

✧ Niehaus Family Newsletter ✧

Joseph and Gertrude Living On

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Editor: Nancy Niehaus Hurley

The First Reunion – 1939

By all reports, the Niehaus Reunion was a success from the start. Charlotte Niehaus Baxter and Anne Niehaus (Mrs. Robert) were the first organizers in 1939. They used penny postcards to invite everyone to the event that took place in Garfield Park. When asked how that first one went, Charlotte replied, "There was a great turnout. Every one of the Niehaus brothers and sisters and their families came." There aren't any records of the numbers attending but the estimate based on the photo is nearly 100.

Many of us remember the fun at reunions as we grew up, with lots of good food, swimming in the Garfield Park pool and, always, horseshoe competitions. From a personal standpoint, I can recall my dad (Frank) anticipating these gatherings each summer. It's nice to see so many young people attending these days and hope they will carry the same memories in the future.



We are trying to identify everyone in this 1939 reunion photo. The project is moving along pretty well, but we are still searching for the identification of a few people. There's a copy of the photo and the names listed so far on display at the reunion. Everyone please take a look to see if you know any of the mystery people. Let's see if we can name 100% of the folks in the oldest family reunion photo available. I will be glad to share the final list with everyone.

Life Goes on:

A Niehaus Family Remembrance

At the 2007 reunion I was happy to have the chance to talk for a little while with Nina Stull. I asked if she had a family remembrance that might be shared in the newsletter. Well, her response is, in my opinion, a real tale for the memory books!

Nina told me how she was positive she knew exactly the date of death for one of our family members, that being Ralph Lark. She remembers so well because of a momentous day in her life.

This short, but significant, story begins on June 4, 1945. Nina was nine months pregnant and began having labor pains. She soon realized it was time to go to the hospital and alerted her husband, Richard. They got into the car, bringing Feenie (Richard's mother) along for the trip to Methodist Hospital.

Well, the Lark home was along the route to the hospital and Richard and Feenie wanted to stop to make a visit. You see Ralph Lark had died three days earlier and was laid out at the family home. Of course, during the trip from the south side of Indianapolis, Nina's labor pains progressed. Hubby and mother-in-law assured her they would make their visit short. Nina was, needless to say, pretty concerned about what might occur while they were inside mourning Ralph. Considering her situation, she decided to wait in the car. She still vividly remembers, "It seemed like they were in there a very long time." But the dead were respected that day as well as the newly born. Nina made it to the hospital and Joemma Sue was born a short time after they arrived. Life goes on!

Wanted - Family Photos

Where are the long lost family photos? Are there any grandparents lurking in your attic? How about early 1900s shots of family? They would be very appreciated contributions to the Niehaus Family Scrapbook. You can see the work-in-progress that is on display at the reunion. If you would loan me your old photos, I would be glad to copy and return them unscathed. I promise!!

Charlotte Niehaus Baxter The Matriarch at 96

Among us is a lady that's a shining example of the strength of the Niehaus genes. Charlotte Louise Wilhelmina Theresa Niehaus was born March 5, 1912, to John and Louise (Albers) Niehaus. She is the granddaughter of Joseph and Gertrude Niehaus and Charles and Martha Albers, all German immigrants in the mid 1880s. Charlotte demonstrates that hardy German heritage in her 96 years and still running strong. She reminds us all how to live a long life by staying active and enjoying her family. Up until just recently she danced on weekends at Moose Lodge #17 in Speedway. Let's keep an eye on her at the reunion for some new line dancing steps.

Charlotte's family is always well represented at the Niehaus family reunions. At last count her immediate line included five children, 22 grandchildren, 42 great grandchildren and 18 great great grandchildren. Below, Charlotte (right) shares good times with three generations of her family at the 2007 reunion.



Family Memorials

May they rest in peace.

Virginia "Gin" Niehaus (Mrs. Edward)
22 December 1920 – 5 August 2007

James R. Lark
4 August 1940 – 25 November 2007

History Corner

Why Indianapolis?

The history of Indianapolis points to very good reasons that our ancestors chose to settle in this Midwestern location in the late 1880s. The city was experiencing a manufacturing, transportation and cultural expansion at the time that the Joseph and Gertrude Niehaus family became residents. The population of the city grew from 50,000 to 100,000 between 1870 and 1890. There was, undoubtedly, a favorable climate for Joseph to make a living at his rug weaving business during the last 20 years of the 19th century. As the city attracted more residents, he would continue to find more customers for his products. And as the children of the family became adults, opportunities would exist for them.

