedding in its records. There is no doubt that Mena and Rosalia, daughters of William Wiggenghorn were married in

the Buena Vista House in the make shift German church of St. Henry 's.



The completed Buena Vista House at the time of William Wiggnhorn.

William Wiggenhorn prospered in Watertown. His sons eventually became very prominent. He encouraged them to begin making cigars which they started in the hotel of their father. It became so famous that they moved into a large building and even exported their famous cigars to other states.

The cigar business was an example of a family working together. One son was in charge of the books, did the payroll and home sales. Another was the general overseer in the manufacturing department and was in charge of all employee matters. Grandsons were in charge of sorting and packing the cigars. They had a reputation for using the best materials and employing the most skillful workers.

Another son became a famous watchmaker. He had learned the trade in Germany and after a time, moved to another small town, Hustisford, Wis.

At one time, at a silver wedding of Constancee Wiggenhorn, it was written that the Wiggenhorns "comprise a goodly portion of the best families in the town and are composed of various generations. Not one of them scores a bad record. They were highly valued for their integrity." In 1987 it was reported that there were 75 descendants of the

Wiggenhorns in Watertown. Today in the year 2001 there are none.

William continued with his proprietorship of the Buena Vista House (?). On the 4th of September 1871 he and Josephine celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary.

A Golden Wedding —The rare and beautiful incident of a Golden Wedding took place in this city on Monday the 4th of September, 1871. The parties were Mr. William and Mrs. Josephine Wiggenhorn, and the last ceremony was celebrated at St. Henri's Church, in the presence of seven surviving children and thirty-nine grand children.

Because their daughter Mena had died at such a young age, unfortunately very little is known about this illustrious family. Carl Kuhnert remarried when Minnie and Josephine were very young. People did not travel and family contacts were not strong. Nevertheless, the Wiggenhorn family is one to be proud of for the lives they inspired.

William Wiggenhorn died at age 80 in 1876.

Death of Mr. William Wiggenhorn.—It is our painful duty to announce this week the death of Mr. WILLIAM WIGGENHORN, which sad occurrence took place in this city on last Tuesday, the 12th inst., in the 80th year of his age. The deceased was a constant resident of this place since 1848. When he first came here, he purchased the Buena Vista House, which he conducted during a period of fifteen years. Advanced age compelled him at length to sell the property, since which time he was not actively engaged in any business, but lived a life of ease and contentment. A wife and three sons, Messrs. CONSTANCE, EUGENE and AUGUST WIGGENHORN, survive him. His funeral takes place to-day (Thursday), the 14th inst.

JOSEPHINE KUHNERT'S HUSBAND JOSEPH HEIMER

As reported in the 2000 Kuhnert issue, Josephine was Minnie's very dear sister. They were only sixteen months apart in age, Josie being the elder.

The story of Josie and the Heimer connection husband started with her marriage.

Minnie and Josephine Kuhnert were married in a double ceremony, in 1882, at St. John's Church in Johnsburg. From their wedding pictures, it looks like their dresses were almost alike. But with one noticeable difference, Minnie is wearing a long necklace and Josephine is not.

Minnie's husband-to-be was John Schueneman and Josie's was Joseph Heimer. John was from Chicago, having McHenry County roots, and Joseph was born February 7, 1858 in Johnsburg.

At age 20 he went to Chicago to work for a packing company. After a short time, he went into the hardware business for himself.



Joe Heimer at the time of his wedding.

After the wedding both couples settled in Chicago and started families.

Minnie's first child was born in 1883 but Josephine's first and only child was not born until 1885. Minnie and John had three more children, all born in Chicago but Josephine and Joe did not have any more.

In 1892 the families separated. Joe Heimer must have decided to move back to McHenry because he bought the prevailing McHenry House, a hotel in the town. Between the two of them, they made it into one of the most popular hotels in the area.

There are many stories written in the Plaindealer, the weekly McHenry newspaper, of the parties given by the popular family.

The Heimers continued to prosper as the fame of the hotel spread in the area. It was during this time that Joe bought a sizable amount of stock in the very successful company of Remien Kuhnert owned by Josephine's brother Louis Kuhnert. This was a flourishing wallpaper company in Chicago at that time.

But their happiness was short lived.

After a few years, he retired because of illness and the very popular hostelry was sold. This was the beginning of a long siege of unfortunate happenings for Josephine, for Joe died July 7, 1908 at only age 50.

