

**The Billigmeier Family**  
**Black Sea Germans to North Dakota**

**By Carolyn Schott, April 2024**

## A Narrative Lineage of the Billigmeier Family: Black Sea Germans to North Dakota

### Introduction

Many stories of immigrant families focus only on the “big” moves—across oceans or continents—to start new lives in new places. But the Billigmeiers’ story is that of a family that was constantly on the move, both big and small, to seek new opportunities.

As an ethnic German family, their very presence in the Russian Empire was the result of a big move by a previous generation. For many decades, the family remained there, making a series of smaller moves to new colonies in search of new land. As circumstances in Russia changed, the family made that big move across the ocean to the U.S. But instead of being content, each generation continued to explore new opportunities. For one, that meant shifting from homesteading to a business venture and back to farming. For the next, it meant ranging as far away as France to serve his country before settling down near his home town in North Dakota. Every move, big and small, brought the family new possibilities and hope for better lives.

**A note on church records available for researching Black Sea Germans:** As there was no civil registration of births/marriages/deaths in the Russian Empire until after the Russian Revolution, church metrical records are the best documentation of vital records prior to 1919.<sup>1</sup> The most prevalent church records for Black Sea Germans are the St. Petersburg Consistory Lutheran Church Book Duplicates (often just called the St. Petersburg Records), which start in 1833.<sup>2</sup> These are copies of local churches’ original birth/marriage/death records, making them vulnerable to transcription errors.

In the Bessarabia-region villages, where the Billigmeiers settled after 1843, some original church birth/marriage/death records do exist.<sup>3</sup> When available, those have been used rather than the St. Petersburg duplicate records. In addition, German churches in Bessarabia maintained family registers. While the primary purpose of these was to track an individual’s communion participation, they serve as an important source of information on family groups and birth/marriage/death information when

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All German translations by Carolyn Schott with some vocabulary assistance from DeepL.com. The author acknowledges Elli Wise for occasional assistance in deciphering especially difficult-to-read German handwritten script and to Merv Weiss for assistance in deciphering some Cyrillic handwritten script. All websites accessed on 14 January 2023 unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> “Russia Civil Registration: Historical Background” in *FamilySearch Research Wiki*, *FamilySearch* ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russia\\_Civil\\_Registration](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russia_Civil_Registration)).

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Kent Edlund, *The Lutherans of Russia: Parish Index to the Church Books of the Evangelical-Lutheran Consistory at St. Petersburg 1833-1885* (St. Paul, Minnesota, German Genealogical Society of St. Paul, 1994), p. xiii; digital image, *Germans from Russia Heritage Society* (<https://www.grhs.org/chapters/krim/Edlund.pdf>).

<sup>3</sup> “Bessarabian Village Church Records,” *Black Sea German Research* ([https://www.blackseagr.org/research/bess\\_films.pdf](https://www.blackseagr.org/research/bess_films.pdf)).

metrical records are not available.<sup>4</sup> However, as this information was copied by the pastor from other records, these are also vulnerable to transcription errors.

## Generation 1

1. **Christian Ludwig Billigmeier** (Christian Hecker<sup>A</sup>) was born 5 February 1834 in Rohrbach, Odessa, Russia, and was baptized on 10 February 1834 as Christian Ludwig Hecker, illegitimate son of Christian Hecker and Christina Rauschenberger.<sup>5</sup> On 12 June 1834, when he was just four months old, his mother married Jakob Billigmeier in Rohrbach.<sup>6</sup> Christian Ludwig adopted his stepfather's name of Billigmeier and used it consistently throughout his life. Christian Ludwig died on 10 October 1910 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>7</sup>

Christian Ludwig married **Justine Doering (Döring, Döhring)** on 10 May 1857 in Tarutino, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>8</sup> She was born 12 May 1838 in Kulm, Bessarabia, Russia, the daughter of Friedrich Döring and Maria Kroll, and baptized on 17 May 1838.<sup>9</sup> Justina died on 25 June 1903 in North Dakota and was buried at the Gnadenfeld Congregational Cemetery in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>10</sup>

## Family story of Christian Ludwig

Christian Ludwig had an inauspicious beginning, born illegitimately in the German colony of Rohrbach in the Odessa area of the Black Sea region—an area that was called South Russia at the time but is now

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<sup>4</sup> "Germany Church Records: Family Registers (Familienbücher)" in *FamilySearch Research Wiki*, *FamilySearch* ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany\\_Church\\_Records](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Church_Records)).

<sup>5</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Rohrbach > 1834 Births, marriages, deaths > image 4 of 31; birth of Christian Ludwig Hecker, outside of marriage, to Christian Hecker and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>6</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Rohrbach > 1834 Births, marriages, deaths > image 20 of 31; Billigmeier-Rauschenberger, 12 June 1834; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>7</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier family; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>8</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1857: Births, marriages, deaths > image 16 of 47; Billigmeier-Doering, undated; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For date, see Evangelische Kirche Tarutino-Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1847-1860," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98H-G>), DGS #8246070, image 194 of 479, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. Marriage not found in original church register per FHLRemoteAccess@familysearch.org (Salt Lake City, Utah) to Carolyn Schott, email, 12 June 2023; Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Heiraten [Marriages] 1830-1847, 1855-1867," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/film/008003600>), DGS #8003600; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>9</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Geburten, Tote [Births, Deaths] 1824-1843," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6K-3SCH-2>), DGS #8003586, image 457 of 478, birth of Justina Döring to Friedrich Döring and Maria Kroll; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>10</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Sterberegister [Death Register], p. 341, Justina Billigmeier, 25 June 1903; church office, Kulm. See also *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 57922665, Justina Billigmeier (1838-1903), Gnadenfeld Congregational Cemetery, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; photo by Jae Miller.

part of Ukraine. His parents, Christina Rauschenberger and a farmer named Christian Hecker, didn't participate in his baptism. Instead, midwife Maria Bruckenberger presented Christian Ludwig to Pastor Johannes Bonekemper for baptism five days after his birth.<sup>11</sup> His godparents were Christian Friedrich Walter and Christina Barbara Schallenberger.

Although illegitimate births were not unknown among Black Sea Germans, the colonists had a pious approach to life influenced by their Christian faith. This probably made Christian Ludwig's illegitimacy a stigma. German colonists had brought many of their customs and attitudes with them from their German homeland, where illegitimate children were often considered less useful to the community than legitimate children.<sup>12</sup>

Dr. Ute Schmidt, a German lecturer on history and on political and social science, described Germans in the Black Sea region as:

The pietest imbued Protestant ethic was the guiding principle for community life ... Deviations from accepted customary moral/ethical norms—especially in the area of family, marriage and sexual morals—were taboo. ... “Crimes of the flesh” were generally judged harshly ...<sup>13</sup>

When Christian Ludwig was just four months old, his mother married Jakob Billigmeier, a man 20 years her senior, from the colony of Worms, which was just a few miles from Rohrbach.

Jakob was the only father that Christian Ludwig would know and he seemed to fully embrace his stepfather's family as his own. His choice of names reflects this:

- He used the Billigmeier surname rather than the Hecker name throughout his life.<sup>14</sup>
- He named two of his sons after his stepfather Jakob, but did not name any of his children Christian, possibly distancing himself from his absent biological father.<sup>15</sup>
- He used the name Ludwig throughout his life, dropping the first name of Christian. While that is consistent with the German custom of using a middle name as the *Rufname* [called-by name], it

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<sup>11</sup> “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Rohrbach > 1834 Births, marriages, deaths > image 4 of 31; birth of Christian Ludwig Hecker, outside of marriage, to Christian Hecker and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>12</sup> Isabel V. Hull, “The Infanticide Debate” in *Sexuality, State, and Civil Society in Germany, 1700-1815* (Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 1996), p. 112.

<sup>13</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p.127.

<sup>14</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), “Familienbuch 1861-1880,” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8003630, image 463 of 479, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>15</sup> “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1871 Births, marriages, deaths > image 23 of 42; birth of Jakob Billigmaier to Ludwig Billigmaier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). See also “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1875 Births, marriages, deaths > image 29 of 76; birth of Jacob Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

may also reflect a rejection of his absent biological father.<sup>16</sup> (Although he used the name Ludwig throughout his life, this narrative will refer to him as C. Ludwig to distinguish him from his son, who was also named Ludwig.)

Christina's marriage to Jakob gave her respectability after having an illegitimate child. But it was also important for Jakob, as Christina became stepmother to his children from a previous marriage. When Jakob and Christina married in 1834, Jakob had four children who were unmarried, and probably lived with their father and new stepmother, giving C. Ludwig an instant set of older stepsiblings.<sup>17</sup>

- KONRAD, born 27 September 1816 in Gräfenhausen, Pfalz, Germany.<sup>18</sup> He married Christina Orth on 27 June 1839 in Worms, Odessa, Russia.<sup>19</sup>
- MARIA SUSANNA, born 5 June 1819 in Gräfenhausen, Pfalz, Germany.<sup>20</sup> She married Johann Georg Huber on 23 November 1836 in Worms, Odessa, Russia.<sup>21</sup>
- ANDREAS, born about March 1822 and died 11 May 1838 in Worms, Odessa, Russia.<sup>22</sup>
- KATHARINA, born 10 July 1828 in Worms, Odessa, Russia, and died by 1860 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>23</sup>

Katharina Kranzbuehler is named as the mother of Jakob's children born in Gräfenhausen. It cannot be confirmed whether she was also the mother of Andreas and Katharina, who were born after the Billigmeier family had immigrated to the Black Sea region, as birth and death records are not extant for Worms prior to 1833. Her date of death also cannot be confirmed, although it is likely she died prior to

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<sup>16</sup> "Germany Names, Personal," at *FamilySearch Research Wiki* ([https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany\\_Names\\_Personal](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Names_Personal)).

<sup>17</sup> Children of Jakob who had died or married prior to Jakob's 1834 marriage to Christina are not included here.

<sup>18</sup> Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche Annweiler (BA. Bergzabern), "Taufen [Baptisms] 1803-1812, 1815-1817," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSC9-Y6V2>), DGS #102333099, image 45 of 361, birth of Conrad Billigmeier to Jacob Billigmeier and Catharina Kranzbuehler; citing Protestantischen Landeskirchenarchiv [Protestant State Church Archives], Speyer, Germany.

<sup>19</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1839 Births, marriages, deaths > image 13 of 20; Billigmeier Orth, 27 June 1839; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>20</sup> Evangelisch-Reformierte Kirche Annweiler (BA. Bergzabern), "Queichhambach, Gräfenhausen, Dernbach, Ramberg: Taufden [Baptisms] 1800-1833," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G92X-41H9>), DGS #4034779, image 367 of 487, birth of Susanna Billigmaier to Jakob Billigmaier and Catharina Kranzbuehler; citing Protestantischen Landeskirchenarchiv [Protestant State Church Archives], Speyer, Germany.

<sup>21</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms (Reformed): Worms > 1836 Births, marriages, deaths > image 6 of 8; Huber-Billigmeier, 23 November 1836; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>22</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1838 Births, marriages, deaths > image 17 of 22; death of Andreas Billigmeier, age 16 1/6 years; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>23</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1847-1860," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98H-G>), DGS #8246070, image 194 of 479, Katharina in family register for Jakob Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. No death date is shown, but the cross by her name indicates she died.

1833 as her death is not recorded in Worms in the records that exist for 1833 or for 1834 (prior to Jakob's marriage to Christina).<sup>24</sup>

### C. Ludwig's boyhood

In 1841 when C. Ludwig was 7, the Welfare Committee for Foreign Settlers imposed new rules for the schools in German colonies to address a chronic problem with low attendance.<sup>25</sup> These rules required children to start school by age 7 and attend each weekday from the beginning of October through the end of March. It's likely that C. Ludwig started school at this time.

(The Welfare Committee for Foreign Settlers was the Russian government body responsible for overseeing all foreign colonists in Russia, who were governed under a structure separate from Russian law. It was established in 1818 and continued through 1871. From 1833 through 1871, the main office for the Welfare Committee for colonists in the Black Sea area was in Odessa.)<sup>26</sup>

Like any farming family, the Billigmeier family experienced good years and bad in Worms. Although as an infant, C. Ludwig would probably have been oblivious to the stress caused by the crop failure in his first year of life and the moderate harvests during the following years of 1835 and 1836.<sup>27</sup>

Of course, bad crop years due to weather or insects were part of every farmer's life, to get through as best they could. But another thing that created hardship for families in Worms was the lack of farmland. By 1841, the colonists of Worms decided to stop raising sheep, which required large expanses of land for grazing, and devote that land to agriculture to meet the needs of the growing families of the village.<sup>28</sup> While this was a practical short-term solution, it was unlikely to be sustainable as the village's population grew, leading to the need for more land to cultivate. It's possible that recognition of this as a stopgap measure may have inspired the Billigmeier family's move to the neighboring region of Bessarabia.

