

The Heinrich Brinker Family

Courtesy of Matilda Kuchenmeister Brinker

This is a transcription of a hand written three page letter on the life of Heinrich Brinker written by his daughter, Mrs. G.A. Kuechenmeister (Mathilde Marie) at the time of her father's death.

Heinrich Brinker died last Friday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. G.A. Kuechenmeister, after a brief illness. A few days previous to his death, he slipped on the kitchen floor and this fall together with old age, hastened his death.

Heinrich Brinker was born June 16, 1818, at Oanabrueck, Hanover, Germany. When he was 6 yrs of age his father died and he was adopted by a Catholic priest, in whose home he spent a happy childhood, and where he attended school until he attained age 14 yrs (he was one of 13 children). After his confirmation his mother was summoned to a council that was to decide what trade he should be apprenticed, and he being the eldest child, she decided that he should learn his father's trade, that of tailoring. After having served his master faithfully for the term of his apprenticeship, he took up his staff as "Handwerksburcche" and set out into the great, strange world. He took a southwestern course from his native town until he reached Crefeld, and from there traveled 2 yrs through the Rhine country, making longer and shorter stays at Elberfeld, Duesseldorf, Salingen, Cablantz, Bingen, and many other places. He spent 2 yrs in Switzerland, making his longest stay in Schoffhauses, Zuerich, Appenzell, Lucerne, Bern, and Neufchatel. From Lausanne he entered France. After spending several months at different minor towns, he reached Paris where, with the exception of 6 mos spent at Lyons, he lived 15 yrs.

Besides working at his trade he took up the studies of phnenology and history, frequenting places where lectures were given on these and kindred subjects. In this way he became acquainted with many noted men among whom he counted Heinrich Heine as an intimate acquaintance. It was here that he married Anna Marie Amelia Wilmes. Here 4 children were born to them as follows: Elise and Heinrich (who died in infancy), Mathilde Marie (Mrs. G.A. Kuechenmeister) and Marie (Mrs. Peter Bechius).

After the fall of Louis Phillippe in 1848 he took an active part in the anti-Napoleonic movement and one day, being informed that his name appeared on the list of persons to be arrested for political activity, he fled to America where he was joined 6 months later by his family. Together with Jacques Reding and wife, M. Audier, Francois Bernard and another French family by the name of Le Spre, they all came to Wisconsin where they bought 120 acres of land in the town of Fredonia, Ozaukee County. Before many weeks passed it was apparent that not one of the small band was fitted to force a livelihood from the wilderness and all went elsewhere to seek more congenial occupations. His wife, preferred to remain on the farm with the children. He bought up the shares of his friends and established a home for them, then went to Chicago where he conducted a merchant tailoring establishment from 1853 until 1865. Then he spent 9 yrs on his farm in Fredonia, and after that 5 yrs at Colby and since 1879 he has lived with his children, Mr. and Mrs. G.A. Keuchenmeister at Kewaskum and West Bend, where he died on the 6th day of January 1905, age 86 yrs, 6 months, and 20 days. Mrs. Brinker preceded her husband in death in September 1899. In addition to the children above mentioned, he left his surviving sons, Henry and Charles, now of Oregon, Emma (Mrs. H.J. Blanchard) of Colby Wisconsin, and Louisa (Mrs. Deane) of Chicago, and 26 grand children.