

Chapter 7. Johann “John” Thiel and His Descendants in Wisconsin



Ittersdorf is a village in the Wallerfangen Municipality, Saarlouis District, Saarland, Germany. It is very close to the French border and not far from Luxembourg.

Originally part of the Holy Roman

Empire of the German nation, Saarlouis gradually came under French sovereignty between 1737 and 1766. After the Napoleonic Wars, about 1815, the area came under Prussian control. The records of St Martin Roman Catholic Church in Ittersdorf were written in Latin, but people’s names were also sometimes written as French names and sometimes as German names.¹



Aerial view of Ittersdorf, Saarland

Johann ‘John’ Thiel, my 2nd-great grandfather, was born in Ittersdorf on 31 October 1816, the son of **Johann Thiel** (1793-1865) and **Margaretha Wirth** (1789-1870), my 3rd-great grandparents. My 4th-great grandparents are **Johannes Thiel** (1748-1814), a carpenter and farmer married to **Maria Hirtz** (1749-1810) and **Johann Georg Wirth** (1738-1793), a farmer married to **Anna Catharina Frommel** (1759-1812). My 5th-great grandparents are **Heinrich Thiel** (1697-1771), a teacher in nearby Bedersdorf, married to **Maria Schwartz** (1712-1794), **Adam Hirtz** (1725-1760), a carpenter and farmer, married to **Anna Katharina Schmidt** (1730-1808), **Johann Peter Wirtz II** (1693-1778), a day-laborer in Berus married to **Anna Katharina Rolles** (1702-1749), and **Franz Frommel** (1717-1790), a bricklayer and stone cutter, married to **Maria Mueller** (1727-1781). All these ancestors were born in Ittersdorf, except that Heinrich Thiel was born in Noerdange in the Commune of Beckerich in western Luxembourg. Noerdange is where Heinrich’s parents, my 6th-great grandparents **Peter Thielen** and **Susanne Mertes**, were married.

Records on my Thiel ancestors stop with Peter Thielen, but details on my ancestors not named Thiel stretch back to the late 1500s. Among the surnames are Hirtz, Hoffman, Schmidt, Ehl, Rolles, Frommel, Scheur, Mueller, Heck, Winter, Schwartz, Orditz, Faldt, and Buchheit. Details on those ancestors and hundreds of descendants can be found in my tree Nearly All Our Ancestors 2 posted on ancestry.com and at WorldConnect on rootsweb.com (which is free).

THIELS TO AMERICA



St. Mary's,
New Oregon

My 3rd-great grandparents **Johann Thiel** and **Margaretha Wirth** had nine children. In 1834 they emigrated to America with six of those children, establishing a farm on Main Street in Buffalo. About 1841 they bought land in the Town of North Collins to the south of Buffalo in Erie County. The Holland Land Company owned most of western New York. The chief surveyor and land agent was Joseph Ellicott, for whom Ellicottville is named. He divided the land into townships and lots. The company advertised and sold lots and portions of lots to individuals, often for a small down payment. Three of the children remained in or near North Collins and had numerous descendants. I have visited cemeteries next to Roman Catholic churches in New Oregon and Langford, in the Town of North Collins, which are filled with Thiel tombstones. In 2003 I attended a Thiel reunion in New Oregon organized by Paula Thiel Snellgrove. Those were held every two years until recently. The picture in footnote one shows some of the numerous descendants.

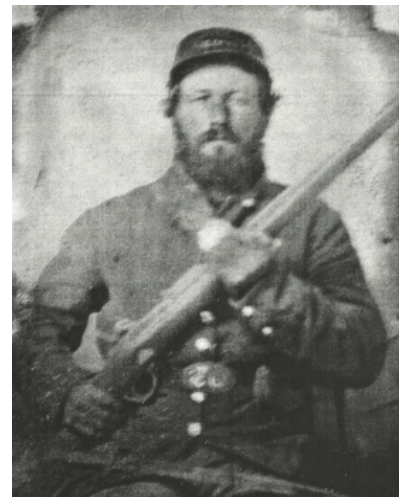


John and Magdalena Dole Thiel

Those not leaving Erie County were **Peter** (1821-1866), **John** (1826-1918), and **Margaretha** (1830-1906). That John is not my 2nd great-grandfather. Meticulous searching of the Ittersdorf genealogy records indicates that Johann and Margaretha Wirth Thiel named two sons John, the other being my actual 2nd great-grandfather. Peter, John, and Margaretha married in Erie County. Peter married **Helena Hund** (1829-1913), John married **Magdalena Dole** (1833-1916), and Margaretha married **Franz X Johengen** (1827-1888), a farmer and manufacturer of boots and shoes. Peter's farm was adjacent to that of his father, between Langford and New Oregon. John's farm was about two miles west of Langford. In 1887 John and Magdalena left the farm to their children and moved to Hamburg, Erie County.

A fourth child, **Balthasar "Baltz" Thiel** (1832-1925), married **Mary Bouillian** (1838-1908) in 1857 in North Collins but then by 1860 had moved to Cincinnati, Ohio, where he is listed in the census as a carpenter. The family moved to Ripley County, Indiana, before he enlisted in the Union Army on

December 11, 1863 and served with General Sherman in his march to Atlanta. He was left in a



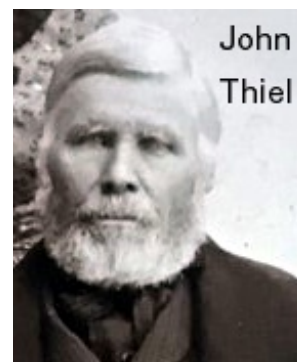
Baltz Thiel in his Army uniform

hospital in Washington DC in February 1865 but received disability after he was discharged (Book on Ripley County, 1991, in Indiana State Library). After the War he worked as a cooper. He and his wife are buried, along with many of their descendants, in St Louis Catholic Cemetery in Batesville, Ripley, Indiana.