### Moving to Leipzig

The German colony of Leipzig, Bessarabia, experienced a cholera epidemic in 1831, leaving many farms vacant due to the high death rate. This created an opportunity for eleven families from Worms and Rohrbach (including the Billigmeiers) to relocate and take over the abandoned farms.<sup>29</sup> As all of these

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<sup>24</sup> Negative findings for Katharina's death in "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1833 Births, marriages, deaths and also 1834 Births, marriages, deaths; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>25</sup> Joseph S. Height, "The Village School" in *Homesteaders on the Steppe*, second printing (Bismarck, North Dakota, North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), p. 258.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph S. Height, "The Administration of the Colonies" in *Homesteaders on the Steppe*, second printing (Bismarck, North Dakota, North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), p. 227-228.

<sup>27</sup> Joseph S. Height, "The Chronicle of Worms" in *Homesteaders on the Steppe*, second printing (Bismarck, North Dakota, North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), p. 216.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph S. Height, "The Chronicle of Worms" in *Homesteaders on the Steppe*, second printing (Bismarck, North Dakota, North Dakota Historical Society of Germans from Russia, 1975), p. 216.

<sup>29</sup> Arthur E. Flegel, CG, "Leipzig in Bessarabia" in *Extended Relationships of the Kulm, Leipzig, Tarutino Communities in Bessarabia, Russia* (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2016), p. 15.

families were experienced farmers that had “substantial” holdings in Worms and Rohrbach, they were considered highly capable of taking on this new challenge.<sup>30</sup>

The Billigmeier family’s transfer from Worms to Leipzig was authorized by the Minister of State Property on 5 March 1843.<sup>31</sup> The following month, the Billigmeier family was officially transferred from the tax jurisdiction of Worms to that of Leipzig.<sup>32</sup>

The Russian government used *ревизские сказки* [revision lists or poll tax lists] to document a family’s tax status in a village.<sup>33</sup> Because revision lists include all family members, they are similar to a census. Revision lists were also created when transferring a family to a different village and tax jurisdiction.

The Billigmeier family would have been recorded on the Worms 1835 revision list, however, that is not extant to review.<sup>34</sup> When they left Worms in 1843, their transfer to Leipzig was recorded on a “transfer” revision list. This list shows only those family members who moved *and* were on the 1835 revision list.

**Table 1: April 1843 revision list<sup>35</sup>**

Name	Age as of 1835
Jakob Billigmeier	43
His stepson Ludwig Hecker [This reference to the 1835 revision list is the only time other than his baptismal record where C. Ludwig is shown with the Hecker name and the only time that C. Ludwig is called a stepson rather than a son.]	1
His wife Christina	22
His daughter Katharina	7

The transfer list excludes C. Ludwig’s stepsiblings who did not move to Leipzig—Andreas, who had died, and Konrad and Maria Susanna, who married and stayed in the Worms tax jurisdiction. The transfer list excludes the three children of Jakob and Christina who were born after the 1835 revision list. However,

<sup>30</sup> Gotthilf Aldinger, *Chronicles of the Community Leipzig in Bessarabia*, trans. by Arthur E. Flegel CG (Menlo Park, 1985), image 12 of 66; digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/868073-chronicles-of-the-community-leipzig-in-bessarabia>). Although this source says that the Billigmeiers came from Rohrbach, other records consistently show them as being from Worms.

<sup>31</sup> Дело о перечислении Петерстальского колониста Петра Гроса в бессарабскую колонию Фриденсталь [Case on the transfer of Peterstal colonist Peter Gros to the Bessarabian colony of Friedenstal], 5 March 1843, authorization for seven families to move to Bessarabia including Jacob Billigmeier; digital image and transcription supplied by Andriy Kotynskyy, 7 August 2023; file 6-1-7725, State Archives of Odesa, Odesa, Ukraine. Note that the Russian spelling for Odessa is used throughout this narrative, appropriate to the time period. However, the Ukrainian spelling Odesa is used when referring to archives in current-day Ukraine.

<sup>32</sup> "Молдова перепись подушного налога (ревизские сказки) и переписи населения, 1796-1917 [Moldova Poll Tax Census (Revision Lists) and Census Lists 1796-1917]," digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1985804>) > Херсон [Kherson] > Херсон > 1842-1844 vol 689 > image 283 of 466; revision list, no. 84 Якобь Биллигмайерь [Jakob Billigmaier], April 1843; citing Moldovan National Archives, Chisinau.

<sup>33</sup> "Russia Taxation" in *FamilySearch Research Wiki* ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russia\\_Taxation](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russia_Taxation)).

<sup>34</sup> Serge Yelizarov (Odesa, Ukraine) to Carolyn Schott, email, 20 August 2022.

<sup>35</sup> "Молдова перепись подушного налога (ревизские сказки) и переписи населения, 1796-1917 [Moldova Poll Tax Census (Revision Lists) and Census Lists 1796-1917]," digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1985804>) > Херсон [Kherson] > Херсон > 1842-1844 vol 689 > image 283 of 466; revision list, no. 84, Якобь Биллигмайерь [Jakob Billigmaier], April 1843; citing Moldovan National Archives, Chisinau.

their subsequent deaths in Leipzig make it clear that they were part of the family that immigrated. These half-siblings of C. Ludwig were:

- MARIA SOPHIA, born 24 August 1835 in Worms, Odessa, Russia, and died 4 March 1853 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>36</sup>
- MAGDALENA, born 8 March 1838 in Worms, Odessa, Russia, and died 25 December 1848 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>37</sup>
- GEORG JAKOB, born 28 February 1843 in Worms, Odessa, Russia and died 21 July 1843 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>38</sup>

It's unclear exactly when the Billigmeiers left Worms. They seemed to be in Leipzig as early as July, when C. Ludwig's half-brother Georg Jakob died there. It appears they were back in Worms in September, where another half-brother of C. Ludwig, Johann Conrad, died of *Gichtern* [convulsions] at age 3.<sup>39</sup>

Date	Event
April 1843	Family transferred to Leipzig tax jurisdiction
3 May 1843	Parochial schein issued in Worms to document baptism of Georg Jakob for pastor in Leipzig <sup>40</sup>
21 Jul 1843	Georg Jakob dies in Leipzig
4 Sep 1843	Johann Conrad dies in Worms

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<sup>36</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1835 Births, marriages, deaths > image 4 of 18; birth of Maria Sophia Billigmeier to Jacob Billigmeier and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). See also "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1853 Births, marriages, deaths > image 44 of 46; death of Maria Sophia Billigmeier, 4 March 1853; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>37</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1838 Births, marriages, deaths > image 2 of 22; birth of Magdalena Billigmeier to Jacob Billigmeier and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For death, see Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths] 1845-1874," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-5614>), DGS #8003622, image 301 of 455, death of Magdalena Billigmeier, 25 December 1848; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>38</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1843 Births, marriages, deaths > image 3 of 20; birth of Georg Jacob Billigmeier to Jacob Billigmeier and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For death, see Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths] 1830-1847," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSG9-CQ76-4>), DGS #8206954, image 337 of 447, death of Jakob Billigmeier (born in Worms), 21 July 1843; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>39</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1843 Births, marriages, deaths > image 17 of 20; death of Johann Conrad Billigmeier, 4 September 1843; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). See also "Gichter" on *Compgen* (<https://wiki.genealogy.net/Gichter>).

<sup>40</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Worms: Worms > 1843 Births, marriages, deaths > image 3 of 20; birth of Georg Jacob Billigmeier to Jacob Billigmeier and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For description of the parochial schein, see "Parochial Certificates," 2006, *Volga Germans* (<https://web.archive.org/web/20120716232011/http://www.webbitt.com/volga/paroch.html>).



## Life in Leipzig

The village of Leipzig was situated in a wide valley on the left bank of the Kugalnik River in Bessarabia. The village was considered impressive: “A view from the church steeple presented a pretty scene of order and cleanliness as well as prosperity with its two neat rows of tiled roof houses and five kilometer long street lined on both sides with locust trees.”<sup>41</sup>

C. Ludwig would have resumed his schooling once the family was settled in Leipzig and was one of the 285 students being taught by the schoolmaster Adam Trautmann in 1845.<sup>42</sup> However, by the time he was confirmed on 31 March 1849 at age 15, C. Ludwig would have been considered an adult who should be working rather than sitting in a classroom.<sup>43</sup> As the oldest son in the family, his help would have been vital, especially as livestock epidemics in 1844 and 1845 followed by a grasshopper infestation in 1847 impacted the family’s first few years in Bessarabia.<sup>44</sup>

Although the soil of Bessarabia was considered among the best that exists for agriculture, breaking the land and making a living was a difficult task for these farmers.<sup>45</sup> Bessarabian farmers focused mostly on grain crops, such as wheat, although each household also had a kitchen garden where they grew fruits and vegetables. Raising livestock, primarily cows and sheep, was a significant source of income. Leipzig also became one of the Bessarabian villages that produced wine.<sup>46</sup>

Rather than receiving one large plot of land, colonists were each assigned several parcels of land so each family had land with good soil or access to water or proximity to the village.<sup>47</sup> Although this method of land distribution was meant to promote equity, it also meant that C. Ludwig and his father and brothers had to go farther distances between each parcel to work the land. Much of the sowing was done by hand and with primitive agricultural tools. “Modern” farming tools such as iron plows and stone threshing rollers were just beginning to be available in the 1840s.<sup>48</sup>

To sell their grain, C. Ludwig and his father likely took the long dangerous trip to Odessa each year. The typical route was to drive first to Akkerman, take a barge across the Dniester Liman, and then continue

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<sup>41</sup> Gotthilf Aldinger, *Chronicles of the Community Leipzig in Bessarabia*, trans. by Arthur E. Flegel CG (Menlo Park, 1985), image 13 & 56 of 66; digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/868073-chronicles-of-the-community-leipzig-in-bessarabia>).

<sup>42</sup> Arthur E. Flegel, CG, “Leipzig in Bessarabia” in *Extended Relationships of the Kulm, Leipzig, Tarutino Communities in Bessarabia, Russia* (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2016), p. 16.

<sup>43</sup> For confirmation date, see Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), “Familienbuch 1847-1860,” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98H-G>), DGS #8246070, image 194 of 479, Christian Ludwig in family register for Jakob Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>44</sup> Ingo Rüdiger Isert, “Hofbeschreibung Leipzig” in *Jahresheft 1994 des Heimatmuseums der Deutschen aus Bessarabien* [1994 Yearbook of the Museum of Local History of the Bessarabian Germans] (1995), p. 62; citing File 6-1a-139, “Hofsbeschreibung in der Kolonie Leipzig im Akkermanschen Kreise der Provintz Bessarabien 1856-1857 [Farm inventory of the colony of Leipzig in the Akkermann district of the province of Bessarabia 1856-1857], Staatsarchiv Odessa, Ukraine. See also Albert Kern, “Leipzig” in *Homeland Book of the Bessarabian Germans*, trans. by Ilona Richey, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 1998), p. 142.

<sup>45</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 160.

<sup>46</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 170.

<sup>47</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 159.

<sup>48</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 160.

on to Odessa.<sup>49</sup> Farmers often made the trip in a convoy with others because attacks by robbers were frequent and the sandy roads often caused wagons to bog down, requiring additional help to get free.

All the residents of Leipzig experienced hardships in 1855, when the village was forced to quarter Russian troops on their way to fight in the “Turkish War” [the Crimean War].<sup>50</sup> The requisitioning of hay and grain, as well as the disruption to the harvests, was so severe that many farmers considered giving up their operations.

The toll of many difficult years must have weighed heavily upon the Billigmeier family. The 1856/57 *Hofbeschreibung* [farm inventory] labeled the family as poor despite their possession of three horses, two colts, a pair of oxen, five cows, eight calves, seven sheep, two pigs, a plow, two wagons, and 1,000 grapevines.<sup>51</sup> Although the farm inventory labels them as a poor family, the number of horses, cattle, sheep, and hogs they owned is actually close to the average for all families in Leipzig, and they had more than twice as many grapevines than the average.<sup>52</sup>

### C. Ludwig starts a family

But the difficult years apparently didn’t dampen C. Ludwig’s determination to look to the future. When he was 23, he married Justina Döring from the village of Kulm, just six miles away from Leipzig. Both villages were part of the Tarutino Parish, which may have given the young couple the opportunity to meet. Justina’s father, Friedrich, had been one of the original founders of Kulm.<sup>53</sup>

C. Ludwig and Justina started their married life in Leipzig and had two children there, Wilhelmina and Ludwig.<sup>54</sup> But then an opportunity presented itself to move from Leipzig and help found a new colony. German colonists in the Black Sea region followed the inheritance practice of ultimogeniture (sometimes called minorat in German), in which the youngest son inherits the land in its entirety.<sup>55</sup> This practice was

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<sup>49</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 184-185.

