

Harms
Descendants of
Johann Peter Harms



"Autumn . . . the year's last, loveliest smile." Bryant

Margarethe Hoyers
1706 - 1997

P R E F A C E

The plan to write down the genealogy and story of the Harms' lineage had been in our minds for some time before we began gathering material of the direct descendants of Johann Casten and Margarethe Harms who came to Minnesota in 1856.

When it was decided to observe the 100th anniversary of their homesteading on July 8, 1956, we began to think of delving into a few past generations in Europe. An air mail letter to Fallingbostel, Hannover, where the passports for the emigrants had been made out, brought a nineteen-page manuscript from historian Mr. Hans Stuhlmacher. He had traced the ancestry back to the first Harms recorded in 1528 and on the feminine side to a Henke Wetkert in 1489. To Mr. Stuhlmacher we are greatly indebted for his search in the state archives of Hannover and Fallingbostel, and the records of the Church of Dueshorn. From the book "Die Heidmark," where the Harms and other residents of the Luneburger Heide have been recorded since their appearance in this region, he gathered much helpful data. We also appreciate the co-operation of all the relatives who made this genealogy possible. The cover design and the pen sketch of the Dueshorn Church were done by Barbara J. Wilson, Alamosa, Colo.

Often we had to choose between two different dates and then base our choice of year on authentic archives or records.

We hope the assembling of this material will help future generations to realize the Harms heritage: to live a life of honest labor, physical or mental, and to cherish the faith of our fathers.

Louise Harms Casper
Sharon Natalie Casper

Nineteen Hundred and Fifty Six

HARMS

The first 47 pages are a history of the ancient HARMS FAMILY of Hanover Germany. We are a part of that family. What you will read here comes from the "Gleanings" of Clarence Uetzmann. He is found on page 20, of the Uetzmann genealogy. He did not write it but he worked long and hard hours to find this history, and how we fit into it. This part of the book is dedicated to him.

It is the year 1956. One hundred years have passed since under the grace of God, the ancient Harmshof in the province of Hannover Germany was linked with the Harms Homestead of the forested hills of southern Minnesota territory in the United States.

The original Harmshof according to the archives of Celle. Province of Hanover Northern Germany was registered in the year 1483 as the biggest in Bostlingen south of Fallingbostel. It lay in the southwest part of the Luneburger Heide, in a section termed "Die Heidmark" a beautiful region of heath hills and forests both evergreen and broadleaf. Near the ancient county seat of Fallingbostel are found the seven stone henge remains of the burial places of the Huns, fierce Asiatic tribes who overran Europe in 400 Ad.

The first recorded owner of the Bostlingen homestead in the year 1378 is a Johann Luetkeman. In 1528 a Peter Harmen is noted and over the centuries a variation of derivatives of the name in the form of Harmensz, Hermensz, Hermens, Harmsz, Harms appear. Heerman, according to its low German form evolved from the word Heer meaning army therefore Heerman is "man of the army". In 1563 the owner of the Harmshof is Hinrich Heermen: in 1589 we find Hermenm in 1628 evolves Hansz Harmenz and in 1672 it is Johann Harmsz: in 1714 Johann Hinrich Harms and in 1757 Johann Peter Harms is recorded as owner.

Johann Peter Harms was co-founder of the first savings bank in lower Saxon in 1838. In a book, "Die Heidmark" there is a painting by the artist Spellman of A Fritz Harms with his violin. He is said to have been the most outstanding musician ever to have lived in the Heidmark. Descendants of these Bostlingen Harms in Carver County Minnesota are Mary Harms, Doris Harms Gruenhagen, Fritz, Henry and Christ Harms, A brother Sam of Maine a German instructor at Harvard University died a few years ago.

In 1656 ten years after the close of the 30 year war, Johann Harms of the Bostlingengen Harmshof married into the Waetkenhof at Hartem, a few miles southwest of Bostlingen. He was recorded as Johann Waetken, called Harms. Place names were retained with great tenacity so a Joahnn Harms as late as 1700, is listed in the church records of Dushorn as Johann Waetken called Harms.

The Waetkenhof kept its name until 1936 when its owner was George Hellberg. In that year the owner to whose blood ties the American branch of the Harms is linked on the female side, moved to Hof Lohe in Kres Celle. Its present owner is Ernest Helberg. It is also linked to a daughter of the Waetkenhof. Marieehen Wischmann, now on an estate by Dehnsen, near Lueneburg. In 1937 the owners of the Harmshof of Bolstingen evacuated moving to a large estate at Pogenhagen, near Neustadt Hannover. Today its owner is Mrs. Emma Harms. The entire region of the original estate was taken over for military ground in World War II but the house of the Bolstingen Harmshof is still standing.

