

## Our Story Continues . . . The Klitz Family in Nebraska

### CHAPTER 8

#### **JOHAN HERMAN BERNARD KLITZ and (1) ANNA MARIA THERESIA UPHUES and (2) ANNA MARIA ELISABETH PIEPER**

*1813-1875; 1814-1858; 1826-1891*

Johanna Herman Bernard Klitz was born on 4 February 1813, in Schöppingen, Germany. Bernard married Maria Theresia Uphues in Schöppingen on 16 February 1841. Bernard, Theresia, and their family lived at the Heven 15 farmstead just outside of Eggerode until about 1847. They had five children; two of their children, both girls, died before Bernard emigrated to America. Theresia's last child, Barney, was born on 30 May 1858. Theresia died on 4 September 1858, in Schöppingen from complications associated with childbirth. She was only 44 years old. After Theresia's death, Bernard married Elizabeth Pieper, also from Schöppingen, on 27 February 1859 in Holtwick, Prussia.

Bernard was a day-laborer and farmhand. His sons, Bernard Heinrich (1842-1917) and Johan Engelbert (1849-1900), were both tailors/garment makers as well as farmers. It was not uncommon to have two sources of income at that time in Germany. Usually, there was no profit in tenant farming. One was able to grow food enough to feed one's family on the small plot that the owner of the land would lease to them. Flax was a major crop around Schöppingen during this time frame, probably the reason the sons took up tailoring/garment making.

On 7 June 1869, Bernard requested permission to emigrate to America. Permission was granted on 27 June 1869, and the family departed on 7 July 1869. According to the ship's manifest, here are the names, ages and occupations of the Bernard Klitz family that set sail for America:

Bernard	54 years	Laborer
Elizabeth	44 years	
Henry	27 years	Laborer
Johan	20 years	Weaver
Barney	10 years	
Anna	8 years	
Elizabeth	6 years	

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When we look at the emigration of our ancestors from Westphalia to America, we ask why? Why would you leave your family, friends, and homeland to go to an unknown country? One would think leaving behind your family would be one of the hardest things to do. They had to sell all that they had to afford the journey from Prussia and considering the cost, a return trip back to Prussia was almost unthinkable. The emigration had something irrevocable about it. Despite the challenges and difficulties, our ancestors left Germany to find a new and better life in America.

In 1838, Prussia instituted the “Gemeinheitsteilung”, a partitioning of communal land. Peasants were able to sustain two to three cows before the partitioning because of their access to communal land; afterwards, they could hardly sustain one cow. Life for these people became more difficult and living expenses more costly. Most Westphalian peasants/tenant farmers had a second occupation to supplement their income. Weavers and tailors were plentiful in Westphalia. Starting in the 1840's with the mechanization of the international textile industry, local weavers and tailors encountered a smaller, more competitive market for their goods.

Many emigrants were influenced by letters from friends and family already in America, who were able to establish themselves and make a good living. The process of emigrants traveling to the same towns as their emigre friends and family is called chain migration. Shipping companies advertised sailing to the United States in Westphalian towns, building on the ideas of a prosperous new life in America. Established networks of German communities throughout the United States and a “safety in numbers” mentality diminished the fear of the long journey and the uncertainty of living in a strange land.

Receiving permission to legally emigrate from Prussia was challenging, and at times, rare. to get permission for legal emigration. Our ancestors did request and received permission to emigrate. This means two things. Bernard and his family did not have a monetary debt. It also meant that the two older sons, Heinrich and Johan, no longer had any restrictions due to military service.

The “Law Regulating the Duty for Military Service” of 9 September 1814, mandated three years of military service for men starting at age 20, with voluntary service possible as early as 17 years old. After the regular service, a two-year commitment in the Reserves was mandatory. After the age of 26, conscripts were funneled into the “Landwehr” [militia]. All males, age 20 to 32 years, had to



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perform duty in the “Landwehr”. Young men could look forward to many years of military duty in one form or another.

The family left Germany from the port of Bremerhaven, sailing to New York. The emigration permission request lists that Bernard had 200 talers of wealth at the time of the voyage. While an exact exchange rate to the U.S. dollar of 1869 has not been found, a Prussian taler in 1871 was worth \$0.73. Two-hundred talers was the equivalent of \$ 146.00. I have been told that 200 talers were about the same value as 4 good milking cows. To give you an idea of what items cost in the United States, and what \$146.00 could get you, wheat cost \$1.02 per bushel in 1870. Sugar was \$.07 per pound. An average work horse cost \$150.00, a heifer \$18.75, and four-room house (32’ by 40’) cost \$700.00. Bleached cotton was \$0.15 per yard and from the 1872 Montgomery Ward catalogue, one could buy six pairs of men’s cotton socks for \$1.00.