<sup>50</sup> Gotthilf Aldinger, *Chronicles of the Community Leipzig in Bessarabia*, trans. by Arthur E. Flegel CG (Menlo Park, 1985), images 19 & 26 of 66; digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/868073-chronicles-of-the-community-leipzig-in-bessarabia>).

<sup>51</sup> Ingo Rüdiger Isert, “Hofbeschreibung Leipzig” in *Jahresheft 1994 des Heimatmuseums der Deutschen aus Bessarabien* [1994 Yearbook of the Museum of Local History of the Bessarabian Germans] (1995), p. 62; citing File 6-1a-139, “Hofsbeschreibung in der Kolonie Leipzig im Akkermanschen Kreise der Provintz Bessarabien 1856-1857 [Farm inventory of the colony of Leipzig in the Akkermann district of the province of Bessarabia 1856-1857], Staatsarchiv Odessa, Ukraine.

<sup>52</sup> Burkett W. Huey, *The German Settlements in Bessarabia: A Study of the German Immigration to, Successful Settlement in, and Ultimate Abandonment of Bessarabia* (Carrboro, NC, TIPS Technical Publishing, 2016), p. 135.

<sup>53</sup> Arthur E. Flegel, CG, “Leipzig in Bessarabia” in *Extended Relationships of the Kulm, Leipzig, Tarutino Communities in Bessarabia, Russia* (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2016), p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> For Wilhelmina, see “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1858 Births, marriages, deaths > image 26 of 49; birth of Wilhelmina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For Ludwig, see “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1859 Births, marriages, deaths > image 58 of 61; birth of Ludwig Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>55</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011),

mandated by the Welfare Committee to prevent farms from being divided among all sons, which led to each generation owning increasingly smaller parcels of land that would not support a family.

The 1856/57 farm inventory shows C. Ludwig as the oldest of four brothers—himself, Samuel, Jakob, and Wilhelm.<sup>56</sup> As the youngest, Wilhelm was the expected heir, which meant the older Billigmeier sons, including C. Ludwig, needed to acquire their own land or learn a trade.

The land in Bessarabia originally allocated to German colonists by the Russian government was already fully settled. However, the opportunity to acquire additional land arose when serfdom was abolished in 1861. Much of the land in the Black Sea region was owned by Russian nobles, who were generally absentee landlords. When serfdom was abolished, these landlords had to pay peasants for their labor, which made their estates less profitable to manage from a distance.<sup>57</sup> Absentee Russian landlords were suddenly willing to sell land to German colonists anxious to expand to new colonies.

C. Ludwig and Justina moved their little family to the Odessa area, initially to the colony of Güldendorf, where his older stepsister Maria Susanna had moved from Worms with her husband Johann Georg Huber.<sup>58</sup>

A new daughter was born to C. Ludwig and Justina in Güldendorf in August 1861.<sup>59</sup> They then joined the group of Güldendorfers who founded a new “daughter” colony nearby, which they called Annental.<sup>60</sup> C. Ludwig and Justina settled in Annental for the next decade, starting a new farm and giving birth to five children there (Samuel, Johann, Friedrich, another Justina, and Jakob) between October 1862 and July 1871.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ingo Rüdiger Isert, “Hofbeschreibung Leipzig” in *Jahresheft 1994 des Heimatmuseums der Deutschen aus Bessarabien* [1994 Yearbook of the Museum of Local History of the Bessarabian Germans] (1995), p. 62; citing File 6-1a-139, “Hofbeschreibung in der Kolonie Leipzig im Akkermanschen Kreise der Provintz Bessarabien 1856-1857 [Farm inventory of the colony of Leipzig in the Akkermann district of the province of Bessarabia 1856-1857], Staatsarchiv Odessa, Ukraine.

<sup>57</sup> P. Konrad Keller, “The German Colony Blumenfeld (Odessa District) on the 50th Anniversary of its Existence,” trans. by DeepL, (originally published in *Deutscher Volkskalendar* 1912), p. 1; *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/Blumenfeld-50-anniv-1912.pdf>).

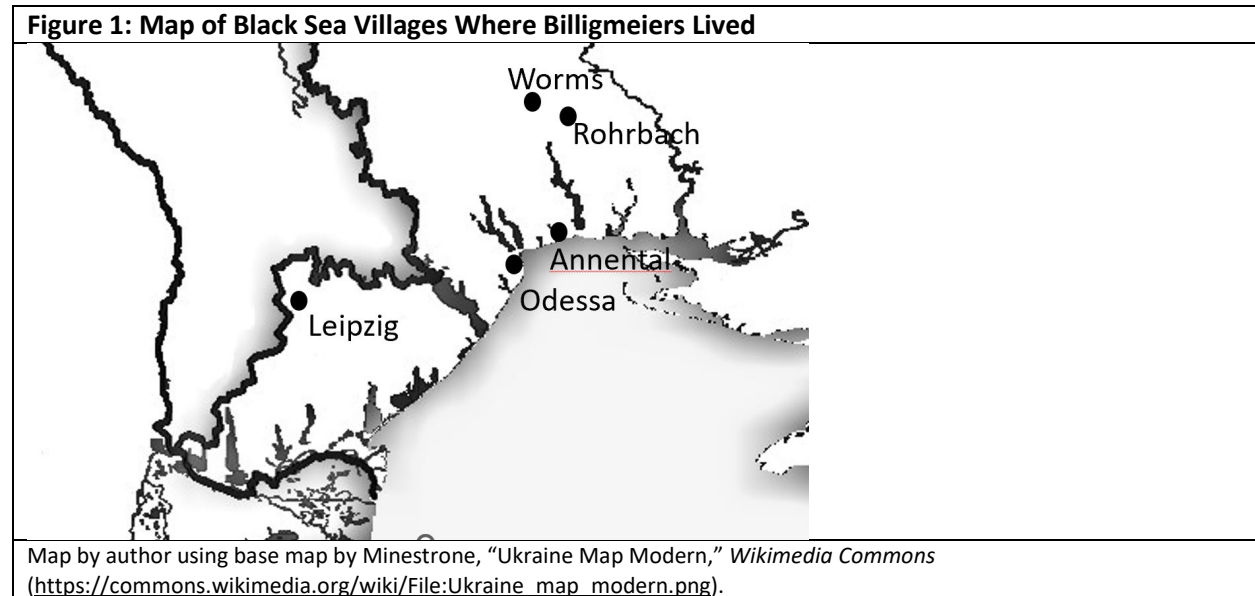
<sup>58</sup> “185x Güldendorf Births recorded in Odessa Parish translated by BSGR,” index, *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/st-petes/gueldendorf-births-185x.pdf>), p. 6. Births of children to Georg Huber and Susanna Billigmeier document their presence in Güldendorf. Index of “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885].

<sup>59</sup> “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1861 Births, marriages, deaths > image 35 of 65; birth of Justina Billigmaier to Ludwig Billigmaier and Justina Dörring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>60</sup> Although no history of the village of Annental exists to identify the founding families, of the 60 people who died in Annental during the decade after its founding (1870s), 33 people (55%) indicated that their family had origins in the village of Güldendorf. “187x Johannestal/Waterloo Parish Deaths translated by BSGR,” index, *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/st-petes/johannestal-waterloo-deaths-187x.pdf>).

<sup>61</sup> For Samuel, see “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1862 Births, marriages, deaths > image 45 of 78; birth of Samuel Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Dörring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For Johann, see “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1864 Births, marriages, deaths > image 44 of 77; birth of Johann Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justine Dörring in Annental; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For Friedrich, see *Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), “Familienbuch 1861-1880,”* digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8246070, image

C. Ludwig's half-brothers Samuel and Jakob joined him in Annental. Samuel acted as godfather to C. Ludwig's son Johann when he was born in Annental in 1864.<sup>62</sup> And in 1868, Jakob married Carolina Huber in Güldendorf.<sup>63</sup> Later that year, Jakob and Carolina had a son in Annental and C. Ludwig was the godfather.<sup>64</sup>



## Return to Leipzig

After about 10 years as pioneers in Annental, C. Ludwig and Justina decided to return to Leipzig, arriving sometime between the July 1871 birth of their son Jakob in Annental and his November 1872 death in

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463 of 479, Friedrich in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. For Justina, see "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1867 Births, marriages, deaths > image 50 of 84; birth of Justina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhning; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For Jakob, see "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1871 Births, marriages, deaths > image 23 of 42; birth of Jakob Billigmaier to Ludwig Billigmaier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>62</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1864 Births, marriages, deaths > image 44 of 77; birth of Johann Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justine Döhning, godparents Conrad Quenzer, Samuel Billigmeyer, Catherine Quenzer; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>63</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1868 Births, marriages, deaths > image 51 of 88; Billigmeier- Huber, 14 May 1868; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>64</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1868 Births, marriages, deaths > image 46 of 88; birth of Philipp Billigmeier to Jakob Billigmeier and Karolina Huber, godparents Ludwig Billigmeier, Jakob Quenzer, Christina Huber; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

Leipzig.<sup>65</sup> Their decision to return was likely influenced by the death of C. Ludwig's stepfather and an apparent lack of a Billigmeier heir in Leipzig.

C. Ludwig's stepfather Jakob died in 1863.<sup>66</sup> The church family register shows only "1863 gest" [gestorben or died], not the specific date of death, and his death cannot be found in either the original church register nor the St. Petersburg records for Leipzig.<sup>67</sup> This may indicate that the pastor did not have that information available to him, which could suggest that Jakob died somewhere other than Leipzig. A search of 1863 deaths in Worms, Jakob's previous residence, produced no additional information about his death.<sup>68</sup>

After Jakob's death and before C. Ludwig's return to Leipzig about 1871, his mother Christina moved away from Leipzig, marrying Ludwig Rembold on 12 March 1867 in the village of Johannestal, near Worms.<sup>69</sup> It's possible that 13-year-old Friedrich Wilhelm, C. Ludwig's youngest half-brother who should have inherited the family land in Leipzig, moved to Johannestal with his mother. However, there is no record of his marriage or death in Johannestal among extant records (through 1885).<sup>70</sup>

Friedrich Wilhelm also may have died during C. Ludwig's time in Annental. Friedrich Wilhelm was born 2 November 1854 and there is no record of him in Leipzig after 1859.<sup>71</sup> No death record can be found for

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<sup>65</sup> For birth, see "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1871 Births, marriages, deaths > image 23 of 42; birth of Jakob Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). For death, see Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths] 1845-1874," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-56G9>), DGS #8003622, image 435 of 455, death of Jacob Billigmeier, 16 November 1872; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>66</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98Y-3>), DGS #8246070, image 462 of 479, family register for Jakob Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>67</sup> Negative findings in Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote 1845-1874," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-565R>), DGS #8003622; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. Conducted page by page search for 1862 through March 1867, images 379 through 412. Also negative findings in Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). Conducted page by page search of Leipzig deaths 1862 through March 1867.

<sup>68</sup> Negative findings for any Billigmeier deaths in the 1860s in Worms or Rohrbach in "186x Rohrbach/Worms Deaths translated by BSGR," index, *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/st-petes/rohrbach-worms-deaths-186x.pdf>), p. 1.

<sup>69</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Johannestal > 1867: Births, marriages, deaths > image 27 of 33; Rembold-Billigmeier, 12 March 1867; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>70</sup> Negative findings for any Billigmeier marriages/deaths in Johannestal in "Odessa Area Lutheran/Reformed Church Records: Johannestal/Waterloo Parish," indexes, *Black Sea German Research* ([https://www.blackseagr.org/research\\_church\\_odessa.html](https://www.blackseagr.org/research_church_odessa.html)). Indexes of "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]." Searched 1860s, 1870s, 1880s for marriages and deaths.

<sup>71</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1854: Births, marriages, deaths > image 46 of 46; birth of Friedrich Wilhelm Billigmeier to Jakob Billigmeier and Christina Rauschenberger; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). Note that C. Ludwig had another half-brother named Wilhelm, who was born 14 April 1850 and died 16 October 1853. Both Wilhelms, along with the older Wilhelm's death information, are listed on the 1859 revision list. "Молдова перепись подушного налога (ревизские сказки) и переписи населения, 1796-1917 [Moldova Poll Tax Census

him in Leipzig.<sup>72</sup> He may have died before 1870 as that's when he would have been confirmed, and there is no confirmation date shown for him in the Leipzig church family register.<sup>73</sup>

Whether Friedrich Wilhelm died or simply left Leipzig, he apparently did not settle on the Billigmeier farm in Leipzig. It's possible C. Ludwig returned to Leipzig to claim the Billigmeier farm because both his stepfather and the son expected to inherit were gone.