The McHenry Plaindealer wrote, *"he was an honest, upright and courteous man... Socially he was beyond equal... served our village in the capacity of alderman for a number of years... the funeral being one of the largest ever held here."*

Josephine's son who lived with his parents had been employed by the United States Postal Service since 1904. His service was on a mail train between Chicago and Minneapolis on the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul line.



Charles Heimer in 1908 just before his father died

In 1911 he married Edna Hunter of Elgin in McHenry. Shortly after that he bought a house in Chicago at 4210 N. Hermitage Ave.

Probably because Josephine was alone and because her sister Minnie and children lived in Chicago, Josephine went to live with the newly married couple.

Charles was a good son who watched over his mother after his father died. Without his mother's knowledge, he even continued to pay her the dividends from the Remien Kuhner investment when the company suffered huge losses.

Then the unthinkable happened. The mail clerks had finished their work and with the mail train speeding towards Chicago, the train was passing through Watertown, Wisconsin early one Sunday morning in 1934. Charles lay on a bench

and covered himself with a mail sack for a rest.

Because he was guarding the mail he was allowed to carry a gun. And then an accident happened!

When the train neared Oconomowoc, the other clerks in the car heard a muffled report and one of them noticed smoke was coming from the gun of Charles. His pistol was lying at his left side and the bench was covered with blood.

The gun was worn on the right side and it was surmised that Charles must have twisted to be more comfortable. This dislodged the gun and it fired.

Bleeding profusely, he was taken from the train at Milwaukee and to the emergency hospital. Even though the doctors tried to save him by operating immediately and giving him a blood transfusion, there was no hope.

His mother Josephine along with his wife rushed to his side and tried to console him in his last minutes. He was conscious until he died that evening, February 4th 1934. He was only 50 years old.

How ironic for Josephine to have lost both her husband and her only son at age 50.

Minnie, Josephine's very close sister, was in California at the time. She rushed home in time for the funeral in McHenry.

This is the story of one Kuhnert daughter who started life with such hope. But Aunt Jo, as she was affectionately called by all Minnie's grandchildren, loved her dearly. She remained a part of Minnie's family until she died in 1948.

MARY'S MESSAGES



The reason I'm printing all the pictures is to make these ancestors seem more real to you. I realize that some pictures have been printed more than once, such as the photo of Carl in the 1996 issue and Mena Wiggenhorn in the 1997 issue.

I have quite a few unidentified Daguerrratype, Ambrotypes, and Tintypes given to me by my mother when she learned I was into genealogy. As it was many years ago and I recognized almost no one, I must admit I did not believe I would ever be able to match them up with our ancestors.

But today through my research I have been able to identify a few. For the others, I am desperately trying to discover to which family they belong. I try to match up the clothing, the facial resemblances, and the type of photo. I think I am making progress.

There is a German Wiggenhorn home page on the web. I have made contact with several Wiggenhorns, some related to the original family in Watertown, and some not. However, one in Germany has listed a home page, and if you want to access it the address is <http://home.t-online.de/home/Meintgens.Achim/ahnin201.htm>. The address looks kind of funny but I think you will be able to get it.

The following is from an email I received from Emily Larkin. I hope she won't mind my putting it in this Kuhnert issue of Know Your Roots. Needless to say, this is exactly the reason I am

writing these issues. They are a record for the future generations.

"Dear Aunt Mary,

I'm sorry I didn't write to you sooner about the June "Know Your Roots." [ed. 1999 Kuhnert issue.]

I really liked it, especially the map of Centerville, now Woodstock, and seeing what my town looked like in 1844. I was surprised to see that Charles Kuhnert's land is within short walking distance of my house, even though my street's not shown on the map. I would have never realized that as I drive by the land almost every day. A viaduct was built on the land in, I think, 1857, or somewhere around there, with train tracks and a service station sometime later. There are also some houses now. Many of the street names have changed since 1854, also. It was quite a challenge thinking of what they were now. Also, some little side-streets that were alleys back then are now streets.

~*Emily*~*

Along that same line(although our family does not have roots in the area), I have been told that Harry Durland Griffith is President of the Lake Forest, Lake Bluff (in Illinois) Historical Society. Restoring and maintaining the history of any area is very important for future generations and I commend him for his efforts.

I wish members of the family would send me information of their accomplishments which I could add to my messages. Usually I just hear about them through happenstance. You may be sure if you send them to me, I'll mention them in an upcoming issue.

I wonder if anyone will recognize the children in this photo. It's an old one..