A fifth child, **Jacob Winter Thiel** (1818-1893), married to **Christina Labeaheim** (1810-1889), moved to Cincinnati about 1850. In 1860 he was living with his wife and three children, a tailor, in the same building as his brother Baltz. He remained in Cincinnati, joined the 4th Reg. Ohio Cavalry in the Civil War, and in later years was a flour miller and carriage trimmer. His son **Nicholas Jacob Thiel** (1843-1900), a traveling salesman born before Jacob left New York, married Magdalena Mergenthal (1846-1915), with whom he had six children. One of those children, **Jacob William Thiel** (1867-1916), was an allopathic physician in Cincinnati, having obtained his medical degree from the Eclectic Medical College in 1902. Eclectic medicine made use of botanical remedies along with other substances and physical therapy practices. A nephew of Jacob William Thiel, **John Melvin Thiel** (1912-2005), was a physician in Galveston, Texas.

In addition to his parents and siblings, three first cousins of “my” John Thiel emigrated to America. They were children of his uncle **Peter Thiel** (1779-1831), who was born and died in Ittersdorf, namely **Anton** (1813-1890), **John** (1816-1893), and **Anna Maria** (1822-1892), who was married to Frank Kiefer. The Wunrow/Wundrow/Wunderow Family Tree on ancestry.com posted the obituary of John Thiel the son: *“John Thiel was 19 years of age when he came to the United States in 1835. He passed the next seven years in the eastern states, likely in western New York near the city of Gowanda, New York [Erie County]. In 1842 he came to Wisconsin where he stopped for a while in Prairieville, now named Waukesha. Not finding anything suitable he joined his cousin Nicolas Simon [also “my” John Thiels’s first cousin] on a prospecting tour to the north in October 1842. They followed an old Indian trail crossing the Oconomowoc River at Coon’s Mills, now called Monches.... They continued their course north until they came to section 11 in the town of Hartford. There John Thiel selected as fine a piece of land as there is in the town. Soon after he bought it from the government. This was his home for forty years. He sold it in 1882 and moved to the city of Hartford, Wisconsin.”* Hartford lies a short distance northwest of Milwaukee. That John Thiel has numerous descendants in and around Hartford. Anton Thiel and Anna Maria Thiel Kiefer also emigrated to Erie County, New York, and then moved on to Hartford, Wisconsin. Both died in Milwaukee.

According to his obituary, my 2nd great-grandfather **John Thiel** emigrated at the age of 23 to America [1839 or 1840], living first near Buffalo, New York. The 1900 census lists immigration as 1840. So he arrived several years after his parents and younger siblings. He must have moved to Cincinnati before 1847, when he enlisted to fight in the Mexican-American War. His brother Jacob Winter Thiel, we will remember, had already left New York for Cincinnati.



JOHN THIEL AND THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

John Thiel's tombstone says he was a Mexican War (1846-1848) veteran. This account comes from his service papers obtained from The National Archives in Washington, D.C. and other records.

Overview

The War began in April 1846 when Mexican cavalry attacked a group of American soldiers in a disputed zone between the Rio Grande and Nueces Rivers. The Mexican Army under the command of General Santa Anna then suffered a series of losses. In February 1847 U.S. troops led by Gen. Winfield Scott landed in Veracruz and took over the city. They then began marching toward Mexico City, essentially following the same route that Hernán Cortés followed when he invaded the Aztec empire. The Mexicans resisted at Cerro Gordo and elsewhere, but were bested each time. In September 1847, Scott successfully laid siege to Mexico City's Chapultepec Castle.

During that clash, a group of military school cadets – the so-called niños heroes – purportedly committed suicide rather than surrender.

Guerrilla attacks against U.S. supply lines continued, but for all intents and purposes the war had ended. Santa Anna resigned, and the United States waited for a new government capable of negotiations to form. Finally, on Feb. 2, 1848, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed, establishing the Rio Grande and not the Nueces River as the U.S.-Mexican border. Under the treaty, Mexico also recognized the U.S. annexation of Texas, and agreed to sell California and the rest of its territory north of the Rio Grande for \$15 million plus the assumption of certain damages claims. After the Treaty, some guerrilla bands continued to attack American forces.

At the beginning of the war, the U.S. Army had eight regiments of infantry (three battalions), four artillery regiments and three mounted regiments

(two dragoons, one of mounted rifles). These regiments were supplemented by 10 new regiments (nine of infantry and one of cavalry) raised for one year's service (new regiments raised for one year according to act of Congress Feb 11, 1847).

State Volunteers were raised in various sized units and for various periods of time, mostly for one year. Later some were raised for the duration of the war as it became clear it was going to last longer than a year. An account at the time said that the regulars regarded the volunteers with contempt. They robbed Mexicans of their cattle and corn, stole their fences for firewood, got

Record of enrollment of John Thiel in the Ohio Infantry, Mexican War

drunk, and killed several inoffensive inhabitants of the town in the streets. Many of the volunteers were unwanted and were considered poor soldiers by the regular Army.

The Regiment of John Thiel

From the Official Roster of the Soldiers of the State of Ohio in the War with Mexico, 1846-1948 (Pages 383-597), first printed in 1897, indexed and reprinted in 1991 by the Ohio Genealogical Society [I have put details related to John Thiel in brackets and italics]:

“During the month of June, 1847, the companies arrived at Cincinnati, Ohio, and were mustered into the service of the United States, and the regimental organizations formed by the election of Charles H Brough as Colonel. [*John Thiel was enlisted in Company A, 4th Regiment Ohio Infantry on May 12, 1847 by Captain Moor at Cincinnati. Age 30 years, height 5 feet 3 inches, fresh complexion, blue eyes, light hair, born Itisdorf [sic], Prussia, occupation Taylor [sic], family none.*]

The regiment left Cincinnati July 1, 1847, for New Orleans, via steamer, and crossed the Gulf of Mexico on steamer ‘Telegraph,’ landing near the mouth of the Rio Grande river, marched to Matamoras and garrisoned that town until September 4, 1847, when it proceeded to Vera Cruz, arriving there eleven days later. [*John Thiel was “left sick” at Point Issab (Point Isabel, near Brownsville, Texas) on September 12, 1847. Matamoras is just across the present-day border from Brownsville and therefore near Point Isabel, which had hospital facilities. He would not return to his regiment until December 1, 1847 and therefore would miss the only battle that his regiment engaged in.*]

When Gen. Lane marched to attack the city of Huamantla, October 9, 1847, the regiment was ordered to remain and guard the packed wagon train.