As C. Ludwig re-established his place in the Leipzig community, his position as a registered colonist meant he would have participated in the community assembly, which was made up of one person from each of the farms in the village.<sup>74</sup> This group was responsible for electing village officials, approving all new community ordinances and expenditures, and determining disciplinary actions against community members who didn't follow the community rules (such as keeping their buildings and yards in order) or morality rules (such as establishing taverns in one's home or gambling).<sup>75</sup>

### Changing times for the Billigmeier family

The next decades brought changes to the German colonists' status in Bessarabia and throughout Russia. In 1871, the Welfare Committee was dissolved, and the German colonists were subsequently governed under standard Russian law.<sup>76</sup> One of the resulting changes gave colonists more control over their land, allowing them to subdivide or sell it. But other changes, such as requiring them to perform military service, were viewed less favorably.

As life in Russia became more difficult for the German population, news of available land in North America spread like wildfire, luring many Bessarabian Germans to emigrate. This included several of C. Ludwig and Justina's children—Ludwig, Samuel, Friedrich, and Justina—who immigrated to the U.S. between 1885 and 1892.<sup>77</sup>

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(Revision Lists) and Census Lists 1796-1917],” digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1985804>) > Бессарабия [Bessarabia] > Кишинев [Kischinev] > 1859 vol 770 > image 90 of 101; revision list, family 270 Якобь Билгмайерь [Jakob Bilgmaier], 1859; citing Moldovan National Archives, Chisinau. For birth/death dates of Wilhelm (1850-1853), see Evangelische Kirche Tarutino-Leipzig (Bessarabien), “Familienbuch 1847-1860,” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98H-G>), DGS #8246070, image 194 of 479, Wilhelm in family register for Jakob Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>72</sup> Negative findings in “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Worms; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). Page by page search of deaths from for 1857-1870 (1865 and 1866 missing). Also negative findings for death of Friedrich Wilhelm in Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), “Tote [Deaths] 1845-1874,” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-56Y2>), DGS #8003622; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. Searched 1857-1870, images 356-455.

<sup>73</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), “Familienbuch 1861-1880,” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98Y-3>), DGS #8246070, image 462 of 479, Friedrich Wilhelm in family register for Jakob Billigmeier, no confirmation date shown; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>74</sup> Arthur Sucket, “Paris, Bessarabia – Part 2a” from *Paris in Bessarabien: Chronik der Gemeinden Paris und Neu-Paris in Bessarabien [Paris in Bessarabia: Chronicle of the Communities Paris and New Paris in Bessarabia]*, trans. Allen E. Konrad; *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/Paris,%20Bessarabia%20-%20Part%20a.pdf>), p. 4.

<sup>75</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 99, 102-103.

<sup>76</sup> Ute Schmidt, *Bessarabia: German Colonists on the Black Sea*, trans. by James T. Gessele, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection and Deutsches Kulturforum östliches Europa, 2011), p. 271-272.

<sup>77</sup> For Ludwig and Justina, see “New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10096811:7488>), images 9 of 13, manifest, SS *Ems*, 7 November 1885, New York, no page number, line 513 for Ludwig Billigmeier age 26, line 517 for

It also included C. Ludwig's wife Justina and his youngest daughter Sophie (age 11), who left Leipzig in 1890 for North Dakota.<sup>78</sup> C. Ludwig, however, remained behind. He had made many moves in his life—from Worms to Leipzig as a boy, from Leipzig to Annental as a young man, from Annental back to Leipzig as a family man. While it was unusual to see this type of family split, the evidence supports C. Ludwig remaining in Leipzig:

- Although death/burial registers are not extant for 1910 to confirm this date, his death is recorded in the Leipzig family register as 10 October 1910, twenty years after Justina's departure.<sup>79</sup>
- He is not shown on the ship's passenger list with his wife and daughter.
- There is no record of him coming to the U.S. on another ship.<sup>80</sup>
- When Justina filed her final affidavit to claim her homestead land in North Dakota in 1897, she said she was a widow.<sup>81</sup> Clearly C. Ludwig wasn't with her in the U.S. at that time.

C. Ludwig remained in Leipzig, where his daughter Wilhelmina lived as did the family of his deceased son Johann, until C. Ludwig died in 1910.

### **Justina builds a life in North Dakota**

Just. Billigmeier, age 51, wife, and Sophia Billigmeier, age 11, child, traveled on the SS *Amsterdam*, departing 19 April 1890 from Rotterdam, Netherlands, to New York.<sup>82</sup> Although they arrived in New York on 3 May 1890, their disembarkation was delayed two days so all steerage passengers could be vaccinated after one steerage passenger (Peter Leek) came down with smallpox during their voyage.<sup>83</sup>

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Justina Billigmeier age 18; citing NARA microfilm publication M237. For Samuel, see "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237\\_507-0727](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237_507-0727)), image 12 of 20, manifest, SS *Werra*, 31 May 1887, no page number, line 575, Saml Billigmeier, 24; citing NARA microfilm publication M237. For Friedrich, see "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237\\_590-0278](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237_590-0278)), image 16 of 21, manifest, SS *Gellert*, 3 June 1892, no page number, line 789, Friedrich Bilgemeyer, 26; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>78</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237\\_547-0356](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237_547-0356)), image 3 of 13, manifest, SS *Amsterdam*, 5 May 1890, no page number, lines 113-114, Just Billigmeier, 51, and Sophie Billigmeier, 11; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>79</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>80</sup> Negative findings in "Passenger Lists," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/img\\_passlists/](https://www.ancestry.com/search/categories/img_passlists/)). Search terms of name Lud\* Bil\*, born 1834 +/- 5 years.

<sup>81</sup> Homestead Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 19 October 1897, in Justina Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 3657, 28 October 1897, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>82</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237\\_547-0356](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237_547-0356)), image 3 of 13, manifest, SS *Amsterdam*, 5 May 1890, New York, no page number, lines 113-114, Just Billigmeier, age 51, and Sophie Billigmeier, age 11; citing NARA microfilm publication M237. For departure date, see "Incoming Steamships" in *The New York Times* (New York), 3 May 1890, p. 3, col. 7; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/20610858/>). Although the announcement says they departed from Amsterdam, the passenger manifest shows that passengers boarded at Rotterdam, Netherlands, and Broulougne, France.

<sup>83</sup> For the smallpox case, see "City and Suburban News" in *The New York Times* (New York), 4 May 1890, p. 3, col. 4; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/20611035/>). For final arrival date, see "The Amsterdam's

Justina and Sophie's likely travel companions were August Wolf (age 69, implied birth year about 1821) and Louise Wolf (age 66, implied birth year about 1824) who were listed next to them on the passenger manifest.<sup>84</sup> Although the Wolfs and Billigmayers are both shown on the ship's list as coming from Germany, August and Louise were also from Leipzig, Bessarabia.<sup>85</sup>

Despite the distance between North Dakota and Bessarabia, it's likely that Justina continued to stay in touch with her daughter Wilhelmina in Leipzig as Wilhelmina's family knew where the Billigmeiers lived in North America. Decades later in 1940, Adam Lemke (Wilhelmina's son) filled out a form for the German government as part of a resettlement process for ethnic Germans to return to Germany from Bessarabia during WWII. When asked if he had any relatives who had emigrated, he listed all of his aunts and uncles, "Ludwig, Samuel, Friedrich, Justina, Sophia Billigmeier," as going to "Nortamerika, Dakota, Kulm."<sup>86</sup>

It's unknown where Justina and Sophie lived for their first two years in the U.S., but by the spring of 1892, Justina decided to take up a homestead. Her first step was to declare her intent to become a U.S. citizen, which she did on 5 May 1892 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>87</sup> On 10 June 1892, she settled onto land in section 10 of Roloff Township of McIntosh County and began building a house and well. She filed her homestead claim on this land on 25 November 1892.<sup>88</sup> Her land was near the section where her son Ludwig had settled.

Justina's decision to become a naturalized citizen was unusual, as women typically derived their citizenship status from their husbands at this time.<sup>89</sup> However, C. Ludwig had not come to the U.S. with her, and to be eligible to homestead, Justina had to either be a citizen or declare her intent to become one.<sup>90</sup> She also had to be the head of her household, which may be the reason she declared herself a widow in her homestead application.

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Passengers" in *The New York Times* (New York), 5 May 1890, p. 5, col. 5; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/20611236/>).

<sup>84</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237\\_547-0356](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237_547-0356)), image 3 of 13, manifest, SS *Amsterdam*, 5 May 1890, no page number, lines 115-116, Aug Wolf, 69, and Louise Wolf 66; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>85</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9HJ-5>), DGS #8003630, image 325 of 541, family register for August Wolff; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>86</sup> Deutsches Ausland-Institut [German Foreign Institute], Sippenkundliche Fragebögen von Umsiedlern [Genealogical Questionnaires of Those Resettling] (Leipzig, Bessarabia), Adam Lemke, line 8 family members who moved to other places; Koblenz Record Collection, Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Bismarck, North Dakota; citing Collection R57, items 10928-10931, Deutschland Bundesarchiv [Germany Federal Archive], Berlin-Lichterfelde.

<sup>87</sup> Certificate of Declaration of Intention, 7 November 1892, in Justina Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 3657, 28 October 1897, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

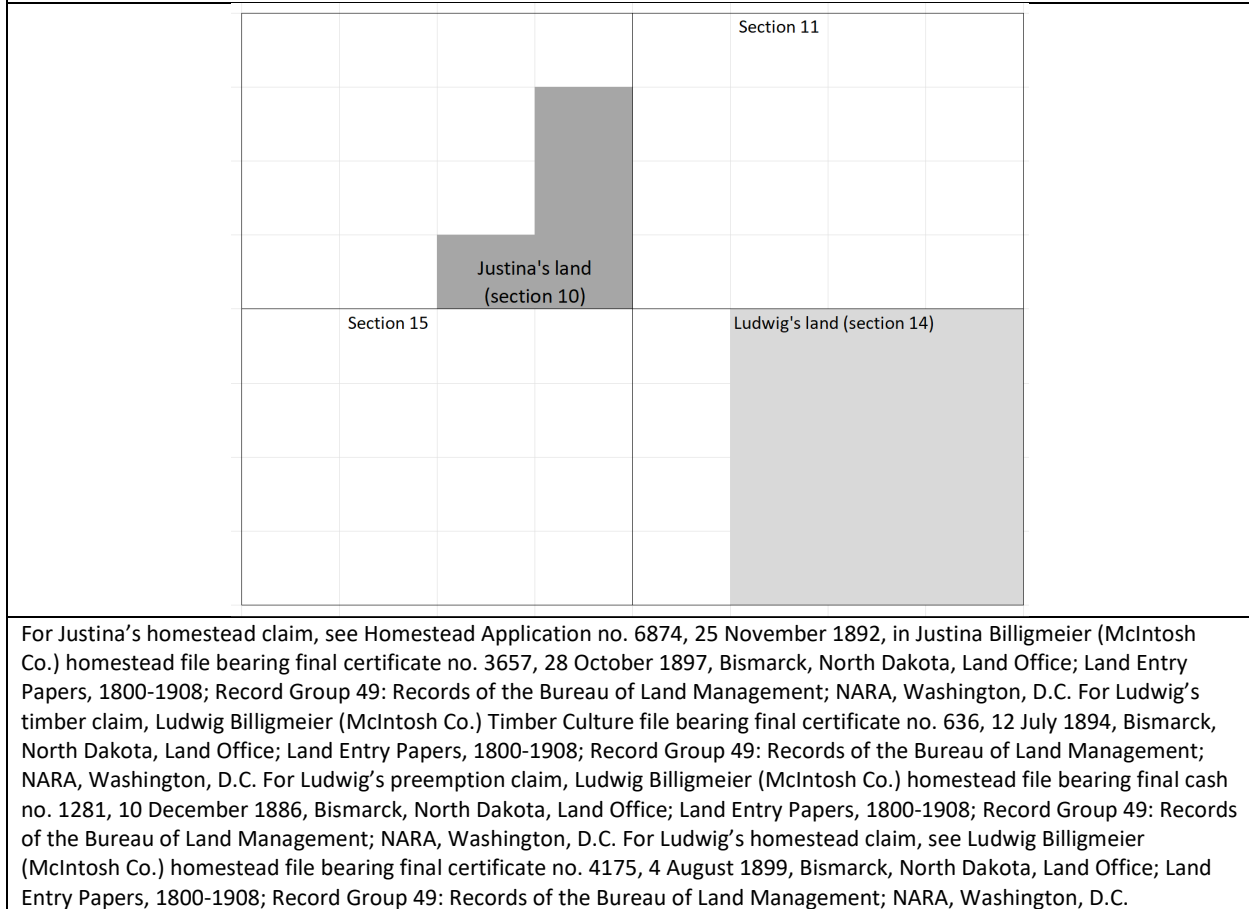
<sup>88</sup> Homestead Application no. 6874, 25 November 1892, in Justina Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 3657, 28 October 1897, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>89</sup> Marian L. Smith, "Any woman who is now or may hereafter be married . . ." Women and Naturalization, ca. 1802–1940," summer 1998, *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization-1.html>).