The various forms of the name Waetken evolved from that of the first recorded owner 1489. Henke Wetkert: in 1499 it is Henke Wedeking: from 1511- 1528 the name Thys Wetken is repeated. From 1563-1631 four successive owners have the name Heinrich Wetken. The name Wedeking is closest to its original meaning. Welkind or "Forest Child". The name shows its closeness to the Saxon tongue. This region is the home of early Anglo-Saxons. Germanic tribes who settled in Britain from here in the 5th and 6th centuries the remaining old Saxons under their hero Wittlkind refuses conquest by Charlamenge for 30 years. After their surrender in the 9th century they accepted Christianity.

The Waetkenhof at Hartem had a beautiful stand of timber besides its heath, pasture crops and meadowland. The farm place was beautifully located on a rise of ground and had a large grove of majestic oaks, centuries old. The sheep barn was built to hold 300 sheep of the breed. "Heldeschmuecke" or pride of the heath, overlooked miles of heatherland and pasture.

Hanover was part of the Duchy of Brunswick until 1692 when it became part of the Holy Roman empire. From 1714-1837 it was ruled by English Kings. It lies along the North Sea.

According to the archives of Hanover in 1667 Johann Wetke called Harms furnished the Duke of Brunswick wagon service and works acre for acre on his and the Duke's land. To the Duke of Kuenbyrg he had to give one smoked ham, 1 May hen (one hatched in May), 1 pig, 1 ewe with lamb, some hunting money, rye and oats. To the circuit judge of Fallingbostel and the Kuester of the church at Dushorn 1 ham, bread, and eggs. To the noble family at Weihe he had to give one-tenth of small livestock and one-tenth of his corn crop.

The ownership of the Waetkenhof was taken over by Peter Waetken called Harms in 1682 following Johann Waetken, called Harms, who had married into the place in 1656. After Peter Waetken's ownership a second Johann Waetken called Harms took over in 1702.

His son Johann Peter Waetken called Harms took over the Waetkenhof in 1723. In that same year he married Margarethe Elisabeth Brandes. In 1725 he married Catherina Margarethe Wehers Gabrecht, daughter of Hans Wehrs. One of their sons was Johann Hinrich Harms born in 1736.

Johann Hinrich Harms took over the Waetkenhof in 1752. In 1779 he is listed in the Hanover archives as possessing 1 house and 5 farm buildings insured for 375 taler in cash 58 taler, 22 groschen, 6 1/2 pfennige. The land and field was measured as so many steps long and so many steps wide. The estate had 563 morgen land, one morgen equals about 2 acres. Originally it designated the amount of land one man could plow or work in one morning. In 1752 Johann Hinrich married Elisabeth Ilse Hoyer daughter of Carsten and Anna Marlene von der Berlie Hoyer, Johann died in 1804. They had nine children. Casten Heinrich born 1753, Johann Hinrich born 1758, Cord Hinrich born 1759, Ilse Margarethe born 1762, Hans Heinrich born 1765, JOHANN CASTEN born 1768, Anna Ilse born 1770.

From 1836 to 1865 many persons left the county of Fallingbostel for America. Many of these were relatives who followed each other as they received favorable reports from America. These emigrants traveled between decks and arrived in America only after a long uncomfortable voyage. Many of the following names are still familiar in Carver County Minnesota.

In 1842 a Gruenhagen left from Westernholtz in 1845 a von der Berlie. 1847 Marie Dorothee Uetzmann age 17 from Dushorn, 1848 a Zum Berge from Westernholtz, also 1848 Johann Heinrich Sprengeler with wife and two children from Bostlingen.

One hundred and twenty two persons from Kreis Fallingbostel emigrated to America via Bremerhaven in 1855. Those who settled in carver county were Heinrich Friedrich Eggers and wife and four children from Iningen: George Heinrich Mattfeldt with wife Catharine Dorothea Uetzmann and small son Heinrich from Ettenbostel: and Johann Casten Harms II with wife Ilse Katherine Margarethe Uetzmann and small son Casten Heinrich Harms.

In 1857 the following left: Friedrich Zum Berge and wife Marie Harms Cord Bergmann a tailor from Proebsten: Johann Heinrich Bruesehoff and wife Margarethe Elisabeth (Luering) with two small children Friedrich 4 and Johann Heinrich 6: Hans Heinrich Harms a bachelor 32 years old from Proebsten, a brother of Johann C. Harms who came in 1855, John Friedrich Eggers of Krellingen with his wife Ilse Sophie Elisabeth (Uetzmann) who was a sister to Ilse K.M. Harms and Catherine Dorothea Matfeldt.

In 1858 Heinrich Cord Ohland and wife Catherine Margarethe (Uetzmann) emigrated with their three children. Casten Heinrich 18 Heinrich 15 and Friedrich 9. Casten Heinrich Harms and wife Anna Christine (Dreyer) also came in 1858.