All of the family, except Johan, sailed on the ship “Freihandel”, reaching Castle Garden in New York City on 20 August 1869. Johan did not arrive in New York until 31 August 1869, on the ship “Argonaut”.

Both the Freihandel and the Argonaut were sailing ships, not steamships which were becoming more prevalent in the 1860s and 1870s. The voyage from Bremerhaven to New York took 44 days for the Freihandel, which carried 220 passengers on this trip. The weather was high winds and thick fog during the first part of the voyage (*New York Times*, 21 August 1869). The Argonaut sailed for 42 days, carrying 80 passengers. The weather had light winds and was calm during the entire voyage (*New York Times*, 1 September 1869).

For a walkthrough of the process that our ancestors experienced upon arriving in New York, see “Castle Garden: The Forgotten Gateway” by Barry Moreno at the end of this chapter.

Bernard and his family traveled to Quincy, Illinois, after arriving in New York. Quincy was a large town and home to numerous German immigrants. The Klitzes lived in Quincy for a little over a year, appearing in the 1870 U.S. Federal Census as living in the 6<sup>th</sup> Ward. Other than Quincy being a hub for German immigrants, why did the Klitzes go there before homesteading in Nebraska. It was on account of Bernard’s second wife, Elizabeth Pieper. Herman and Elisabeth Pieper and their children were from Schoppingen and sailed on the Friehandel with the Klitzes. The Herman Pieper family settled in Quincy, as well. We believe that Elizabeth, Wilhelm, and Herman Pieper were siblings. Wilhelm immigrated to

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America in 1860. His wife, Maria Hanover, emigrated with her family in 1861. We assume that Elizabeth and her brother kept in contact when he was in America and Elizabeth was still in Germany. The Herman Pieper family then moved to the Olean area of Eastern Nebraska. Elizabeth Pieper and Bernard Klitz's family followed. John Henry Klitz is a co-baptismal sponsor of a child of Elizabeth Pieper Vogel. Elizabeth Pieper Vogel is the daughter of Wilhelm and Maria Pieper, born in Quincy in 1862. Wilhelm and Elisabeth Pieper remained in Quincy.

It is not known what the Klitz family did during their stay in Quincy, but the men probably were laborers or farm workers. Sometime between 11 August 1870, and 3 March 1871 the Klitzes moves from Quincy to Colfax County, Nebraska. They most likely rode the train as there were numerous trains operating from Quincy to the west. The cost of the fare from Quincy to Nebraska at that time is unknown, but the fare from New York to Chicago was \$20.00. The Union Pacific, in 1871, was charging the fare of \$7.30 between Grand Island, NE. and Fremont, NE. The railroads gave huge discounts to passengers who were traveling west to settle. This discount provided the railroad an opportunity to sell the land they were given by the government in exchange for building the railroads. Then the settlers would use the railroads to ship their produce from Nebraska to the east. It was not uncommon for a family to use an entire railroad car to haul all of their belongings; farm equipment, livestock, household goods, and themselves to their new home.

The Klitzes arrived in Nebraska by early March 1871, given the date of submission on their homestead application. In the homestead affidavit, Bernard declared he is head of household and he intended to become a citizen of the United States. The application, Number 771, was made for the purpose of actual settlement and is dated 3 March 1871. The receipt for the application, dated 23 March 1871, was for the sum of \$14.00.

These papers state that Bernard lived on the land beginning 23 March 1871, until, the present day, but "present day" is crossed out and handwritten above the text is "April 25, 1875". We feel this date, April 25, 1875, is the date on which Bernard died. We do not know where Bernard is buried. Olean's congregation was organized in 1874 and the first burial listed in the History of Olean book is August 8, 1877. It also states that the deceased were taken to Saint Charles to be buried before Olean was organized. According to the U.S. Land Office Olean in Lincoln precinct of 1879 had a total population of 522. Of these, 130 were farmers, 1 was a merchant, 1 was a shoemaker, 1 was a priest and 2 were blacksmiths.



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After Bernard died, the three younger children lived with Elisabeth Pieper Klitz, while John and Bernard Henry both homesteaded their own land. On the homestead papers it states that John lived on his own homestead from 20 August 1871 forward. The two homesteads adjoin each other.