<sup>90</sup> "Homestead Act (1862)," National Archives (<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/homestead-act>).



**Figure 2: Roloff Township – Justina and Ludwig Billigmeier’s Land Claims**



Justina’s decision to homestead on her own may seem unusual, however, about 12% of the homesteaders in the Dakotas, Colorado, Utah, Montana, and Wyoming were single women.<sup>91</sup> Even her age of 54 was not unique. An 1890 homesteader in North Dakota’s Bottineau County was Kjersten Andrianson, a single woman of age 70.<sup>92</sup>

In Justina’s affidavit for final homestead proof, filed on 6 September 1897, she stated she had lived on the land continually since she first settled there.<sup>93</sup> Her statement was verified by Georg Siegler, Johann Schneider, Gottlieb Schneider, and Friedrich Flegel—all of Kulm, North Dakota. On 23 May 1898, Justina received her land patent—earning her 160 acres free and clear.<sup>94</sup>

It’s likely that Justina’s daughter Sophie continued to live with her during her homesteading years, at least until Sophie’s marriage. On 9 December 1895, Christian Remboldt of Eureka, SD, age 24, and Sofia

<sup>91</sup> Marcia Hensley, “The single women who homesteaded the West,” 2 April 2007, HighCountryNews (<https://www.hcn.org/issues/343/16929-women-homesteaders>).

<sup>92</sup> Barbara Witteman, *Prairie in Her Heart: Pioneer Women of North Dakota* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 19.

<sup>93</sup> No. 1—Homestead [intent to make final proof], 6 September 1897, in Justina Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 3657, 28 October 1897, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>94</sup> McIntosh County, North Dakota, Homestead Patent Record Book 6:133, U.S. to Justina Billigmeier, homestead patent 3657, 23 May 1898; County Recorder’s Office, Ashley.

Billigmeier of Rotterdam, ND, age 18, applied for a marriage license in McIntosh County.<sup>95</sup> (Rotterdam was a farm post office from 1893 to 1897 located in Rosenthal Township, which adjoined Roloff Township where Sophia likely lived with her mother.)<sup>96</sup> However, this marriage did not occur as there is no associated marriage certificate. Perhaps the marriage was stopped because Sophie was actually just 16 years old at the time.

Instead, Sophie married John Nathan a month later on 20 January 1896 in Lowenthal Township, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>97</sup> This marriage license correctly shows her age as 16 and calls her a resident of Kulm, LaMoure County. Adam Mueller signed to give permission for the under-age marriage. It's unknown what connection Adam Mueller had to the Billigmeier family.

By 1900, two years after Justina gained title to her homestead and was no longer required to live there, she'd moved to McLean County to live with her daughter Sophie and her husband.<sup>98</sup> However, a year later, it seems likely that Justina had moved to Kulm, where her son Ludwig lived, because an August 1901 land sale record describes her as a resident of Kulm.<sup>99</sup>

Two years later on 25 June 1903, Justina died at age 65.<sup>100</sup> She was buried in Gnadefeld Congregational Cemetery in Roloff Township—near the land she had worked so hard to homestead but far from her husband C. Ludwig, who outlived her by seven years before dying in Leipzig, Bessarabia.<sup>101</sup>

## Children

C. Ludwig and Justina had the following children:

- 2 i. WILHELMINA BILLIGMEIER was born 10 February 1858 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>102</sup> She died 20 January 1912 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>103</sup> She married

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<sup>95</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Register, 1885 Dec 18-1911 Jan 5 > image 258 of 766, p. 16, Remboldt-Billigmeier, 9 December 1895 license, but no marriage certificate; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>96</sup> Douglas A. Wick, *North Dakota Place Names* (Bismarck, Hedemarken Collectibles, 1988), p. 167.

<sup>97</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Register, 1885 Dec 18-1911 Jan 5 > image 264 of 766, p. 29, Nathan-Billigmeier, 20 January 1896; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>98</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McLean Co., North Dakota, population schedule (pop. sch.), township 149, no page number, enumeration district (ED) 247, sheet 8-A, dwelling 144, family 147, Justina Billigmeier in John Nathan family; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68210848:7602>).

<sup>99</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 9:94, Justina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier, no. 2677, 19 August 1901; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>100</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Sterberegister [Death Register], p. 341, Justina Billigmeier, 25 June 1903; church office, Kulm.

<sup>101</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 57922665, Justina Billigmeier (1838-1903), Gnadefeld Congregational Cemetery, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; photo by Jae Miller. Headstone says Billigmeier but Find a Grave entry says Billigmeier.

<sup>102</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1858 Births, marriages, deaths > image 26 of 49; birth of Wilhelmina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>103</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1900," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9C7-5>), DGS #8003630, image 341 of 541, Вильгельмина Виллигмейер [Wilhelmina Billigmeier] in family register for Adam Lämke family; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

Adam Lembke (Lämke, Lemke) on 22 November 1874 in Tarutino, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>104</sup> He was born 25 January 1856 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>105</sup> He died 15 April 1922 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>106</sup>

- + 3 ii. LUDWIG BILLIGMEIER was born 21 September 1859 in Leipzig.<sup>107</sup> He died 3 February 1903, probably in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>108</sup> He married Juliana (Julia) Peltz (Pelz, Belz) on 2 January 1881 in Tarutino.<sup>109</sup> She was born 5 April 1862 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>110</sup> She died on 10 December 1925 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>111</sup>
  
- 4 iii. JUSTINA BILLIGMEIER was born 30 August 1861 in Güldendorf, Odessa, Russia.<sup>112</sup> She probably died prior to 1867. Although a death record cannot be found in Güldendorf nor in Annental where the Billigmeiers lived during this time, it is unlikely that C. Ludwig and Justina would have re-used the name Justina for their daughter born in 1867 unless this Justina had already died.<sup>113</sup> She had certainly died by 1872 when the

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<sup>104</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1873-1874 Births, marriages, deaths > image 42 of 71; Lembke-Billigmeier, 22 November 1874; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). Later family registers show their marriage date as 23 November 1874.

<sup>105</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1856 Births, marriages, deaths > image 43 of 47; birth of Adam Lembke to Adam Lembke (deceased) and Justina Böttcher; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>106</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1900," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9C7-5>), DGS #8003630, image 341 of 541, family register for Adam Lämke family; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>107</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1859 Births, marriages, deaths > image 58 of 61; birth of Ludwig Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>108</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Sterberegister [Death Register], p. 342, Ludwig Billigmeier, 3 February 1904; church office, Kulm.

<sup>109</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier II; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>110</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Taufen [Baptisms] 1852-1866," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/film/008003600> : accessed 13 October 2023), Microfilm #1768035, p. 302, birth of Julianna Pelz; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>111</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1925 > 02001-02500 > image 146 of 500, cert. 2146, Julia Heer, 10 December 1925; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. See also Obituary for Julia Heer, *Der Kirchenbote* [The Church Messenger] vol. 44 no. 3 (7 January 1926), no page number shown in clipping; digital image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415138\\_00680](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415138_00680)).

<sup>112</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1861 Births, marriages, deaths > image 35 of 65; birth of Justina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Dörring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>113</sup> Negative findings for Justina Billigmeier in "Village of Güldendorf 186x Deaths Recorded in City of Odessa Parish - translated by BSGR," index, *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/st-petes/gueldendorf-deaths-186x.pdf>). Also negative findings in "Annental Deaths 1862-1868 translated by BSGR," index, *Black Sea German Research*

family returned to Leipzig as she is not recorded in the Leipzig church's family register.<sup>114</sup>

- 5 iv. SAMUEL BILLIGMEIER was born 10 October 1862 in Annental, Odessa, Russia.<sup>115</sup> He died on 22 June 1927 in Lodi, San Joaquin Co., California.<sup>116</sup>

Samuel married first Katharina Heinz (Hintz) on 20 June 1885 in Tarutino, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>117</sup> She was born 25 February 1865 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>118</sup> She died on 26 January 1923 in Lodi, San Joaquin Co., California.<sup>119</sup> Samuel married second Christina (Mittleider) Dockter between January 1923 and January 1924.<sup>120</sup> Christina died on 11 June 1929 in Anamoose, Sheridan Co., North Dakota.<sup>121</sup>

- 6 v. JOHANN BILLIGMEIER was born 25 November 1864 in Annental, Odessa, Russia.<sup>122</sup> Although subsequent Leipzig church family registers show his birth date as 2

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(<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/st-petes/annental-deaths-1862-1868.pdf>). Indexes of "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]

<sup>114</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8246070, image 463 of 479, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>115</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1862 Births, marriages, deaths > image 45 of 78; birth of Samuel Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>116</sup> "San Joaquin County death records, 1904-1968; indexes, 1893-1967," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2001287>) > San Joaquin > Death certificates 1927 no 1-518, image 484 of 522, cert. 480, Samuel Billigmeier, 22 June 1927; San Joaquin Co. Recorder, Stockton, California. Death certificate incorrectly shows place of birth as Germany and father's name as Samuel Billigmeier. Mother's surname is correctly stated as Dohring, although the first name is shown as Christina rather than Justina. Samuel's second wife Christina was the informant for the death certificate and may not have known family details. See also "Samuel Billigmeier Dies From Spider Bite" in *Stockton Daily Independent* (California), 24 June 1927, p. 4, col. 7; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/607950502/>).

<sup>117</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1885 Births, marriages, deaths > image 45 of 78; Billigmeier-Heinz, 20 June 1885; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>118</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P98V-D>), DGS #8246070, image 348 of 479, Katharina in family register for Jacob Hinz; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. Negative search for any 1865 births in original church records per [FHLRemoteAccess@familysearch.org](mailto:FHLRemoteAccess@familysearch.org) (Salt Lake City, Utah) to Carolyn Schott, email, 22 May 2023.

<sup>119</sup> "San Joaquin County death records, 1904-1968; indexes, 1893-1967," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2001287>) > San Joaquin > Death certificates 1923 no 1-450, image 16 of 470, cert. 15, Katherine Billegmier, 6 January 1923; San Joaquin Co. Recorder, Stockton, California.

<sup>120</sup> Samuel married his second wife, Christine, between January 1923 (when his first wife died) and January 1924 (when Christine is mentioned in a deed). San Joaquin Co., California, Samuel Billigmeier and Christina Billigmeier (his wife) to John C. Schmierer, deed no. 106, 7 January 1924; County Recorder's Office, Stockton.

<sup>121</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1929 > 03501-04000 > image 435 of 500, cert. 3935, Christina Billegmeier, 11 June 1929; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. See also "Christina Billigmeier Leaves San Joaquin Property to Children" in the *Stockton Independent* (California), 26 June 1929, p. 12, col. 2; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/607922196/>).