Friedrich Wildung, his wife Dorothea (Uetzmann) with their six children Friedrich 19, Diedrich 17, Marie 15, Wilhelm 13, Dorothea 9, and Sophie 5 left from Bockhorn in 1860.

All these emigrants, mostly farm laborers, or living in small homes on large estates, left because there was no more land available in their homeland. This is also the reason Johann Casten left for America. Johan Casten and his party stopped for a year in illinois, but not finding the climate to thier liking traveled on to Minnesota territory, following the Minnesota River from Ft. Snelling to the village of Carver. From there they traveled eight miles farther west in the deep forested territory, untill they crossed a small stream later called Bevans Creek.

They took a homested of 180 acres to which they later added more land by purchase till they owned a section of land. The later land grants were signed by Presidents Buchanan and Lincoln.

The first home of Johann Casten and Ilse Katharine Margarethe Harms was of huge logs on the hill northeast of the present homestead. It used to be called "Hirchbarg" meaning dear hill. In this house Wilheimine was born in 1806 during a Sioux Indian raid. According to Ernest Harms, only living child of Johann Casten Harms.

The settlers hearing of the impending raid, refused to leave the new parents and infant and seek thier own safty at Fort Snelling. The Indians chose a southern route and the settlers remained unharmed. A factor in this may have been that the family had often befriended the Indians, roasting their venison and the indians giving them meat in turn.

The next house was built of frame on the present homesite. In it were born Charlotte in 1868 and Ernest 1870. Later it served as chicken house for many years. Having been moved down hill towards the road.

The present house of brick was built by two pinz brothers. One of whom Herman married Bertha Harms' eldest daughter of the house in the year 1878. So the house today is about 80 years old. It is well preserved, especially the interior wood work of waist high wainscoating. It has given happy hours to many who grew up in it and many relatives who vacationed on the farm or come back to visit.

As the Minnesota Harms homestead traces back through only two estates in Germany, so there have been only two church homes in which the Harms have been recorded for centuries.

The church at Dueshorn in Hannover in which generations of Harms and since 1700, the Uetzmans have been baptized, married, and buried, dates back to the introduction of Christianity by Charlemagne. In 1224 the name "Johanniskirche" Church of John the Baptist, was recorded in 1528 during Martin Luther's lifetime. Lutheranism was introduced at which time the Harms also embraced the doctrine of Reformation.

The Zion Church of Benton township in Minnesota became the church home of the emigants from the Duesorn parish. It was organized by the pioneers including Johann Casten Harms, whose signatyre is second on the constitution, in 1857. Its roster of members still include the names of the various branches of Harms, Mattfeld, Zum Berge, Gruenhagen, Eggers, Brueshoff, Wilddung Sprenglerer, and Bergmann. The log building they erected in 1858 was replaced by a frame building in 1890. Since 1954 a modern church and education building stands on the old Zion Hill.

Our God our help in ages past
Our hope for years to come.
Our shelter from the stormy blast
And our eternal home.

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN DUSHORN CHURCH

The Church of today was built in 1500 and is called St. Johannes-der-Täuffer (JOHN THE BAPTIST).

In 1667 the following towns belonged to the congregation: Oberhode, Ostenholz, Westenholz, Benhof, Krelingen, Benzen, Hollige, Dushorn, Ellinghausen, Röderhofen, Tietlingen, Bockhorn, Warrenholz, Boerstling, Hartem, Kolk..

In 1711 the following villages left the Dushorn Congregation and built their own church at OSTENHOLZ - Ostenholz, Westenholz, Oberhoede, Benhof

" In 1843 the Dushorn Church was remodeled and the seating capacity was increased from 430 to 776.

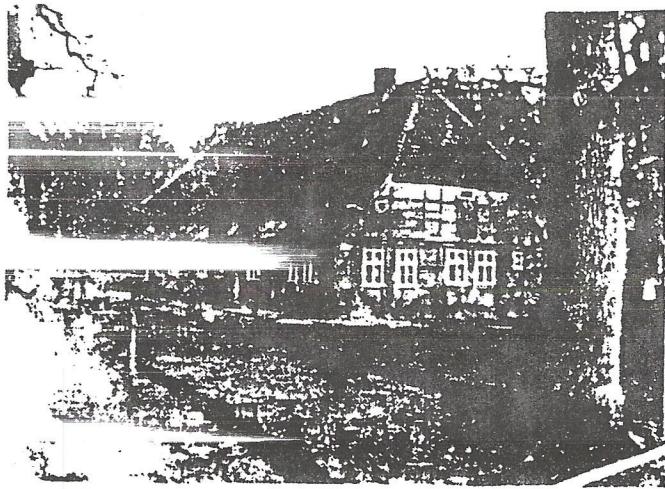


This Baptismal Angel is lowered for baptisms, since 1795.