We could also surely say that an influence in the Niehaus family decision to become Indianapolis residents was their fellow Germans. These countrymen were a major percentage of the late 19th century population increase. Of the foreign born in Indianapolis in 1890, 55% were Germans. Since a large number of them were employed in the trades and skilled work areas, the labor movement in the city during the 1880s and 1890s was another attraction. Germans were active and provided strong leadership in the unions. It was a natural fit. They brought experience in the trade unions with them from their native land.

This period of time was also a notable one for the entire state in the realm of national politics. Considering our current political happenings, the circumstances in Indiana in those years are quite interesting. The elections were closely contested in the post-Civil War era through the early 1900s. Indiana was courted as a "swing state" due to its early election date in October and the coveted 15 electoral votes. Both parties poured money into the state. Hoosiers were on national party tickets in each election between 1868 and 1920. In fact, one president and four vice presidents were from Indiana. In 1888, shortly after our Niehaus family came to the city, one of Indianapolis' own, Benjamin Harrison, was elected the 23rd president of the United States.

My reference for this political history was a book by Jeffrey Tenuth named "Indianapolis: A Circle City History." He called this period of time for Indianapolis the "Golden Age." Mr. Tenuth reports on voting statistics that would be considered amazing in today's elections. Between 1880 and 1912 voter turnout in



Indiana was above 90% in all but one election, 1892. At the same time, national turnout never exceeded 80%. Can you imagine those numbers today?

Does it make you wonder if Joseph and Gertrude were politically aware and in how many elections they may have voted? Did they discuss issues with Gerhard, Anna, Rosa, Mary Anna, Josephine, Bernard, Helena, Joseph, Jr, Clara, John and Wilhelmina? Considering the turmoil in Europe that preceded their decision to leave and the nature of Germans, we might guess that they were opinionated on how political leaders should operate. Of course, this is all we can actually do, speculate. But what we do know is that Indianapolis provided the surroundings that the Niehaus family needed to grow and prosper. Hence, we have the Niehauses of today.

The Niehaus Family emigrated from Westphalia, Germany to Indianapolis, Indiana in 1885:

Heinrich Joseph Niehaus - 1848-1921
Elizabeth Gertrude Wilmsen Niehaus – 1847-1895

Their children:
Gerhard - 1874-1918
Anna - 1875-1956
Rosa - 1876-1952
Mary Anna - 1878-1911
Josephine - 1880-1954
Bernard - 1881-1943
Helena - 1883-1960
Joseph - 1884-1969
Clara - 1887-1949
John - 1889-1956
Francis - 1892-1892
Wilhelmina - 1893-1981

Family Ties: The Larks

It's always nice to hear from another family member who is reaching out to make a connection. Recently I received an email from Jennifer Masterson from Chicago. Jennifer is the great granddaughter of Ralph and Rosa Niehaus Lark. She is researching her family history and her aunt shared a copy of our 2007 Niehaus Newsletter. That resulted in her emailing me and we are now sharing information. Some of you probably know her mother, Jane Marie Lark Whisler Pitt, daughter of Ralph (Jr) and Margaret Lark. Hopefully, Jenni and other family members will be able to come to the reunion this summer.

But sadly Jenni shared recently that she has a lung disease known as LAM. (The actual name is very long.) She's in good condition since they diagnosed it very early. If the point comes many years down the road that she has to have transplants, she'll be prepared. There is information about this disease available from the LAM Foundation.

Jenni has learned a lot about organ donation through her plight. For instance, many people who might not think they are eligible to be organ donors actually are, regardless of age and some health conditions. Even if you have a bad heart, your kidneys or lungs can save someone. If you want to learn more about being a donor go to: www.organdonor.gov

Let's keep our cousin in our prayers.

Nancy's Notes:

A big thank you to Rosie Walters for organizing the reunions for the past few years. We have all enjoyed having the fabulous facilities at Mooresville Park and we greatly appreciate your work in setting up the event.

To Peg Stull, many thanks for creating the annual reunion quilts. Every one of these masterpieces displays your love in the work. They are truly treasures.

I would also like to thank everyone who helped with input for this year's newsletter, Diana Pugh, Nina Stull, Charlotte Baxter and my hubby, Jerry, who always proofreads for me.

You are all my editors, too. If you find I have made an error in my facts or an omission, please let me know. For instance, I'm trying to keep up on the memorials, but I may miss one. So don't hesitate to bring it to my attention.

And lastly, let's hear your tales for the next newsletter. I would love to record your family memories, too. Maybe there's a story passed down from your parents. Or you recall fondly a certain time period or your favorite aunt or uncle. It can be anything you would enjoy sharing. Just stop me to chat or use my email: nhurley1010@gmail.com
Or phone me: 317-727-5350
Or send me some notes at:
111 Rainbow Drive, #1152
Livingston, Texas 77399.

Keep enjoying your family!