<sup>122</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf > 1864 Births, marriages, deaths > image 44 of 77; birth of Johann Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justine

December 1864, the Annental church baptismal register, the record closest in time to his birth, shows his birth date as 25 November and his baptism as 6 December.<sup>123</sup> Johann died on 26 December 1887 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>124</sup>

He married Karoline Kraft on 4 December 1885 in Tarutino, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>125</sup> Karoline was born 13 February 1864 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>126</sup> Karoline married second Ferdinand Bobermin on 2 March 1889 in Tarutino Parish, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>127</sup> She died 15 August 1933 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>128</sup>

- 7 vi. FRIEDRICH BILLIGMEIER was born 1 August 1866 in Annental, Odessa, Russia.<sup>129</sup> He died on 12 November 1926 in Jamestown, Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>130</sup>

He married Elisabeth Schmierer on 3 March 1903 in Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>131</sup>

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Döhring in Annenthal; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>123</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8246070, image 463 of 479, Johann in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. See also Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, Johann in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>124</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths]1874-1889," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6K-39VB-F>), DGS #8003623, image 123 of 427, death of Johann Billigmeier, 26 December 1887; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>125</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Johann Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>126</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1864 Births, marriages, deaths > image 29 of 61; birth of Louisa Kraft to Christian Kraft and Karolina Hinz; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). Birth register shows her as Louisa, but a subsequent family register shows the name Louisa crossed out and Karoline inserted. See Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-D>), DGS #8246070, image 356 of 479, Karoline in family register for Christian Kraft; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>127</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9DF-T>), DGS #8003630, image 69 of 541, family register for Ferdinand Bobermin; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>128</sup> Deutsches Ausland-Institut [German Foreign Institute], Sippenkundliche Fragebögen von Umsiedlern [Genealogical Questionnaires of Those Resettling] (Leipzig, Bessarabia), Christian Flegel, line 4b birth/death of mother-in-law Katharina (Kraft) Bobermin; Koblenz Record Collection, Germans from Russia Heritage Society, Bismarck, North Dakota; citing Collection R57, items 10928-10931, Deutschland Bundesarchiv [Germany Federal Archive], Berlin-Lichterfelde.

<sup>129</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8246070, image 463 of 479, Friedrich in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. Negative search for 1866 births in "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Odessa: Güldendorf; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>130</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1926 > 04001-04500 > image 272 of 493, cert. 4275, Fred Bilegmeir [indexed as Bidegmeir], 12 November 1926; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>131</sup> Stutsman Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Bildemeyer-Schmierer, 3 March 1903; Marriage Records Collection; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

Elisabeth was born 17 June 1877 in Klein Neudorf, [Odessa], South Russia.<sup>132</sup> Elisabeth married second Gottlieb Rempfer in 1928 and he died in 1932.<sup>133</sup> She married third John Ott on 20 August 1934 in Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>134</sup> Elisabeth died 28 April 1936 in Streeter, Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>135</sup>

- 8 vii. JUSTINA BILLIGMEIER was born 16 November 1867 in Annental, Odessa, Russia.<sup>136</sup> Although subsequent family registers show her birth date as 15 November 1867, the church baptismal record, recorded closest in time to her birth, shows her birth on 16 November.<sup>137</sup>

Her death date is unknown, however, she probably died before 1900. After traveling to the U.S. with her brother Ludwig, there is no record of her either dying or marrying during the Billigmeiers' time in South Dakota from November 1885 through April 1886.<sup>138</sup> There are no marriage nor death records for her in North Dakota.<sup>139</sup> However, it's possible that she died in North Dakota prior to 1896 (which is the

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<sup>132</sup> For birth date, see Obituary for Elisabeth Schmierer Billigmaier Rempfer Ott in *Der Staats-Anzeiger* [The State Gazette] (Rugby, North Dakota), 12 May 1936, clipping doesn't show page number; digital image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415132\\_01851](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415132_01851)). See also "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1936 > 04001-04500 > image 438 of 499, cert. 4439, Elizabeth Ott, 28 April 1936; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. Elisabeth's birth date in her obituary (informant her brother Karl) and her death certificate (informant unknown) conflict. The date on her birth certificate is written in a different pen color and was probably added after the certificate was originally filled out. Karl was younger and would not have primary information about Elisabeth's birth, but would have gotten his knowledge of his sister's birth date from their parents.

<sup>133</sup> Obituary for Elisabeth Schmierer Billigmaier Rempfer Ott in *Der Staats-Anzeiger* [The State Gazette] (Rugby, North Dakota), 12 May 1936, clipping doesn't show page number; image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415132\\_01851](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415132_01851)).

<sup>134</sup> Stutsman Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate no. 221, Ott-Schmierer, 20 August 1934; County Recorder's Office, Jamestown.

<sup>135</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1936 > 04001-04500 > image 438 of 499, cert. 4439, Elizabeth Ott, 28 April 1936; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>136</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1867 Births, marriages, deaths > image 50 of 84; birth of Justina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>137</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8246070, image 463 of 479, Justina in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. See also Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, Justina in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>138</sup> Negative findings in Immanuel Parish (Hutchinson Co., SD), "Immanuel Parish Wedding and Funeral Registry, 1879-1914," digital images, *Beulah Williams Library, Northern State University* (<http://digitalcollections.northern.edu/digital/collection/hutchinson/id/0/rec/13>). Conducted line-by-line search for marriages between November 1885 and April 1888, and for deaths between November 1885 and February 1886.

<sup>139</sup> Negative findings in "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>). Search terms Jus\* and Bill\*, born 1867 +/- 5 years. Also negative findings at "Marriage Records," database, *State Historical Society of North Dakota* (<https://statemuseum.nd.gov/marriages/>); citing North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Vital Records. Search terms first name Justine or Justine for 1886 through 1900. Negative findings for her death at "Death Records," database, *State Historical Society of North Dakota* (<https://statemuseum.nd.gov/deaths/>); citing North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Vital Records. Search terms first name Justina or Justine, death dates 1886 through 1900.

earliest extant records for the Billigmeiers' church in North Dakota) and her death didn't get recorded with the state.<sup>140</sup> She is not recorded in the 1900 U.S. census.<sup>141</sup> There is no probate file available for her mother, which would have indicated whether Justina was alive in 1925 when her mother died.<sup>142</sup>

- 9 viii. JAKOB BILLIGMEIER was born 9 July 1871 in Annental, Odessa, Russia.<sup>143</sup> He died 16 November 1872 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>144</sup>
- 10 ix. KAROLINA BILLIGMEIER was born 31 December 1872 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia and she died 21 January 1873 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>145</sup>
- 11 x. JACOB BILLIGMEIER was born 10 February 1875 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>146</sup> He died 7 January 1887 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>147</sup>
- 12 xi. SOPHIE BILLIGMEIER was born 4 September 1876 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>148</sup> She died 17 September 1876 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> For start date of congregational church records, see Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad; church office, Kulm. Negative findings in line-by-line search after 1896.

<sup>141</sup> Negative findings for Justina in "1900 United States Federal Census," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7602/>). Search terms first name Jus\*, birth in 1867 +/- five years in Russia, immigration in 1885 +/- 2 years, North Dakota and adjacent states.

<sup>142</sup> Daniel Sauerwein, North Dakota State Archives (Bismarck) to Carolyn Schott, email, 23 August 2023.

<sup>143</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Johannestal: Annental > 1871 Births, marriages, deaths > image 23 of 42; birth of Jakob Billigmaier to Ludwig Billigmaier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>144</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths] 1845-1874," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-56G9>), DGS #8003622, image 435 of 455, death of Jacob Billigmeier, 16 November 1872; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>145</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1861-1880," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSPJ-P982-Y>), DGS #8003630, image 463 of 479, Karolina in family register for Ludwig Billigmeier; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. See also Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths] 1845-1874," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-56GJ>), DGS #8003622, image 436 of 455, death of Karolina Billigmeier, 21 January 1873; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig. No birth register is extant for 1872, but the death record that shows her age at death as 21 days corroborates the family register information.

<sup>146</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1875 Births, marriages, deaths > image 29 of 76; birth of Jacob Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>147</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Tote [Deaths] 1874-1889," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6K-39KX-9>), DGS #8003623, image 107 of 427, death of Jakob Billigmeier, 7 January 1887; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>148</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1876 Births, marriages, deaths > image 37 of 80; birth of Sophie Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>149</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman >

- 13 xii. SOPHIE BILLIGMEIER was born 9 June 1879 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>150</sup> She died on 23 February 1939 in Lodi, San Joaquin Co., California.<sup>151</sup> Sophie married John Nathan 20 January 1896 in Lowenthal Township, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>152</sup> He was born 21 October 1872 in Russia and died on 28 January 1954 in Lodi, San Joaquin, California.<sup>153</sup>

## Generation 2

3. **Ludwig Billigmeier** (Christian Ludwig<sup>1</sup>, Christian Hecker<sup>A</sup>) was born 21 September 1859 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia, and baptized 27 September 1859.<sup>154</sup> Ludwig died 3 February 1904, probably in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>155</sup> He was buried in the Gnadenfeld Congregational Cemetery.<sup>156</sup>

Ludwig's date of death is recorded as 3 February 1904 in the church burial register, which is the document recorded closest in time to his death, making this the most likely date of death. However, his death is shown as 1 February 1904 in his probate file.<sup>157</sup> No death certificate was found.<sup>158</sup> Although there was a state law in effect for death certificates to be recorded with the state at that time, general compliance with that law didn't start until 1923.<sup>159</sup>

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Tarutino: Leipzig > 1876 Births, marriages, deaths > image 76 of 80; death of Sophie Billigmeier, 17 September 1876; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>150</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1879 Births, marriages, deaths > image 37 of 73; birth of Sophie Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>151</sup> "Mrs. Sophia Nathan Dies at Lodi Home" in *Stockton Evening and Sunday Record* (California), 24 February 1939, p. 21, col. 2; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/843756312/>).

<sup>152</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Register, 1885 Dec 18-1911 Jan 5 > image 264 of 766, p. 29, Nathan-Billigmeier, 20 January 1896; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>153</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McLean Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 149, no page number, ED 247, sheet 8-A, dwelling 144, family 147, John Nathan family; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68210844:7602>). John's death certificate appears to show a birth year of 1873, however, the last digit of the year appears to be corrected by hand to 1872. "San Joaquin County death records, 1904-1968; indexes, 1893-1967," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2001287>) > San Joaquin > Death certificates 1954 no 1-1011, image 394 of 2270, cert. 173, John Nathan, 28 January 1954; San Joaquin County Recorder, Stockton, California.

<sup>154</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1859 Births, marriages, deaths > image 58 of 61; birth of Ludwig Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Justina Döhring; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>155</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Sterberegister [Death Register], p. 342, Ludwig Billigmeier, 3 February 1904; church office, Kulm.

<sup>156</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 57922667, Ludwig Billigmeier (1859-1904), Gnadenfeld Congregational Cemetery, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; photo by Jae Miller.

<sup>157</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Petition for Letters of Administration, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 25 February 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>158</sup> Negative findings at "Death Records," database, *State Historical Society of North Dakota* (<https://statemuseum.nd.gov/deaths/>); citing North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Vital Records. Search terms Billigmeier/Billigmeier/Billigmeier, died 1900-1909. Also, negative findings at "Public Death Index, Division of Public Records" at *North Dakota Division of Vital Records* (<https://apps.nd.gov/doh/certificates/deathCertSearch.htm>). Search terms Billigmeier and Billigmeier, 1901 through 1909.

<sup>159</sup> See "How to Find North Dakota Death Records" in *FamilySearch Research Wiki* ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/How\\_to\\_Find\\_North\\_Dakota\\_Death\\_Records#Deaths\\_1893\\_to\\_Present](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/How_to_Find_North_Dakota_Death_Records#Deaths_1893_to_Present)).



He married **Juliana (Julia, Juliane) Peltz (Pelz, Belz)** on 2 January 1881 in Tarutino, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>160</sup> Juliane was born 5 April 1862 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, Russia, the daughter of Christian Daniel Pelz and Justina Hinz, and was baptized 8 April 1862.<sup>161</sup> Her baptismal record, created near the time of her birth, shows a birth date of 5 April, however her death certificate and two obituaries show birth dates of 17 April or 7 April.<sup>162</sup> Julianna died on 10 December 1925 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>163</sup> She was buried in the Kulm Congregational Cemetery.<sup>164</sup>

Julianna married second **Jacob Heer** on 28 July 1920 in LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>165</sup> Jacob was born between 1852 and 1858. Although his death certificate shows a birth date of 20 May 1854, other documents throughout his life show a variety of possible birth years.<sup>166</sup> The 1910 U.S. census shows him as age 58 (born about 1852) and an 1889 ship's passenger list shows him as age 31 (born about 1858).<sup>167</sup> He may be the Jacob Heer born 20 June 1853 in Franzfeld, Odessa, Russia, to Johann Jakob Heer and Elisabetha Schell.<sup>168</sup> Jacob died 7 September 1934 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>169</sup> He was buried in the Kulm Congregational Cemetery.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeÿer II; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>161</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Taufen [Baptisms] 1852-1866," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/film/008003600> : accessed 13 October 2023), Microfilm #1768035, p. 302, birth of Julianna Pelz ; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>162</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1925 > 02001-02500 > image 146 of 500, cert. 2146, Julia Heer, 10 December 1925; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. See also "Mrs. Julia Heer" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 17 December 1925, p. 1, col. 4; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02381. See also Obituary for Julia Heer, *Der Kirchenbote* [The Church Messenger] vol. 44 no. 3 (7 January 1926), no page number shown in clipping; digital image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415138\\_00680](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415138_00680)).

