



# KNOW YOUR ROOTS

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## IMAGINE

Picture, if you can, a father with eight children whose future for his sons involves being conscripted into an army in a country on the verge of a revolution, with the economy of his country in shambles. Germany was in turmoil. Would you cash in your assets and take your entire family to a foreign country and start over again? Wilhelm Wiggenghorn did just that in 1848.

The story of Wilhelm in Volume VI, Issue 4 of October 2001 bears repeating for those readers who were not subscribers to the original newsletters but who today are interested in their heritage through these Weebly.com issues.

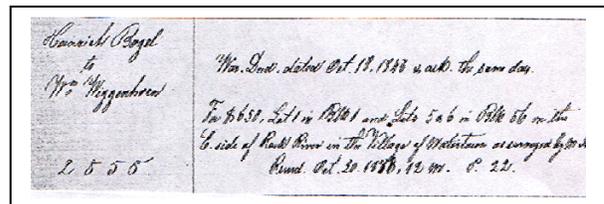
## WILHELM WIGGENHORN

What man had such a strong belief in himself and convictions that he would take his wife and his eight 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 Schoepplingham, 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 Schoepplingham, 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 \$1650.00 for the hotel and the lot. A deed dated October 18, 1848 records the lot cost at \$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. Henry's 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 makeshift 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 Wiggenhorn, were married in the Buena Vista House in the makeshift German church of St. Henry 's. (*Ed. Note: The Buena Vista House exists today.*)



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 handled 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, Wisconsin.

At one time, at the Silver Wedding anniversary of Constance 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. As of the year 2001, there were none.

William continued with his proprietorship of the Buena Vista House for many years. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1871 he and Josephine celebrated their Golden Wedding anniversary.

There are more stories of the Wiggenhorns in previous newsletters. Wilhelm was a man of foresight and determination. We of his family can be proud possessors of his genes. Keep him in mind when discouragement creeps into your life. His history is his legacy to all of us.

*(Ed. Note: For additional information about the origin of the Buena Vista House name, please go to the Announcements/News page on the Know Your Roots website.)*

Note: Look for the next newsletter in November about the Elsons.

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