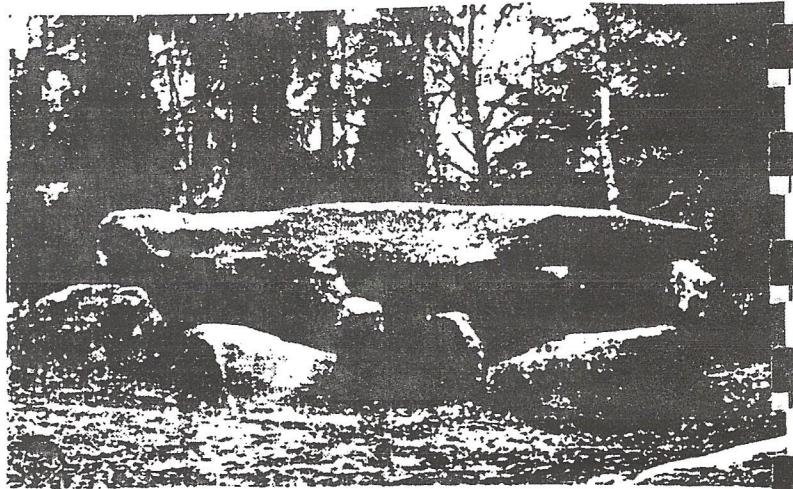


Church at Dueshorn, Hannover, sketched after a reproduction of a painting by the artist, Friedo Witte. Here for centuries generations of Harms were baptised, married and buried. "Lord Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Ps. 90, verse 1.

