

Visit to the USA in May 2008

At the end of May I travelled together with my wife Karin, my brother Kurt and his wife Monika to a visit to Illinois. Diane Jorgensen and her children gave us a heartily welcome. We spent some days in Bourbonnais/Illinois. Friday Diane's son Nick Jorgensen and his wife Laura gave a wonderful dinner for us and we passed the evening with delicious food, warm conversation and singing German folk songs. Sunday we were invited to the church service at Nick and Laura's church. Afterwards we spent the afternoon dining at Diane's place in Momence. Her house stands on the same ground, where her grandmother Anna used to spend the week-ends with her family. It lies on a picturesque little island in the Kankakee River in Momence/Illinois and the former log cabin has become a beautiful and elegant home. The photograph shows us on the porch of the house.



Friday and Saturday we were together tracing the emigrated relatives. On Friday we drove with Diane to Bloomington, which is a 2 hours drive from Bourbonnais. There we visited the grave of Anna's sister Gottlieb and her husband Albert Wilke. No further relatives are buried there. Even the search after the remains of their daughter Carrie at the office of the county clerk and the historical society were without any success.



Saturday we visited the places in Chicago where Anna and her family used to stay and also two cemeteries. At Bethania cemetery we made an interesting discovery. Directly next to the monument of the Gastel family where Anna, her husband Jacob and 5 of her 8 children (Fred, Kathryn, Charles, Anna and Mary) are buried, is the gravestone of Anna's sister Anna Maria Holweger and her husband Gottlieb Holweger. Although Diane has been many times at her grandmother's grave, she didn't realize, that besides this is the grave of her grand-aunt, because there is no birth name written on the stone. In the monument are also buried the son Charles (born as Gottlieb), Charles wife Blanche and the daughter Mary with her husband Nellis Goldsmith. The small gravestone in the front are part of Gastel family monument, the black gravestone in the rear is the monument of the Holweger family.



At the same cemetery we find the family monument of William, Anna's oldest son. He is buried with his wife Elizabeth and his four sons (Erwin, William, Edward and Clifford) including their wives Verna, Dorothy and Mary. Diane has still contact to some of their children.



The grave of Diane's parents George and Bernice is also situated at Bethania.

Finally we visited Forest Home cemetery (Waldheim). There we found the grave of Anna's uncle Jacob Gastel (Gastel Vetter). But we didn't find any indication of his wife Katherine. His daughter Katherine Bowman and her husband are also buried in the same space. The people from the office at the cemetery weren't very helpful. But they gave us a hint to a person named Mary Laubendeger (died 07/28/1890). We only could find a broken gravestone, no inscription.



As we parted it was with the knowledge that everyone now has relatives overseas which will keep contact in the future.