Bernard Meickmann was a neighbor to the eldest Klitz son, Bernard Heinrich, and his “x” signature appears on both Elizabeth’s and John’s homestead papers.

Bernard Meickmann and Elizabeth Klitz were married on 29 May 1883. Elizabeth Pieper Klitz is buried at Olean yet is not buried next to Bernard Meickmann or the Klitzes. The Olean Cemetery at first buried people in the order in which they died and not in family plots. There are 4 different spellings for the name “Meickmann”, which can be confusing when researching family history. The census spells it as Mikemann; Elizabeth Pieper’s tombstone spells it Meickmann; Bernard Meickmann’s tombstone spells it Meikmann; and the Olean parish records spell it Maikmann. We believe that Bernard had the correct German spelling on his wife’s tombstone, Meickmann, so we decided to spell it “Meickmann”.

So what happened to all of the children of Bernard Klitz and Elizabeth Pieper Klitz? Anna (1859-1917) married Hubert Becker on 13 November 1877. Anna Maria Elizabeth (1862-1927) married Joseph Sellhorst on 29 May 1883. Bernard Heinrich (Henry) (1842-1917) married Florentine Ernst on 14 September 1878 in Olean. Johann Engelbert (John) (1849-1900) married Angela Kluthe Grovijohn on 13 June 1878 in Olean. Hermann Bernard (Barney) (1858-1923) who was blind, lived with Bernard Meickmann and Elizabeth, his stepmother, according to the 1880 census. The 1900 census lists Barney living with his sister, Elizabeth, and her husband, Joseph Sellhorst. Barney later moved to Osmond, Nebraska, and lived with his sister, Anna Becker. The “Osmond, Nebraska 1890 to 1990” book entry about William and Mary McGuire Becker, the son and daughter-in-law of Hubert and Anna Klitz Becker, states “the Beckers always seemed to be caring for someone. A blind uncle, Barney Klitz, lived with them until he died.” Barney is buried in Saint Mary’s cemetery in Osmond, Nebraska. The 1910 census lists Bernard Klitz, 52, as a farm laborer residing with William Becker, the husband of his niece. The 1920 census lists, Bernard Klitz, 61, as a farm laborer residing with William Becker and family.

### **Census Records:**

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*1880 U.S. census:* Colfax Co. NE. Lincoln Twp; Bernard Mikemann 48, b; Prussia; farmer; Lisa 53, b; Prussia; Bernard [Klitz] 22, b; Prussia; Lisa [Klitz] 17; b; Prussia.

*1880 U.S. census:* Colfax Co. NE.; Webster Pct; Henry Klitz, 37; b. Germany, farmer; Florentine 40; b; Germany.

*1880 U.S. census;* Colfax Co. NE.; Maplecreek Pct; Hubert Becker, 26, b; Prussia; farmer; Anna, 20, b; Germany; Peter 1, b; NE

*1900 U.S. census;* Dodge Co. NE. Webster Twp; Barne Mikemann; 67 b; Prussia, widowed, farmer.

*1900 U.S. census;* Dodge Co. NE. Webster Pct; Henry Klitz, 67, b. Germany, farmer, married 24 years; Florentine, 70, b. Germany, no children.

*1900 U.S. census;* Colfax Co. NE. Lincoln Pct, Angie Klitz, 50, b. Germany [widow], 4 children-3 living, farmer: John 18; Henry 15; (I do not know if this is an error or if Angie had 4 children.)

*1900 U.S. census;* Dodge Co. NE. Webster Pct; Barne [sic] Klitz, 41, b. Germany, laborer, residing with brother-in-law Joseph Sellhorst and family.

*1900 U.S. census:* Dodge Co. NE., Webster Pct; Hubert Becker, 41, b. Germany, farmer, married 23 years: Annie, 40, b. Germany, Mother of 12-9 living; Pete 21, Annie 15, Willie 13, Lizzie 11, Paul 7, Mary 5, Carrie 2, Leona 2/12, Children born Nebraska.

*1900 U.S. census:* Dodge Co. NE. Webster Pct, Joseph Sellhorst 45, b. Germany, farmer, married 17 years; Elizabeth 37, b. Germany, mother of 9-9 living; Elizabeth 16, Bernard 14, Arnold 13, John 11, Joe 10, Hubert 8, Mary 6, Will 3, Frank 6/12; children born Nebraska, Barne [sic] Klitz 41.