On October 12, 1847, the regiment entered Pueblo by the main road, to the rescue of Col. Childs, who held that city for 28 days; the siege was passed and the enemy left for Atlixco. The regiment marched from Perote, October 19, 1847, and participated in the battle of Atlixco, of that date.

The force under Gen. Lane halted at Santa Isabella, a short distance from the town. When the enemy was sighted the 4th was ordered to occupy a large deep ravine to the left of the road and flank the same. This movement confused the enemy; when the cavalry charged and followed them up for about one and one-half miles, skirmishing with them. After a running fight of about four miles the troops arrived before the city. The town was shelled after night with much destruction, a beautiful moonlight allowing the gunners to direct the shots to the most thickly populated parts of the town. This regiment cautiously entered the town one hour later, when the enemy retreated before it and the city was captured – the loss to the Mexicans being 219 killed and 300 wounded, while the American loss was one killed and one wounded. Atlixco was the headquarters for the guerrillas in this section of the country and the seat of government for the state. News having been received that two pieces of artillery had been finished by the enemy at Guexocingo, a portion of the regiment proceeded there, searched the town; the guns had been removed but the carriages were found and destroyed. The regiment then returned to Pueblo, where regimental headquarters were established and garrison duty performed for about eight months.

[*John Thiel returned to the regiment on December 1, 1847; he had to travel a long distance from Point Isabel to Puebla, which is near Mexico City. In December 1847 John Thiel was a private with Captain Kessler’s Company, 4th Regimental Ohio Infantry. In January-February he was a 4th Corporal with Capt. Kessler’s Company; he was promoted to 4th Corporal on January 1, 1848. He was promoted to 3rd Corporal on January 11, 1848. Capt. Hermann Kessler, 4th Ohio Volunteers, commanding an artillery battery, was killed by guerrillas on February 27, 1848 at San Martin’s (Source: Albert G. Brackett, General Lane’s Brigade in Central Mexico, H. W. Derby & Co., Cincinnati, 1854, p. 336.) San Martin’s is near Puebla in central Mexico,*

southeast of Mexico City. In March and April 1848 John was with Captain St. Gelan's Company, 4th Regimental Ohio Infantry].

The regimental loss during its brief term of service was 76 men – four killed in battle, one died of wounds received in battle, and seventy-one of disease. The regiment was mustered out of service from July 15 to 24, 1848, at Cincinnati, Ohio. [John Thiel mustered-out at Cincinnati on July 22, 1848. He was last paid to April 30, 1848.]”

JOHN THIEL AFTER THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN WAR

Marriage in Cincinnati

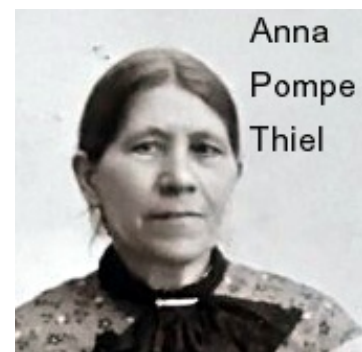
There is a marriage record from St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church in Cincinnati on 5 August 1851 for Johan Thiel and Susanna Imm. The marriage certificates of Catharine Thiel and John Thiel, children of that couple, both name their mother as "Theresia Ihm." The death affidavit of John Thiel states her name as "Theresea Ihn," born in Baden, Germany. Thus Susanna must be Theresia. Witnesses to the marriage were Jacobus Thiel and Carolus Imm. Jacobus must be Jacob Winter Thiel, Johan's brother, and Carolus was Theresia's brother.

I searched for many years for the ancestry of **Theresia Imm**. There were strong clues, from DNA profiles of related ancestry.com users, that she was the daughter of Michael and Catharina Imm. I now know that Michael Imm and his wife Catharina Zelger emigrated to America in 1847, ending up in Cincinnati. They brought two daughters and three sons from Hartheim, a village in Baden, in far southwest Germany, on the Rhine River. Catharina was born in Biengen, a nearby town that is now consolidated into the spa town Bad Krozingen. I have discussed that discovery and their stories in Chapter 8.

Catherine Thiel, my great-grandmother, was born to John and Theresia on 25 Sep 1852 in Cincinnati.

Move to Wisconsin

A second child, John B. Thiel, Jr., was born to John and Theresia on 25 Apr 1856 in Bad Ax (now Vernon) County, Wisconsin. Births of John and Catherine indicate a move to Wisconsin between 1852 and 1856. John's 1901 obituary says that forty-six years before his death [about 1855] he took up residence near La Crosse in Breckenridge. Brecken Ridge, now known as Brinkman Ridge, forms the southern boundary of the Mormon Coulee area, where my Egger ancestors had farms, and lies in both La Crosse and Vernon Counties. BLM records show purchase of 126 acres on April 15, 1856 by John Thiel "of Hamilton County, Ohio" in Vernon County, NE 1/4 Section 4 T14N R6W, from the La Crosse land office.



In 1860 John Thiel, farmer, was living in the Town of Hamburg, Bad Ax, Wisconsin with wife Ann 30 b. Bohemia, Cathrine 8 b. Ohio, John 4 b. WI, and Frank 1 b. Wisconsin. By 1858 Theresia had died, and on 5 May 1858 John married **Anna Maria Pompe**. She was born 3 Nov 1829 in the tiny village of Schokau, Tetschen (Decin) District, North Bohemia, the daughter of Franz Pompe and Anna Maria Wagner. Today the



community Stary Sachov, on the Polzen River in northwestern Czech Republic near the border with Germany, contains villages of Stary Sachov (Old Schokau) and Maly Sachov (Little Schokau). Franz Pompe (born 1788) and Anna Maria Wagner were married 14 Sep 1830 in Saint Bartholomew Church in Sandau (Zandov), North Bohemia.

A paragraph below on Anton Tietze, under the heading William Thiel, has a discussion of emigration from villages in the Tetschen area to the La Crosse area beginning in 1848. The Tietze family was from Dobern, which is a short distance north of Schokau.

In 1870 and 1880 John Thiel is again listed in the census as a farmer living in the Town of Hamburg but with more children – Jacob was born on 3 May 1863, William on 1 Feb 1866, and Daniel T on 17 May 1868. Frank must have died before 1870.