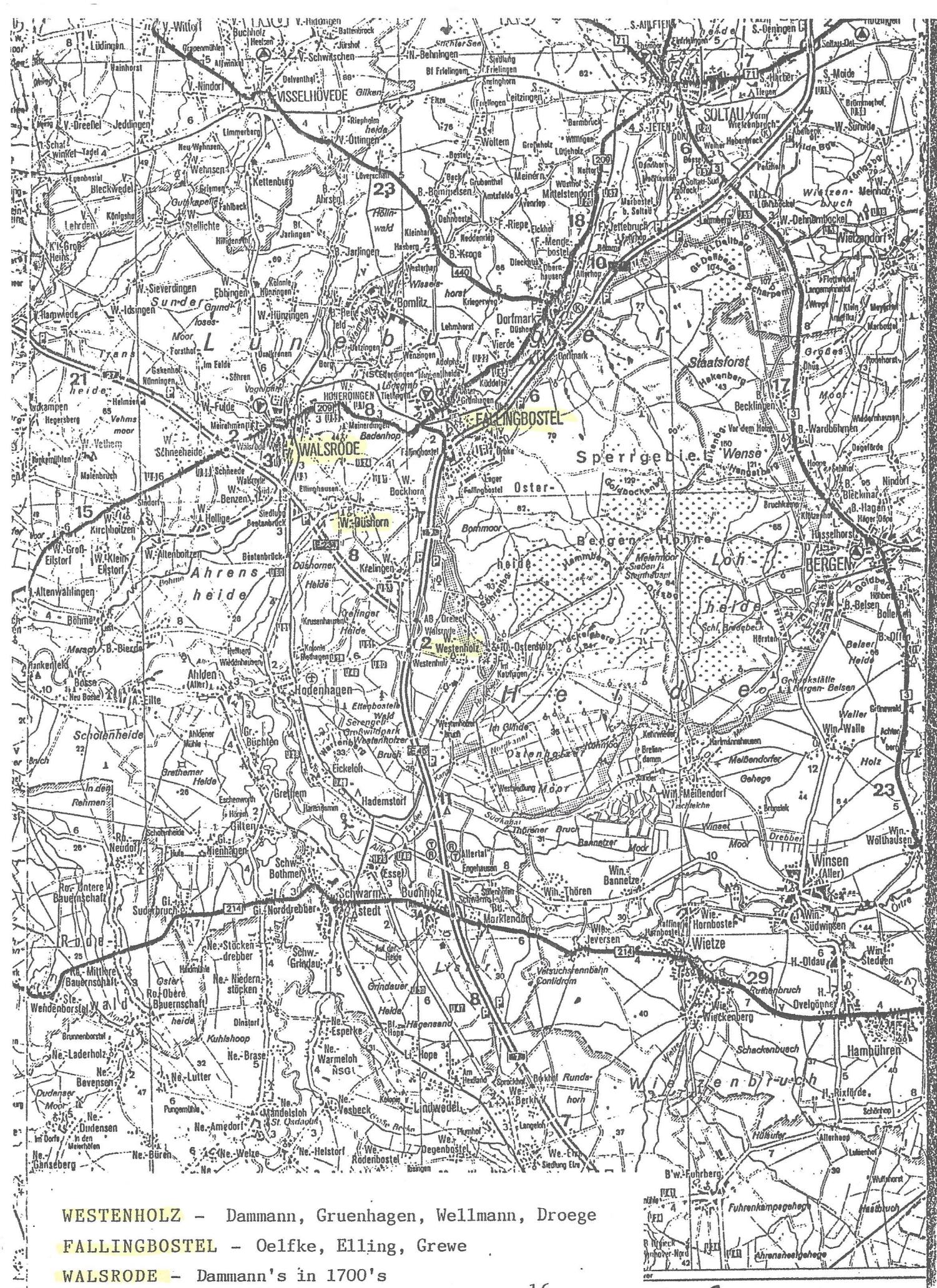


*The Original Harmshof
at Bostlingen*

*Stonehenge Burial Places
of Huns near
Fallinghostel, Hannover*



VILLAGE OF HARTEM. The Waettgenhof lies in the center of the grove to the left. Johann Harmsz (Harms) married into this place from Bostlingen in 1656.



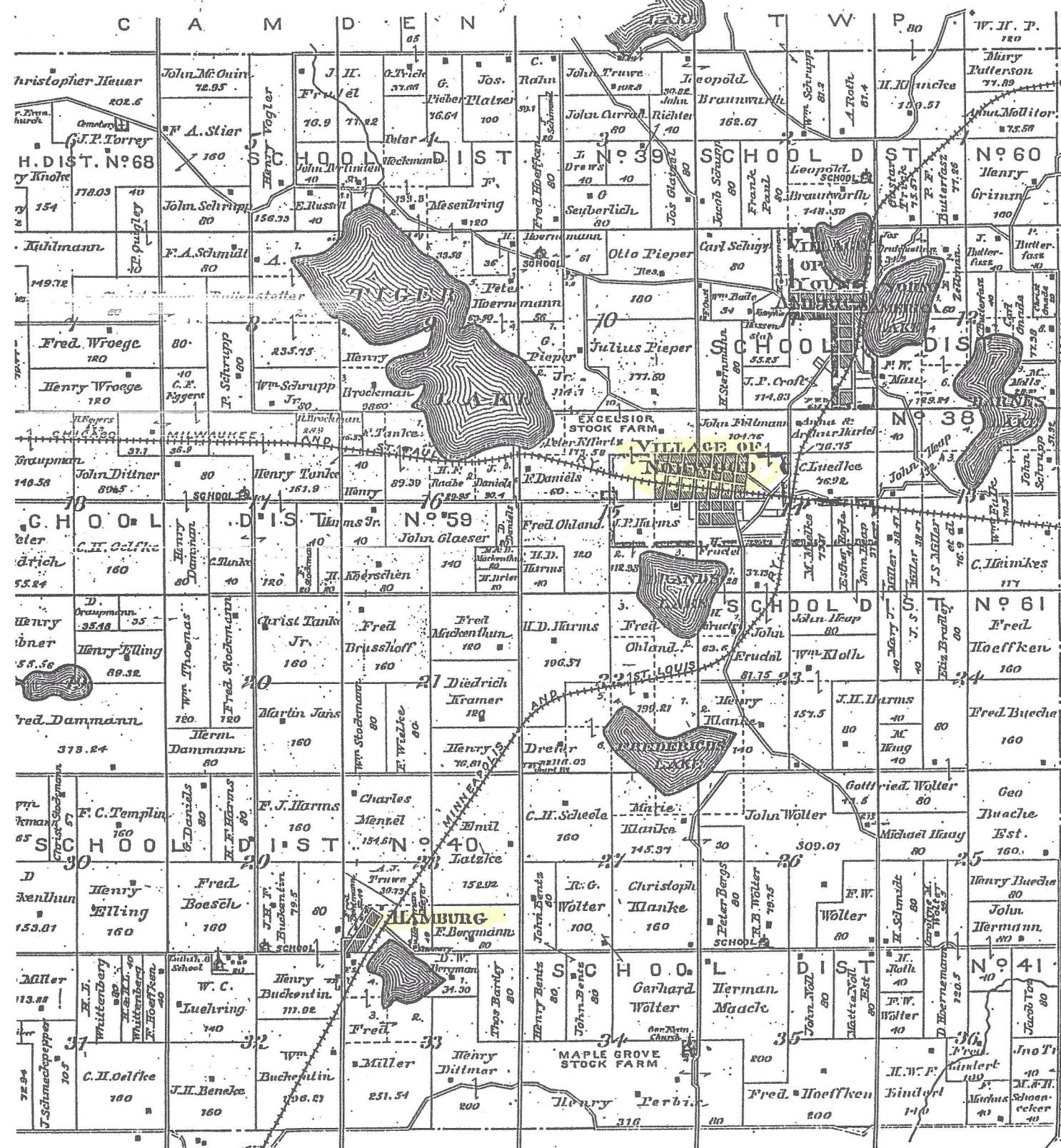
2. Christine Willmsen
(Apr. 24, 1975)

3. David Willmsen
(July 25, 1980)

1898

YOUNG AMERICA

Carver Co.