<sup>163</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1925 > 02001-02500 > image 146 of 500, cert. 2146, Julia Heer, 10 December 1925; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. "Mrs. Julia Heer Called" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 10 December 1925, p. 1, col. 6; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02381.

<sup>164</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 106378801, Julia Heer (1862-1925), Kulm Congregational Cemetery, Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; photo by Stephanie Kay.

<sup>165</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > LaMoure > 1917-1921 > image 1190 of 1401, Heer-Billigmeÿer, 28 July 1920; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>166</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1934 > 02501-03000 > image 51 of 500, cert. 2551, Jacob Heer, 7 September 1934; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>167</sup> 1910 U.S. census, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Kulm, no page number, ED 124, sheet 5-A, dwelling 95, family 95, Jacob Hehr; NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1143; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/20965134:7884>). See also "Baltimore, Maryland, U.S., Passenger Lists, 1820-1964," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1185234:8679>), image 34 of 485, manifest, *SS America*, 5 June 1889, p. 16, line 36 for Jacob Heer [indexed as Keer], 31; citing NARA microfilm publication M255.

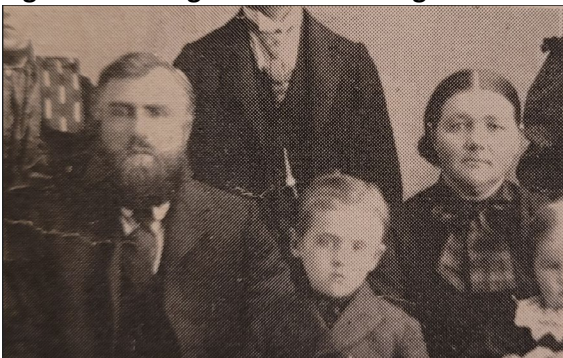
<sup>168</sup> *Freudental, Liebental District Odessa, 1841-1860 Church FB*, translated by Germans from Russia Heritage Society (Bismarck, North Dakota, 2001); Evangelische Kirche Freudental (Freudental, Odessa, Russia), *Familienbuch 1841-1860*, p. 95, Jakob in family register for Johann Jakob Heer; citing file 630-1-91, State Archives of Odesa, Odesa, Ukraine.

<sup>169</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1934 > 02501-03000 > image 51 of 500, cert. 2551, Jacob Heer, 7 September 1934; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>170</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 106378795, Jacob Heer (1854-1934), Kulm Congregational Cemetery, Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; gravestone photo by Stephanie Kay.

## Family story of Ludwig and Julianna

**Figure 3: Ludwig and Julianna Billigmeier**



“Ludwig & Julie Billigmeier” in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 35.

Ludwig Billigmeier was the second child and first son born to C. Ludwig and Justina Billigmeier. His godparents were Samuel Billigmeier (his uncle), Martin Sprenger, and Wilhelmina Harmel.<sup>171</sup> Although he was born in the village of Leipzig, Bessarabia, Ludwig’s childhood was spent mostly in the village of Annental as he was about 2 years old when his parents left Leipzig to help start the new daughter colony near the city of Odessa.

Although little is known about Annental in its early years, it was much smaller than Leipzig. Even 45 years after it was founded, Annental had grown to a population of only 262 people.<sup>172</sup> In 1859 (the year Ludwig was born), Leipzig already had a population of 1,302.<sup>173</sup>

Starting a new farm in a new village would have required hard work from every family member. Even as a young boy, Ludwig would have been given responsibilities to help with the animals or work in the kitchen garden. All German villages had some sort of school, but the school in Annental was probably fairly primitive due to the small size of the village. Most of these small schools were taught by one of the villagers in someone’s home. In the early years of most Black Sea German villages, only the Bible, Lutheran Catechism, and hymnals were used as textbooks to teach reading.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> “Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885],” digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1859 Births, marriages, deaths > image 58 of 61; birth of Ludwig Billigmeier to Ludwig Billgmeier and Justina Döhning, godparents Samuel Billigmeier, Martin Sprenger, Wilhelmina Harmel; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>172</sup> Ulrich Mertens, “Alt-Annental (also Belyary)” in *German-Russian Handbook*, trans. by Brigitte von Budde and Alex Herzog, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2010), p. 245; *North Dakota State University* (<https://library.ndsu.edu/ir/handle/10365/32028>).

<sup>173</sup> “Leipzig gepr. 1815 (Evang.), Kirchspiel Leipzig, Kreis Akkerman, Revisionliste (Census List) 1859” in *Black Sea German Russian Census Volume II* (Bismarck, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Society, 2006), p. 285.

<sup>174</sup> Arthur E. Flegel, CG, “Leipzig in Bessarabia” in *Extended Relationships of the Kulm, Leipzig, Tarutino Communities in Bessarabia, Russia* (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2016), p. 16.

When Ludwig was about 13 years old in 1871/1872, the family moved back to Leipzig where a new school had just opened three years earlier.<sup>175</sup> The larger Leipzig school taught a wider range of subjects, probably including mathematics, music, geography, and Russian (although the school was taught primarily in German).

Despite most of his education occurring in the small Annental school, Ludwig seems to have surpassed his father's educational level. In the Leipzig church family register, Ludwig was assessed as a "2" in reading ability while his father C. Ludwig was only a "1."<sup>176</sup> Although there is no explanation of how each level was defined, Ludwig's higher rating indicates a higher level of achievement. Ludwig's younger siblings, Friedrich and Justina, who attended more years in the larger school of Leipzig obviously benefited as they were each rated as a "4" in their reading ability.

Although the larger school gave Ludwig a couple of years with an enhanced opportunity for learning, by the time he was confirmed on 24 March 1874, he would have put school behind him and focused primarily on helping his father with the farmwork.<sup>177</sup>

### Early years of married life

The Billigmeier family's return to Leipzig was key to another significant event in Ludwig's life—meeting and marrying Julianna Peltz, whose family was among the earliest settlers of Leipzig.<sup>178</sup> Ludwig and Julianna married in January 1881 in the parish church of Tarutino. The text for their wedding was Ephesians 5:33: "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."<sup>179</sup>

Ludwig and Julianna started their married life together in Leipzig. The Leipzig church family register has a separate family entry for them although neither of their two oldest children—Julianna and John—are recorded there.<sup>180</sup> This suggests that the family didn't live in Leipzig in 1882 and 1884 when those children were born. It is likely that Ludwig and Julianna had moved to the nearby daughter colony of Peterstal during those years, where John's obituary states he was born.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Gotthilf Aldinger, *Chronicles of the Community Leipzig in Bessarabia*, trans. by Arthur E. Flegel CG (Menlo Park, 1985), image 20 of 66; digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/868073-chronicles-of-the-community-leipzig-in-bessarabia>).

<sup>176</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeyer; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>177</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeyer II; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>178</sup> Arthur E. Flegel, CG, "Leipzig in Bessarabia" in *Extended Relationships of the Kulm, Leipzig, Tarutino Communities in Bessarabia, Russia* (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 2016), p. 15.

<sup>179</sup> Handwritten excerpt from August Billigmeier's Bible for daughter Valentina Billigmeier Grosz; privately held by Tara Lopez, Arizona [contact information held by author]; copy provided to Carolyn Schott 5 May 2023. See also "Ephesians 5:33 King James Version" at *Bible Gateway* (<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205%3A33&version=KJV>).

<sup>180</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeyer II; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>181</sup> Obituary for John Billigmeier in *Der Kirchenbote* vol. 59 no. 18 (20 May 1940), clipping doesn't show page number; image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," digital image, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415126\\_00555](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415126_00555)).

Peterstal was founded in 1873 by families from Leipzig.<sup>182</sup> There are no records from Peterstal that would confirm Ludwig and Julianna's presence or the births of their children there.<sup>183</sup> However, one of Peterstal's founding families was the Hintz family and Julianna's mother's maiden name was Hintz.<sup>184</sup> This family connection makes it plausible that Ludwig and Julianna were among those who went to Peterstal, probably moving there sometime between their marriage in January 1881 and their first child's birth in April 1882.

However, their time in Peterstal would have been short as Ludwig and Julianna left Russia to set off for the U.S. in 1885. A change in landlords between their arrival in Peterstal and their departure might have influenced that decision. A historical account of Peterstal says "This part of the estate [Peterstal], in the possession of the previous tenant Karadsche-Iskrow, was passed on in 1883 to sons Pawel and Wasili, who managed it themselves from 1885 on and treated the German tenants harshly."<sup>185</sup> The acquisition of a harsh landlord in Peterstal in 1885 coincides with Ludwig and Julianna's departure for the U.S.

Another factor in their decision to leave Russia was likely the changes in the treatment of German colonists in Russia—especially the new requirement for military conscription. One of the key promises by the Russian government to German colonists when they first immigrated to Russia was exemption from service in the army, but on 1 January 1874, that exemption was abolished.<sup>186</sup> Germans conscripted into the Russian army would be required to serve six years of active duty plus nine years in the reserves.

For Bessarabian Germans immigrating to North America, this change in military conscription status is often listed as a main factor for leaving Russia.<sup>187</sup> The reasons for their strong reluctance included: 1) the Russian army's reputation for brutality to recruits, especially to non-Russians; 2) corruption and incompetence in providing basic supplies (food, clothing, etc.), which made soldiers' lives extremely difficult; and 3) the brutality of Russia's "cannon fodder" military strategy that attempted to overwhelm better equipped opponents with large numbers of soldiers, leading to massive casualties.

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<sup>182</sup> Albert Kern, "Peterstal" in *Homeland Book of the Bessarabian Germans*, trans. by Ilona Richey, (Fargo, North Dakota, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection, North Dakota State University Libraries, 1998), p. 144.

<sup>183</sup> Negative search for Peterstal in "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>184</sup> Daniel Erdmann and Edmund Damer, "History of Kurudschika Community, formerly Einsburgsdorf, Tighina District (Bendery) for the 50th Anniversary—1881 to 1931—of Existence," trans. by Allen E. Konrad, (Originally published in the *Deutscher Volkskalender für Bessarabien*, 1931), p. 3; *Black Sea German Research* ([https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/Kurudschika\\_Bess\\_history.pdf](https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/Kurudschika_Bess_history.pdf)).

<sup>185</sup> Daniel Erdmann and Edmund Damer, "History of Kurudschika Community, formerly Einsburgsdorf, Tighina District (Bendery) for the 50th Anniversary—1881 to 1931—of Existence," trans. by Allen E. Konrad, (Originally published in the *Deutscher Volkskalender für Bessarabien*, 1931), p. 3; *Black Sea German Research* ([https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/Kurudschika\\_Bess\\_history.pdf](https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/Kurudschika_Bess_history.pdf)).

<sup>186</sup> Burkett W. Huey, *The German Settlements in Bessarabia: A Study of the German Immigration to, Successful Settlement in, and Ultimate Abandonment of Bessarabia* (Carrboro, NC, TIPS Technical Publishing, 2016), p. 273.

<sup>187</sup> Burkett W. Huey, *The German Settlements in Bessarabia: A Study of the German Immigration to, Successful Settlement in, and Ultimate Abandonment of Bessarabia* (Carrboro, NC, TIPS Technical Publishing, 2016), p. 274-275.

The first conscription of Bessarabian Germans occurred in 1876.<sup>188</sup> Ludwig would have been eligible for conscription when he was 21 in 1881.<sup>189</sup> Although he was not conscripted, his and Julianna's decision to move to the U.S. meant their sons would not have to face this risk in the future.

### The journey to North Dakota

Ludwig, Julianna, and their two children probably took a train from Leipzig (which had become a key railway station just eight years previously) all the way to Bremen, Germany.<sup>190</sup> Based on the travel experiences of Daniel Netz (who came from the nearby village of Neu Elft, Bessarabia, and would become their neighbor in North Dakota), it probably took them about three days to get to Bremen by train, and they would have supplied their own food for the journey.<sup>191</sup> After arriving in Bremen, their lodging and meals would have been subsidized by the shipping company while they waited for a ship to sail for the U.S.

Ludwig and Julianna departed Bremen on 28 October 1885 on the SS *Ems*.<sup>192</sup> The journey across the ocean lasted 10 days, during which typical meals would have been soups, vegetables, tea, and sometimes meat. The cost from Odessa to South Dakota was about \$75 per person.<sup>193</sup>

Ludwig and Julianna traveled to the U.S. with a group of nearly 60 people from Leipzig.<sup>194</sup> These included Ludwig's sister Justina, Julianna's father Daniel, her widowed sister Carolina and children (traveling under the name of Belz rather than her married name of Finck), and her brother Christian's family.<sup>195</sup>

After arriving in New York on 7 November 1885, Ludwig and Julianna traveled about three days by train to Dakota Territory. They arrived in Scotland, Bon Homme Co., Dakota Territory (in current-day South Dakota), probably via the Chicago-Milwaukee Railroad, which had been extended into Scotland just three years earlier.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>188</sup> Burkett W. Huey, *The German Settlements in Bessarabia: A Study of the German Immigration to, Successful Settlement in, and Ultimate Abandonment of Bessarabia* (Carrboro, NC, TIPS Technical Publishing, 2016), p. 273.