Conversion to Methodism

The obituary of John Thiel states that "**During a New Year's night he was disturbed during his card game and later awakened and converted and joined our congregation and served his God faithfully for 42 years.**" The story implies that he converted from Catholicism to the German Methodist Church about 1859. He was associated with the Chipmunk Coulee circuit church of the Salzer Memorial Church of La Crosse and appears on a list of members compiled between 1867-1877 and as an officer of the church in 1888-1889 (Chipmunk Coulee Pioneers, by Robert R. Lorenz, 2002, http://lacrossehistory.org/people/Chipmunk_Coulee_Pioneers.pdf). My great-grandfather Melchior Egglar was an officer in the Chipmunk Coulee church and was later part of the Salzer Memorial Church² in La Crosse. Catherine Thiel Duerrwaechter and her husband Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter were members of Salzer Memorial in La Crosse. John Thiel is also listed as an early member of the Brecken Ridge church, a third part of the Chipmunk Coulee-La Crosse circuit, for which a building was erected in 1861. The Koethe Cemetery, where he and Anna are buried, was established near the former Brecken Ridge church. The cemetery is in Vernon County, but just over the line from La Crosse County.

The Robert Lorenz (2000) history, quoting from Bernet (1943), who wrote a series of articles for the La Crosse Tribune on the history of the Salzer Methodist church, continues: "**Lamprecht, Thiel and Koller were neighbors on Brecken Ridge. Thiel and Koller [Conrad Koller, born 1821 in Bavaria, died 17 May 1907] had come from Cincinnati together. August Lamprecht had attended some Methodist meetings. His relatives suggested he might yet become a Methodist. 'No danger,' he said, 'I go because the young preacher has something to say.'** He had been through the Mexican war as a member of a regiment of cavalry, which experience had not improved his morals any. I have heard him say that we were 'zwei Gottlos grobe buerschen.' Lamprecht kept a saloon. Drinking and card playing were the pleasures of Thiel and Lamprecht. One day they went to a

revival meeting and took their places forward and directly in front of the speaker, the latter with the avowed intention of disturbing the meeting and worrying the young preacher. The earnest words of the preacher touched Lamprecht in the right spot and he came under violent conviction, went forward and fell prostrate, unable to rise and praying loudly for mercy. People at first thought he was trying to deceive them, but found that he was very much in earnest. He was thoroughly converted, went home, the next morning destroyed his stock of liquors, closed his place, threw his cards into an old well and never used them again.

Lamprecht at once began preparing for the ministry and was a successful and beloved pastor in the Northwestern and Norwegian German conference all his life. Thiel also was converted when almost all of the society at Brecken Ridge turned to the Evangelical Association. He worshiped with the rest, opened his home for their meetings, worked in the Sunday school, but with his family remained Methodist (Bernet, 1943)."

Thiel family stories of the Erie County Thiel group (email from Paula Thiel Snellgrove) say that one of the brothers of John Thiel (married to Magdalena Dole) of New York went "west" to Wisconsin and that when that brother came back to visit, his father Johan Thiel found out that he had left the Catholic church and told him not to come home again!

Last Years of John Thiel

Anna Pompe Thiel died in 1897 at Breckenridge in Vernon County. John Thiel then went to live with his daughter Catherine Thiel Duerrwaechter at 819 S. Second St. in La Crosse. At some stage he became deaf. His obituary ends: **"Although 84 years and 2 months old, he rejoiced in good health and visited our continuing assemblage every evening. When he was on the way home from the January 3 evening service, he was hit by a streetcar and died instantly. His faith was so clear that he literally went directly from the church to his eternal rest."** The obituary says that he was survived by two brothers and one sister, who would be John Thiel and Margaretha Thiel Johengen back in Erie County, New York, and Baltz Thiel in Indiana.

John and Anna are buried together in the Koethe Cemetery in Vernon County, Wisconsin.

Catharine Thiel (1852-1910), daughter of John Thiel



Catharine Thiel

Catharine Thiel is my great-grandmother, the daughter of John Thiel and Theresia Imm. She moved to the Town of Hamburg, Vernon, Wisconsin, from Cincinnati as a child with her parents. In 1871, in Hamburg, she married **Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter** (1842-1920). The marriage certificate appears in footnote 3.

Chapter 9 covers Duerrwaechter (in German Dürrwächter) genealogy. Here's a synopsis. The parents of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter, Jonathan Duerrwaechter (1793-1863) and Katharina Barbara Niedermaier (1809-1890) were married in 1832 in Knittlingen, a small town in Wuerttemberg, Germany. Jonathan's Duerrwaechter ancestors in Knittlingen can be traced back to a Jonathan born

~1654. Katharina's Niedermaier ancestors in Knittlingen can be traced back to a Paul born 1654.

In 1854 Jonathan and Katharina Duerrwaechter and their four living children left Knittlingen as part of a party of 92, more than 9 percent of the total estimated emigration from Knittlingen. The Heimatbuch Knittlingen says: "In later years it was primarily because of economic hardship, failed crops, famine and the high cost of living that led people to leave their homeland. Some of them achieved prosperity and recognition in their new countries. After the famine years of 1816 and 1817, 152 people emigrated. As a result of the failed harvests in the years 1845 - 1849 there were 154 emigrants. About the year 1854 it was reported: 'A community of 92 emigrants left our midst on April 11, 1854. Among them were the following families: Faber, Hammer, Blumer, Jost, Dürrwächter, Burk, Etter, and Hessenberger along with a number of single people and minors in order to create a new home in America.' "



Katharina Niedermaier Duerwaechter

The Jonathan Duerrwaechter family sailed from Le Havre, France to New York on the Metropolis, arriving on May 23, 1854. They spent one year in Salem, New Jersey, and then moved near Hokah, Houston, Minnesota, which is on the other side of the Mississippi River from La Crosse.

Children of Jonathan and Katharina were Rosina Katharina Duerrwaechter Breit (1837-1896), Sophia Christina Duerrwaechter Kappauf (1840-1930), Alexander Ludwig, and Katharina Christina Duerrwaechter Weis (1846-1917).

Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter (1842-1910) grew up in Brownsville and Hokah Ridge, Minnesota before coming to La Crosse as a young man. He was employed by the C. L. Colman Lumber Company for about 40 years. The family worshipped in the Salzer Memorial Church² for 48 years and lived at 1009 Mississippi Street in La Crosse. Children of Alexander and Catherine were **Alexander John, Amelia Anna, Anna Catharina, John Jonathan, Rudolph Benjamin** (1879-1881), and **Emma**.



The Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter family. Alexander and Catherine Thiel Duerrwaechter seated center; my grandmother Amelia lower right.

Alexander John Duerrwaechter (1872-1940), son of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter, was a pharmacist in Chicago, Illinois. In 1904, in Chicago, he married **Mary Lemm** (1884-1980). They had no children.

Anna Catharina Duerrwaechter (1876-1936), daughter of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter, was a World War I nurse at Hines Veterans Hospital and later a private nurse in Chicago.

John Jonathan Duerrwaechter (1878-1942), son of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter, married **Bessie Priscilla Jensen** (1881-1927), whose parents were Danish, and, after her death, **Veleda Johnson** (1892-1973). He lived all his life in La Crosse and was a hardware clerk. John Jonathan and Bessie had six children: 1: **Helen Margarethe** (1901-1989), who married **Arthur Oscar Dahlie**, a Teletype Corporation executive; 2: **Mildred** (1902-1989), who married **Lloyd D Miller**, a steam railroad machinist; 3: **Ralph John** (1905-1955), who lived both in Chicago and in La Crosse and held various jobs including automobile salesman; 4: **John Alexander** (1907-1973), who married **Edythe Luella Morken** (1907-1991) in La Crosse, where they had two children, but in 1944 moved the family to Billings, Montana, where he was a field construction welder and then had two more wives, Francis M Landblom and Ludvena Agnes Lawrence; 5: **William Clinton Duerrwaechter** (1911-1985), who spelled the family name Duerwachter and married **Kathryn Jennette Miller**, with whom he had three children Jerold, Don, and Steven; 6: **Elizabeth Bessie** (1913-1935), who married **Arthur Viniencel Kathan**.

Emma Duerrwaechter (1883-1969), daughter of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter, married **William Gerald Lesemann**, a Chicago attorney, in 1927, a year after his wife had died, leaving him with three young children. She outlived her husband by 27 years and died in Wheaton, Illinois.

Amelia Anna Duerrwaechter (1873-1956), my grandmother and the daughter of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter, married **Albert H Egger** in 1896. They undoubtedly met at the Salzer Memorial Church. At that time Albert was a foreman with the J A Salzer Seed Company². Three of their children were born in La Crosse – **Edith Amalie**, **Earl Clarence**, who lived less than a year, and **Willis Alexander**.

The family lived briefly in the Town of Spring Green, Sauk, Wisconsin, as did Amelia's brother Alex Duerrwaechter, but in 1907 went far north in Wisconsin to Bayfield, on the shores of Lake Superior, today a tourist destination and gateway to the Apostle Islands. Two men who had worked at the Salzer Seed Company in La Crosse started orchards outside Bayfield, my grandfather Albert Egger and John F Hauser. The Hauser orchards are still there, but the Egger orchards are long gone. Using a 1915 plat map, I drove to the site of the Egger orchard, east of the Hauser orchard. That land today is either wooded or swamp, so perhaps the orchard failed because of poor land. In any case, by 1920 Albert was a logger and Amelia was a seamstress. Amelia also worked for a Chicago family that summered in Bayfield.



Amelia Duerrwaechter Egger



Edith, Willis, Albert, Ben, Amelia Egger

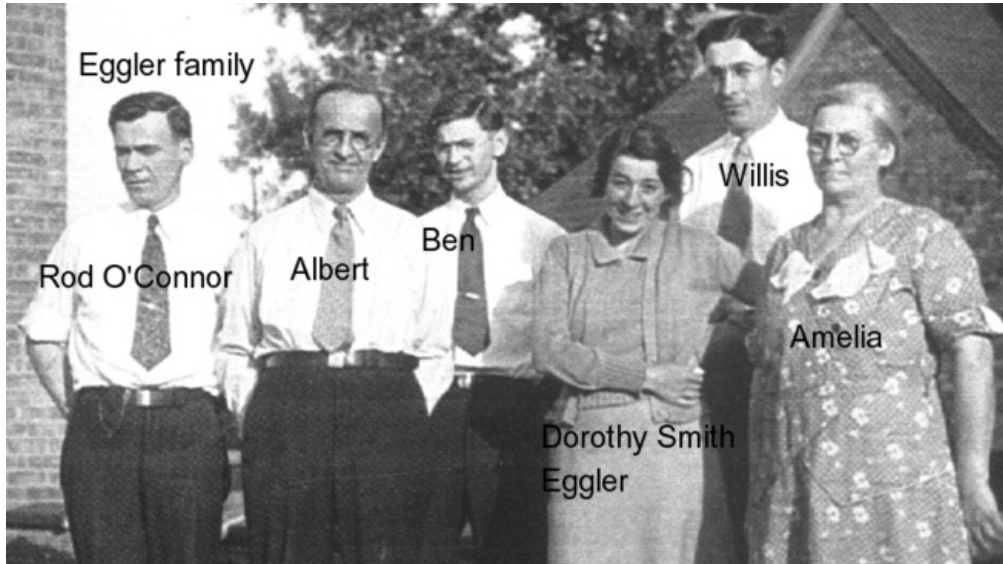
A fourth member of the family, **Benjamin Albert**, had been born in 1910 in Bayfield. Ben went south to Chicago about 1928 and trained as a machinist. His parents followed shortly thereafter. In the 1930 census Albert, Amelia, and Ben were living at 1943 Lawrence Avenue in Chicago, where Amelia was superintendent of the American Boarding House for Aged Ladies, Albert a janitor there, and Ben a machinist. The Boarding House held 10 ladies. Subsequently, according to my Aunt LaVerne, Albert was a janitor in a Methodist church and repaired donated items, and Amelia helped in the church soup kitchen and babysat. In 1940 Albert and Amelia lived at 2433 Leland Avenue.