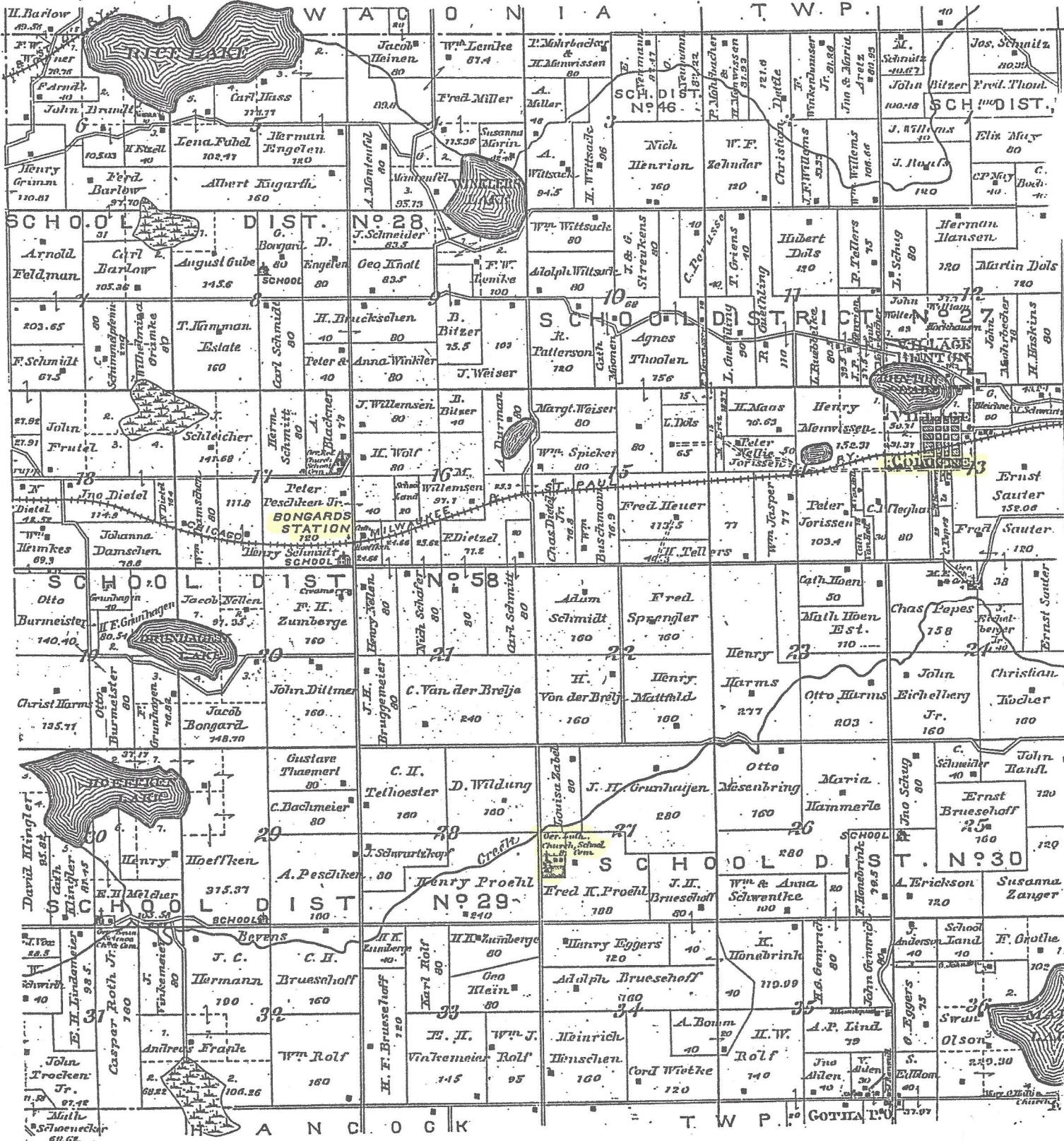


At first there was real hardship among the GERMAN settlers. Oftentimes they were hungry. Breadstuffs and other provisions were scarce and high priced. Cured meats were almost a luxury and although there was plenty of wild game to be had for the killing, these pioneers were unaccustomed to hunting and fishing and could not become accomplished in these pursuits. On the other hand many of the American and native born (INDIANS) were excellent hunters and expert fisherman and the products of their skill helped to furnish food for many of the settlers. Clothing of course was scarce and costly. Physicians were infrequent and a majority of them were not highly trained. Many a life was lost because the doctor could not reach the house in time, or because of his inefficiency when he was in charge of the case. The nearest hospital was St. Paul.

Carver Co.

BENTON

1898





In 1903 ERNST GRUENHAGEN married DOROTHEA HARMS, daughter of Christoph Heinrich and Dorothea Koch of Westenholz, Germany. Christoph's father, Johann Peter Harms, was co-founder of the first savings bank in Lower Saxony, Germany in 1838. Christoph came to America where he met and married on April 4, 1869 at Benton Church Dorothea Koch.

Dorothea Koch was born in Westenholz, Germany the daughter of Johann Christoph & Catharina Marie Dettmer Koch. She came to America with her father and settled in Carver County.

FAMILY ANCESTOR CHART ON PAGE 248.

Christoph and Dorothea Harms had 6 children: Mary (Jan. 3, 1871), Henry (July 24, 1874), Christ (May 21, 1876), Dorothea (Ernst Gruenhagen), Samuel, and Fredrich (Jan. 10, 1885).

Ernst Gruenhagen spent most of his life hospitalized from 1928 until his death. Dorothea spent her life in the Benton community and was a member of the Ladies Aid and LWML of Zion Lutheran Church of Benton Township.

CHRISTOPH & DOROTHEA KOCH HARMS
m. April 4, 1869



Christ-Samuel-Henry-Dorothea-Mary
CHRISTOPH & DOROTHEA KOCH HARMS



ERNST & DOROTHEA HARMS GRUENHAGEN
m. October 9, 1903

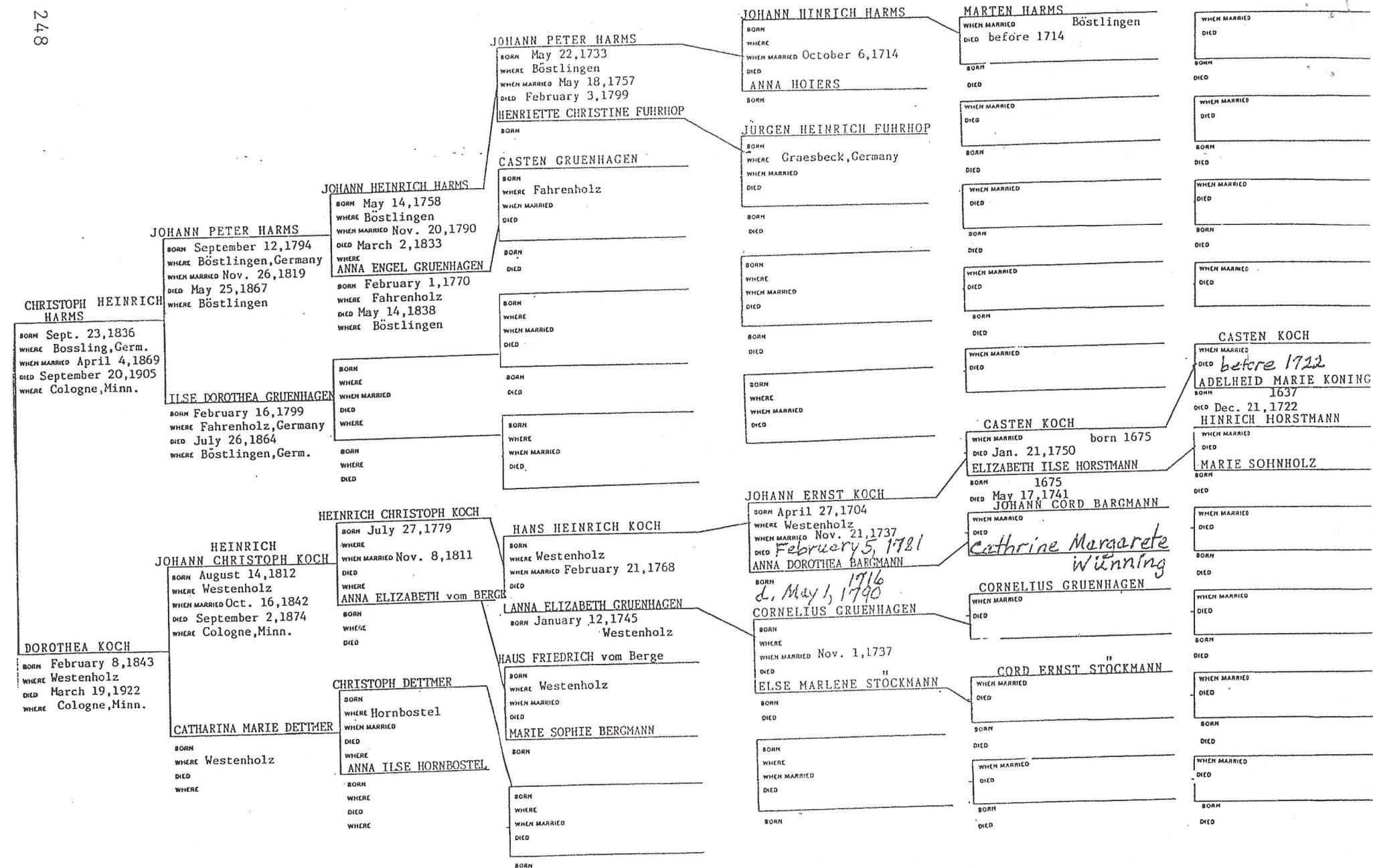
ERNST H.F. GRUENHAGEN m. Oct. 9,1903 DOROTHEA HARMS
(Dec. 24,1879- Oct. 18,1970) (Mar. 7,1878-Mar. 27,1968)