Ben met **LaVerne Tauscher** in that Methodist church. She was born in Racine, Wisconsin, the daughter of Frank Louis Tauscher and Elizabeth Veronica Karpen. They were married in

1936. In 1940 Ben and Laverne lived at 2176 Eastwood in Chicago with their son **James Willis Egger**, 4 months old. In 1943 they had daughter **Maralyn**. In 1945 Albert, Amelia, and Ben with his family moved west to Nampa, Idaho, which is near Idaho's capitol Boise. There Ben continued his career as a machinist. Jim Egger, a machinist himself, married Beverly Hickman. He died in 2020. They had two children. Maralyn, a beautician who died in 2016, married Lanis Lyons and had one child.

Edith Egger also left Bayfield for Chicago and **in 1928 married Roderick Arthur**

O'Connor. He was from Kansas City. When he first came to Chicago, he worked as a stockyard clerk, but by 1930 was working in a grocery store,



which is where he worked all the time that I knew them. See Chapter 5 for more on Rod. When I stopped in Chicago in 1951 on a trip from New Orleans to my grandparents in Washburn, Wisconsin, Rod took me to a White Sox game. They lived on E. 73rd St in Chicago's South Side. Edith and Rod had one son, **Roderick Arthur "Rod" O'Connor Jr.** Rod O'Connor (1928-2002) served in the US Army during Korea. He graduated from Illinois Institute of Technology in 1957. For over 37 years he was employed by the DuKane Corporation in St. Charles, Illinois. He briefly taught at Aurora College. He married **Joanne Lee Blanchard** (1936-1999), and they had two children.



Willis Egger did not follow his family to Chicago. He attended Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, 23 miles from Bayfield but also on Lake Superior, majoring in biology. There he met **Dorothy Smith**, who had grown up on farms outside Washburn, Wisconsin with her parents Howard Allison Smith and Florence Lenore Hewitt Smith. Washburn is halfway between Bayfield and Ashland. After college he taught for a time at high schools in Wisconsin including Black River Falls, and she was a librarian at the Library of Congress in Washington DC. They married in 1929 in Two Harbors, Minnesota, after which he obtained M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in ecological botany at the University of

Minnesota. His M.S. thesis was on ecology of Mackinac Island and his Ph.D. on revegetation of Craters of the Moon, a volcanic National Monument in Idaho.

After teaching stints at Gogebic Junior College, Alma College, and Central Michigan College, Willis Egger spent most of his career teaching at Newcomb College of Tulane University in New Orleans. His research program principally concerned revegetation of volcanic areas in Mexico, Guatemala, and Hawaii. After retirement from Tulane, he taught for a number of years at Warren Wilson College in Swannanoa, North Carolina. After seeing two sons into high school, Dorothy Egger resumed her library career at Tulane and then volunteered at Warren Wilson.

John B. Thiel, Jr. (1856-1945), son of John Thiel and Theresia Imm

John B. Thiel, Jr., was married on 16 Oct 1883, in the Salzer German Methodist Church in La Crosse, to **Mathilda Zietlow** (1860-1941); witnesses were John and Anna Thiel. The marriage certificate says he was at that time from Garner, Hancock, Iowa. He and Matilda set up farms in Garner, where all the children were born, then in the Town of Jefferson, Vernon, Wisconsin, and in 1909 moved to a farm in Ipswich, Edmunds, South Dakota. He retired from farming in 1932 and moved to town. He died on 12 Apr 1945 in Ipswich. Mathilda had died in 1942 in Ipswich.

John and Mathilda had three children, **Alfred John** (1885-1920), **Lillian Effie** (1886-1971), and **Elsie M** (1891-1963). None of the children married. Alfred was a tractor mechanic in Ipswich, Lillian was a bank cashier and public library bookkeeper, and Elsie was a long-time junior high school teacher in Aberdeen, South Dakota.

John and Mathilda Thiel and the three children are all buried in Ipswich South Cemetery.

Jacob Thiel (1863-1944), son of John Thiel and Anna Pompe

Jacob Thiel never married. He was a farm laborer and lumberman and lived periods of time with his brother Dan in Vernon County, in Houston County, Minnesota, and finally in the Methodist Sunset Home in Quincy, Adams, Illinois. He died there in 1944.

William Thiel (1866-1940), son of John Thiel and Anna Pompe

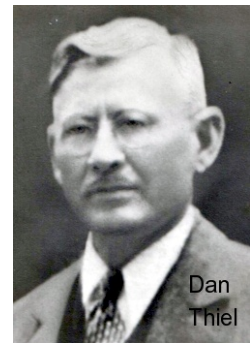
William Thiel was a stationary engineer in a sash factory. In 1889 he married **Augusta Rose Hiekel**. They had three children – **Francis Wilhelmina**, **Elmer George**, and **Samuel John**.

Francis Wilhelmina Thiel (1890-1945) married **Edmund Arnold Tietze** (1891-1945), a farmer at Brinkman Ridge in the Town of Shelby, La Crosse, Wisconsin. His parents had emigrated in 1855 from Dobern in northern Bohemia, along with seven other families, to the Chipmunk Coulee area on the border between Vernon and La Crosse Counties. Those families were ethnic Germans living in Bohemian land that was part of the Austrian Empire and is now in the Czech Republic. Emigration to the La Crosse area began in 1848 from villages, like Dobern, near Tetschen (Dacin) in northern Bohemia. Anna Maria Pompe, married to John Thiel, also came from such a village (see her discussion on p. 133). They left because of dislike of military service, food shortage, and cheap land in Wisconsin.

Francis and Edmund had one child, **William E Tietze** (1923-2011). Bill inherited the family farm at the young age of 19, following the untimely death of his parents, just 2½ weeks apart. He later worked for the La Crosse Cooler Company for 27 years and for Luxco Tool and Die company for 5 years until retiring in 1990. He had married **Helen Karis** in 1948.

Elmer George Washington Thiel (1895-1991) worked in the office of Standard Oil of Indiana in La Crosse, and in 1956 started working for Exchange State Bank in La Crosse. He married **Vera Augusta Brandenburg** (1895-1982) about 1922. They had two sons, Gordon Elmer (1924-1990) and Howard William (1930-2014). **Gordon Elmer Thiel** worked for General Electric. He and his wife, **Alice Eastburn Stanton**, had three sons. **Howard William Thiel** married **Rose Marie Seeman**. Howard was in construction, and Rose is a retired teacher. They had three children.

Samuel John Thiel (1897-1964) was a long-time superintendent for the Salzer Seed Company in La Crosse² In 1923 he married **Gertrude Angeline Merman** (1901-1937). They had three children – John Edward “Jack” Thiel, Joan Carol Thiel, and Gertrude Ann Thiel. Jack enlisted in the Air Corps in World War II. He died in 1999 in Gulfport, Mississippi. Joan graduated from the nursing program at Hamlin University in Saint Paul. She was a registered nurse in La Crosse, Champaign/Urbana, Illinois, and Madison, Wisconsin. Her husband was Donald Wolf. Gertrude graduated from Wisconsin State Teachers College in La Lacrosse. She retired from public school teaching in Madison.



Dan Thiel

Daniel T. Thiel (1868-1946), son of John Thiel and Anna Pompe

Dan Thiel, the youngest son of John Thiel and Anna Pompe, was a farmer and, at one time, chairman of the Town of Hamburg, Vernon County. After farming, he worked at a hardware store in La Crosse. In 1893, in the



Dan Thiel and Anna Egger Thiel

Methodist church in the Town of Shelby, he married **Anna**

Maria Egger. She was the daughter of Melchior and Barbara Freihofer Egger, my great-grandparents. In that way, Dan Thiel is a bridge between two of my ancestral lines – the Thiel line and the Egger line. Dan and Anna Maria had three children while in the Town of Hamburg – Florence Gertrude (1898-2000), Arthur B (1899-1902), and Harvey Vernon (1901-1902). In about 1901 he heard of a hardware store for

sale in Pecatonica, from a traveling hardware equipment salesman, and bought it. He operated it

for many years on the main street of Pecatonica, serving the farm community. Their home was at 226 Fifth St. Pecatonica is in northern Illinois in Winnebago County.

Anna died in 1903, soon after the deaths of the two boys. She may have died of tuberculosis (conversation with Glenn Thiel). After the death of her mother, little Florence lived with the Heinrich Egger family in South Dakota. Heinrich “Henry” Egger was the brother of Anna and Minnie. It was decided after a few years that Florence needed to live with her father. Barbara Egger declared that Anna’s younger sister Minnie Martha Egger (1879-1980) would marry Dan and take care of Florence. Minnie was reluctant to do that, preferring to develop her musical talent, but



Minnie Egger Thiel and Dan Thiel



Florence Thiel

eventually did in 1905. (Story from

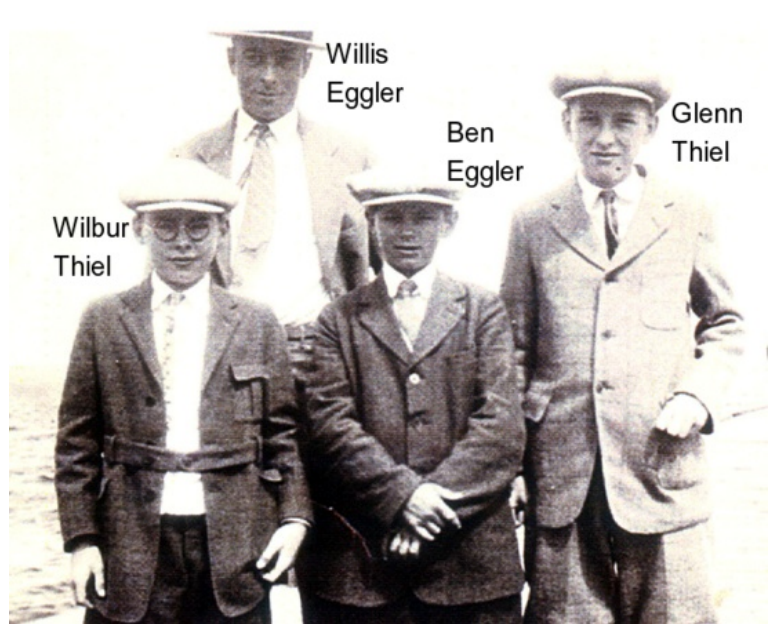
Glenn Thiel.) Dan Thiel and Minnie Egger Thiel had two children – **Glenn Egger Thiel** and **Wilbur Daniel Thiel**. After a number of years, the hardware store was sold, and Dan and Minnie lived in Freeport, Stephenson County, until Dan died. Minnie then lived for the rest of her life in Rockford, Winnebago County, with Glenn.

Florence Gertrude Thiel, daughter of Dan and Anna, (1898-2000) attended Illinois Normal College and Northern Arizona University. She taught school in Phoenix, Arizona for many years.

Wilbur Daniel Thiel (1912-1989), son of Dan and Minnie, inherited musical talent from his mother Minnie Egger. He was an organist in

Rockford during high school, then obtained BA and MA degrees in music from the University of Wisconsin and Union Theological Cemetery, and was the organist for several large churches in New England.

Glenn Egger Thiel (1910-2006), son of Dan and Minnie, attended the University of Illinois and received a degree in architecture. He did not continue in architecture. His 2006 obituary reads that he “was a comptroller and treasurer for Greenlee Brothers and later served as a part-time comptroller for Edward Ware & Associates. He also served as treasurer at Grace United Methodist Church and was a longtime member of the board of Rockford Boys Club, which he served as treasurer. He volunteered in the office of New American Theater and was the first treasurer of the Theater Wing. He was a benefactor of the arts for many community foundations, including Rockford Symphony Orchestra, Friends of The Coronado and the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Rockford Chapter. Thiel was 95 when he died on January 26. On June 5, it was announced that he had bequeathed \$1.8 million to the Community Foundation and more than 25 local nonprofits.”



Glenn Thiel was briefly married to Muriel Sorby.