CHILDREN:

- | | | | |
|---------|--|------------------|--|
| pg. 249 | Alvine B.M. Gruenhagen
(Nov. 1,1904-June 29,1982) | m. Oct. 3,1925 | Alfred F. Bruesehoff
(June 7,1895-Jan. 16,1980) |
| pg. 250 | Amanda E.M. Gruenhagen
(Apr. 15,1906) | m. Apr. 4,1931 | Herbert Schmeckpeper
(May 10,1905-Feb. 22,1981) |
| | Marie A.D. Gruenhagen
(Dec. 29,1908-July 29,1981) | m. Dec. 21,1951 | Arthur Schmeckpeper
(June 8,1911) |
| pg. 251 | Herman F.H. Gruenhagen
(Mar. 22,1911-Aug. 13,1983) | m. June 8,1944 | Adella Herrmann
(June 9,1916) |
| pg. 252 | Erna A.K. Gruenhagen
(July 16,1913) | m. May 8,1938 | Fred H. Behnke Sr.
(Aug. 2,1908-Sept. 22,1981) |
| pg. 257 | Hilma A.B. Gruenhagen
(Apr. 9,1916 -June 18,1990) | m. Sept. 15,1935 | William Thran
(Dec. 1,1903-Oct. 21,1976) |
| | Wilhelm H.F. Gruenhagen
(Oct. 10,1920-Feb. 13,1923) | | |



AMANDA - HERMAN - MARIA
HILMA - ERNA - ALVINE
GRUENHAGEN



Dad Behnke was born on August 2, 1908, to Albert and Augusta Behnke. He had two older half-brothers and two sisters, Martha and Bertha. Albert had been married before but we don't know what happened to his first wife. His half brothers were August who was the oldest and Bill was next who was ten years older than Dad.

When Martha was four years old and Bertha was three years old and Dad Behnke was a baby, their mother Augusta hung herself. It seems Augusta's husband Albert was not a very good father, husband, etc. and Augusta was pregnant again and just couldn't cope.

Martha's date of birth was December 23, 1905. They were born in Midland County, Michigan, a small town named Ashley, near Coleman, Michigan, in Geneva Township.

Some people named Eckert adopted Aunt Bertha (not Martha because she had a speech problem and not Dad Behnke because he was a baby). Bertha had a college education and was a schoolteacher. Bertha now lives in California.

When Augusta died, Dad and Martha were shipped by boat to Minnesota and lived with an aunt first--Ida (Kassuhn) Mueller (Mrs. August Mueller). Ida was a little "kooky." She would get all dressed up in a fancy light dress and big picture hat and say she was going to freeze herself to death in the cold winter. One day they followed her and found her at the neighbor's house playing cards. She also would grind a big knife on a crock and say she was going to cut her throat if the children misbehaved. She loved to play cards all the time. Dad and Martha would lose a card on purpose just to quit playing, but she would just make another one out of paper.

Then they moved and lived with Grandpa Mueller and a step-grandmother, who was only nice to them when Grandpa was home. She did not abuse them physically, only mentally. One time she cracked Dad Behnke with an iron soup ladle and thought he was dead. Another time she baked a rhubarb pie but put salt in it instead of sugar. She said they had to eat every bit of it. Dad outfoxed her. Every time he went to the outhouse he threw away a piece at a time and covered it with crinkled paper so she wouldn't find out.

Martha said she was not mistreated by her Grandpa, but Dad was. One time Grandpa woke Dad up and kicked him down the stairs for forgetting to do a chore.

They never had a Christmas tree. When Martha was ten years old, she brought tree branches home. They tied them together, put three candles on them, lit them, and danced around them. Well, the curtain caught fire. They put the fire out but there was a hole in the curtain. Aunt Martha mended it very carefully by crocheting the hole shut. Nobody noticed that it had been mended.

After Martha was confirmed, Albert came to Belle Plaine and got Martha to be his housekeeper. She was old enough to do his work now. He didn't want to take Dad along which must have hurt him deeply.

Aunt Martha and Dad Behnke were close and kept in contact when they were older. After Martha was married in 1923 to Fred Hansen, her dad Albert came and lived with them for awhile. Fred Hansen's real first name was "Fedder."

Albert was illegitimate. He came from Germany with his mother. Their last name then was Wittenberg. When she married Mr. Behnke, he adopted Albert. On Martha's birth certificate, Albert listed his occupation as farmer, but this is questionable.