Minnie Thiel and her son Glenn. Pearl and Essie were daughters of Minnie's brother Henry Egger

I had the pleasure of meeting Glenn in 2000 at his retirement home in Rockford. We had a lunch there and drove to Pecatonica to see the site of his father's hardware store and the cemetery where Dan Thiel, Anna Maria Egger Thiel, and the two young sons are buried. He gave me a family photo album with many Thiel and Egger photographs, many of which are in this article. Glenn was both my first cousin once removed and my half first cousin twice removed, because of our connection between both the Thiel and Egger lines.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is a summation of almost twenty years of research from many sources, including books, microfilmed records, personal stories, and, increasingly, the Internet. I obtained the initial clues that led me to pursue those records in 1999, with a call from my cousin Jim Egger and an email from his daughter Jamie Kirtley, revealing the name of my great-grandfather Melchior Egger and the parents of my grandmother Amelia Egger -- Alexander Duerrwaechter and Catherine Thiel. Online birth and marriage indices at familysearch.org revealed a number of my Egger, Duerrwaechter, and Thiel ancestors. On a subsequent trip to the Wisconsin Historical Library in Madison I found a trove of documents and microfilms. I visited La Crosse in 2000, examining church records and visiting graves of Egger, Duerrwaechter, and Thiel ancestors and relatives. On a trip to Idaho in 2000 I learned family details from Jim Egger, his sister Maralyn, and their mother Laverne Tauscher Egger. Laverne told me about relatives who were alive at that time, in particular Glenn Thiel. I obtained copies of family photos from Jim and Maralyn, some of which appear in this article.

Later in 2000 I visited Glenn Thiel at his home. He supplied a number of details that appear in this article, as well as the photo album from which several images in this article come.

Among the documents that I copied from Jim Egger was the obituary of John Thiel. It mentions his birthplace of Ittersdorf. But it was not until I later received an email from Paula Thiel Snellgrove that I fully appreciated the connections between my ancestor John Thiel, Ittersdorf, and the many Thiels in Erie County, New York. She helped me find the microfilmed church records and compilations of church records on microfilm. Daryl Wunrow, who attended the 2003 Thiel reunion (person 43)¹, turned me onto the 2003 Walter Oehling book¹ about the Thiel family of Ittersdorf.

If the main inference in this article, that my ancestor John Thiel was the son of Johann Thiel and Margaretha Wirth, is correct, then Paula Thiel Snellgrove should be my 4th cousin. She is in fact, by DNA, my 4th cousin. That coincidence supports all the other evidence that the inference is correct.

I first learned about the war record of John Thiel from his tombstone, and in turn I first saw the tombstone record on the wonderful genealogical website of the La Crosse Public Library.

I learned details about the children of John Thiel, and their descendants, who remained in La Crosse from emails of Rose Seemann Thiel. The Egger-Thiel-Welke-Clark photo is from Barbara Fowler.

My interest in Anna Maria Pompe was spurred by a 2020 inquiry from Ann Kneifl Guenther. Years ago Rose Seemann Thiel, in an email, told me that her grandfather Elmer Thiel had researched Anna and found that she came from Klein Schoken, Bohemia. The town has turned out to be Schokau, Tetschen (Decin in Czech) District, North Bohemia. Klein-Schokau (Little Schokau) was created in 1833, shortly after Anna was born. I found the records for Schokau in LDS Films 48082243 and 4808224, from St. Bartholomew Catholic church in Sandau (Zandov in Czech).

Small photos of John Thiel and Anna Pompe Thiel in the photo album of Glenn Thiel turned out to be cutouts from a group photo, taken in La Crosse, of John and Anna Thiel and Philip Kneifl and his wife Frances Pompe Kneifl. The original photo was emailed to me by Ann Kneifl Guenther. Images of John and Anna in this article were cropped from that photo.

FOOTNOTES

¹The Primary Sources for records of St Martins Catholic Church are Genealogical Society of Utah (Family History Library) Film 464884, Katholische Kirche Ittersdorf (Kr. Saarlouis) Kirchenbuch, 1791-1927; Film 1051242, Zivilstand Register, 1816-1858; and Film 1351226, Item 9, Eglise Catholique Paroisse d'Ittersdorf (Moselle), 1808-1817. Walter Oehling has made a compilation of the records, available as FHL Film 1336833, Item 4, Kirchenbuch Katholische Kirche Ittersdorf (Kr. Saarlouis): Familienbuch 1672-1815, July 1980. He compiled a revised book in 2003, *Die Einwohner von Ittersdorf und Dueren vor 1900*, publ. by Saarlouis Kreisarchiv.



*For the 2003 Thiel Reunion in New Oregon, New York, Paula Thiel Snellgrove assembled the loosebound volume *Descendants of Henrich Thiel, born 1698, and Marie Schwartz, born 1706, of Ittersdorf, Germany*. It is an exhaustive listing of non-emigrant German and, especially, American emigrant descendants. The picture shows people at that reunion, which I attended (person 30)*

²John A Salzer was one of the first pastors of the First German Methodist Episcopal Church in La Crosse. Upon his retirement, he started a floral business that grew into the Salzer Seed Company, at one time the largest seed catalog firm in the United States. My grandfather Albert Eggler worked at the Salzer Company before he moved his family to northern Wisconsin. After Salzer's death, the Church was renamed the Salzer Memorial Church.

³The marriage certificate of Alexander Ludwig Duerrwaechter and Catherine Thiel contains critical genealogical facts including birthplace of Alexander and parents of Alexander and Catherine:

Marriage Certificate.

(TO BE RETURNED TO THE REGISTER OF DEEDS BY THE PERSON OFFICIATING.)

1. The Color,	White.
2. Full name of husband,	Alexander Duerrwaechter.
3. Full name of the wife previous to marriage,	Catharine Thiel.
4. Occupation of said husband,	Day laborer.
5. Residence of said husband,	La Crosse City.
6. Birthplace of said husband,	Knittlingen, Württemberg, Germany.
7. The place, town or township, and county where the marriage was contracted,	Town of Hamburg, Vernon Co. Wisconsin.
8. Time when marriage was contracted,	The 12 day of August A. D. 1871.
9. By what ceremony contracted,	by the rites of the German Ref. Church.
10. Names of subscribing witnesses,	Junther Köthe, & John Dell.
11. Date of certificate of marriage,	The 14 August 1871.
12. Name of the father of said husband,	Jonathan Duerrwaechter.
13. Name of the mother of said husband,	Catharine born of Niedemaier.
14. Name of the father of said wife,	John Thiel.
15. Name of the mother of said wife,	Theresia born of Thom.

UNCERTIFIED COPY
NOT VALID FOR IDENTITY PURPOSES

I Hereby Certify, that the foregoing marriage was consummated by me on the twelfth day of August A. D. 1871

Dated at La Crosse on the 14 day of August A. D. 1871

Name, John Romeis
 Title of Officer, Minister of the Gospel
 Residence, La Crosse