<sup>189</sup> "Russia Military Records" in *FamilySearch Research Wiki*, *FamilySearch* ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russia\\_Military\\_Records](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Russia_Military_Records)).

<sup>190</sup> Gotthilf Aldinger, *Chronicles of the Community Leipzig in Bessarabia*, trans. by Arthur E. Flegel CG (Menlo Park, 1985), image 66 of 66; digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/library/books/records/item/868073-chronicles-of-the-community-leipzig-in-bessarabia>).

<sup>191</sup> North Dakota Work Projects Administration, "Pioneer Biography Files, 1936-1940," *North Dakota State University Archives*, Fargo, microfilm F635.P56 1988, McIntosh Co.; transcription by Carolyn Schott, "Biography of Daniel Netz (1868-1948)," *Black Sea German Research* ([https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/bio-daniel\\_netz.pdf](https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/bio-daniel_netz.pdf)).

<sup>192</sup> "Incoming Steamships," in *The New York Times* (New York), 7 November 1885, p. 8, col. 5; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/20503654/>).

<sup>193</sup> Gordon L. Iseminger, "The McIntosh County Germans-Russians: The First Fifty Years" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 51 (Summer 1984), p. 5.

<sup>194</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10096811:7488>), images 9 and 10 of 13, manifest, SS *Ems*, 7 November 1885, New York, no page number, lines 475-533, all families in this group came from Leipzig; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>195</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10096811:7488>), images 9 of 13, manifest, SS *Ems*, 7 November 1885, New York, no page number, line 517 for Justina Billigmeier age 18, line 518 for Daniel Belz age 58, line 519 for Caroline Belz age 37, line 506 for Christian Belz age 25; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>196</sup> Mark Hufstetler and Michael Bedeau, *South Dakota's Railroads* (Pierre, South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, rev. 2007), p. 22; *South Dakota State Historical Society* (<https://history.sd.gov/preservation/docs/SDRailroad.pdf>). For map of railroad into Dakota Territory as of 1886, see *Official railroad map of Dakota issued by the railroad commissioners*,

Scotland was a common destination for Germans traveling from Bessarabia to the Dakota Territory at that time because of the convenient rail connection. Another reason that might have brought Ludwig and family there was because Ludwig's step-cousin Georg Billigmeier (son of C. Ludwig's step-brother Konrad), who had come to the U.S. in 1873, had settled there.<sup>197</sup>

Ludwig's family spent the winter in Hutchinson Co., just north of Scotland. Ludwig and Julianna's third child, Friedericka, was born during that winter and was baptized in Eigenfeld Evangelical Lutheran Church, which was just southwest of Parkston, Hutchinson Co., Dakota Territory (now South Dakota).

Julianna's obituary corroborates their winter location as being near Parkston.<sup>198</sup> In addition, Ludwig filed his Declaration of Intent to become a U.S. citizen in Hutchinson County on 16 April 1886.<sup>199</sup>

### **Homesteading in Roloff Township, McIntosh County**

In the spring of 1886, Ludwig, Julianna, and their three children moved into the northern part of the Dakota Territory where there was abundant land available for homesteading. They traveled by train to Ellendale, Dickey Co., Dakota Territory (now North Dakota), where they purchased two oxen, a cow, a hog, and some chickens.<sup>200</sup> They continued by wagon west to McIntosh County, which was experiencing a flood of fellow German immigrants.<sup>201</sup> From 1885 to 1890, the population of the county grew more than 800% (from 390 to 3,248), and more than 60% were Germans from the Russian Empire.<sup>202</sup>

Ludwig's granddaughter, Evelyn (Billigmeier) Schott, called Ludwig "a LAND KING."<sup>203</sup> While this may be a bit of an exaggeration from a proud granddaughter, Ludwig did exhibit shrewdness in his property acquisition strategy, accumulating land through three separate claims—a preemption claim, a homestead claim, and a timber claim.

The Homestead Act enabled new settlers to file a claim for up to 160 acres and then gain title to it by: 1) living on the land for six months and then buying it for \$1.25 per acre (preemption claim), or 2) living on the land for five years and then obtaining title for a small filing fee (homestead claim). In both cases, the homesteader was required to make improvements to the land.<sup>204</sup> The Timber Culture Act of 1873

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*November 1st, 1886* (Chicago, Rand McNally and Company, 1886); image, *Library of Congress* (<https://www.loc.gov/resource/g4171p.rr002750/>).

<sup>197</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237\\_379-0369](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/7488/images/NYM237_379-0369)), image 9 of 23, manifest, *SS Thuringia*, 30 July 1873, p. 5, Georg Billigmeier [indexed as Belligmener], 31; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>198</sup> Obituary for Julia Heer, *Der Kirchenbote* [The Church Messenger] vol. 44 no. 3 (7 January 1926), no page number shown in clipping; digital image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415138\\_00680](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415138_00680)).

<sup>199</sup> "South Dakota, County Naturalization Records, 1865-1972," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2078640>) > Hutchinson > Declarations of intention 1876-1906 box 3 > image 90 of 162, Ludwig Billigmeier, 16 April 1886; South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre.

<sup>200</sup> "Ludwig & Julie Billigmeier" in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 35. See also "John Billigmeier" in *Ashley's Golden Jubilee 1888-1938* (Ashley, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1938), p. 154.

<sup>201</sup> "History" in *Ashley's Golden Jubilee 1888-1938* (Ashley, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1938), p. 24.

<sup>202</sup> Gordon L. Iseminger, "The McIntosh County Germans-Russians: The First Fifty Years" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 51 (Summer 1984), p. 4.

<sup>203</sup> "Harry Schott" in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott.

<sup>204</sup> "Homestead Act (1862)," *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/homestead-act>).

enabled settlers to gain an additional 160 acres of land if they committed to planting 10 acres of the land with trees.<sup>205</sup>

Ludwig and family chose their land in the northeast corner of McIntosh County in section 14 of township 132, range 67—which would later be named Roloff Township after Daniel Roloff, a settler from Kulm, Bessarabia, who also arrived spring 1886.<sup>206</sup>

**Table 2: Ludwig Billigmeier Homesteading**

Year	Preemption Claim West half of east half of section 14	Timber Claim East half of west half of section 14	Homestead Claim East half of east half of section 14
1886	12 May: Settled on claim <sup>a</sup> 18 May: Applied for claim <sup>b</sup> 3 Dec: Filed final proof in county land office <sup>c</sup> 10 Dec: Proof papers approved in state land office <sup>d</sup>	18 May: Applied for claim <sup>g</sup>	
1887			20 Jun: Settled on claim <sup>k</sup>
1888			
1889	30 Jul: Proof papers approved for patent <sup>e</sup> 24 Sep: Received land patent <sup>f</sup>		1 Jun: Adobe house built on claim <sup>l</sup>
1890			
1891			
1892			6 Aug: Applied for claim <sup>m</sup> 13 Aug: Claim application approved in state land office <sup>n</sup>
1893			
1894		30 Jun: Filed final proof in county land office <sup>h</sup> 12 Jul: Proof papers approved in state land office <sup>i</sup>	
1895		12 Mar: Received land patent <sup>j</sup>	
1896			
1897			
1898			
1899			10 Jul: Filed final proof in county land office <sup>o</sup> 4 Aug: Proof papers approved in state land office <sup>p</sup> 7 Dec: Received land patent <sup>q</sup>

<sup>205</sup> “The Timber Culture Act,” in *Land Acts; National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/files/calendar/genealogy-fair/2014/handouts/session-11-handout-5of5-martinez-land-other-land-acts.pdf>), p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> Alice Hollan, “Roloff Township” in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 42.

<sup>a</sup> Pre-emption Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 3 December 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>b</sup> Although the application is missing from Ludwig's preemption claim file, it is likely he applied for that claim at the same time as he applied for the timber claim because he filed his proof papers exactly six months later. See Timber Culture Act Application 3456, 18 May 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>c</sup> Affidavit Required of Pre-emption Claimant, 3 December 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>d</sup> Receipt for \$200, 10 December 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>e</sup> Untitled cover page, 30 July 1889, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>f</sup> Pre-emption patent 1281 to Ludwig Billigmeier, 24 September 1889; Patent Record Homestead Pre-emption Book 2:328; McIntosh County Recorder's Office, Ashley, ND. See also Cash Entry, 24 September 1889, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>g</sup> Timber Culture Act Application 3456, 18 May 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>h</sup> Special Certificate, 30 June 1894, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>i</sup> Timber Culture Final Certificate, 12 July 1894, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>j</sup> Timber Culture Certificate 636 to Ludwig Billigmeier, 12 March 1895; Deed Record Book 4:191; McIntosh County Recorder's Office, Ashley, ND. See also Timber Culture [cover page], patent date 12 March 1895, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>k</sup> Homestead Affidavit, 6 August 1892, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>l</sup> Homestead Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 10 July 1899, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>m</sup> Homestead Application 6748, 6 August 1892, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>n</sup> Homestead Application [cover page], 13 August 1892, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>o</sup> Final Affidavit Required of Homestead Claimants, 10 July 1899, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>p</sup> Untitled cover page, 4 August 1899, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>q</sup> Homestead patent 4175 to Ludwig Billigmeier, 7 December 1899; Deed Record Book 6:120; McIntosh County Recorder's Office, Ashley, North Dakota.

After settling in Roloff Township in May 1886, Ludwig immediately filed applications for preemption and timber claims. After the required six months, Ludwig was able to pay off his preemption claim in



December of that same year for \$200 (\$1.25 per acre). By the following spring, the family had moved to a new claim, although they didn't officially file the application for this claim for another five years. This time, Ludwig was able to apply for his homestead as a U.S. citizen as he'd been naturalized a few months earlier on 31 May 1892.<sup>207</sup>

In 1894, he'd fulfilled the requirements to gain title to his timber claim land. In 1899, he'd met the requirements for his homestead claim and paid the \$4 filing fee to obtain final title.

After 14 years in America, Ludwig owned 480 acres of land, making him a major landowner in this corner of North Dakota.

<b>Figure 4: Section 14 of Roloff Township – Ludwig Billigmeier's Land Claims</b>				
	<b>Timber Claim</b>	<b>Preemption Claim</b>	<b>Home-stead Claim</b>	

For timber claim, Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C. For preemption claim, Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C. For homestead claim, see Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

### **Establishing their farm in North Dakota**

Ludwig and Julianna worked hard to establish themselves in this new land. In their first seven months in McIntosh County (May 1886 through December 1886), they built a 14x32-foot sod house, a 14x21-foot sod barn, dug a well, and broke 15 acres of virgin prairie for farming.<sup>208</sup> With no sons old enough to help,

<sup>207</sup> "Final or second papers and petitions, 1890-1948," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSMB-6932-P>), DGS 7786968, image 42 of 705, p.29, Ludwig Billigmeier, 31 May 1892; McIntosh Co. District Court, North Dakota State Historical Society, Bismarck.

<sup>208</sup> Pre-emption Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 3 December 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

it's likely that Julianna worked side-by-side with Ludwig, perhaps by driving the oxen, because breaking the land and planting the first crop generally required at least two people.<sup>209</sup>

Breaking the sod provided them with the materials needed to build their sod house and barn. The sod was used as soon as it was broken up, to keep it from drying out.<sup>210</sup> Sod pieces from one to three feet long created the walls, with each layer being laid crosswise to the previous layer. Most sod houses (or soddies as they were called) had dirt floors, although in some cases, wooden floors were laid and the inside walls whitewashed. But unfortunately, one thing that all soddies seemed to have in common was a roof that leaked in the rain.

That first season, Ludwig and Julianna harvested five acres of flax, three acres of corn, and one bushel of potatoes.<sup>211</sup> Since there was no harvesting machinery, the flax had to be threshed by hand.<sup>212</sup> The only times Ludwig left the farm during this period were 12 overnight trips to town for provisions, while Julianna and the children kept watch over the farm.<sup>213</sup> (His provisioning trips were likely to Ashley, the only nearby town, which was about a 30-mile journey.) Their second year of farming, one of the oxen died and they had to hook up the cow to the plow to get the farmwork done.<sup>214</sup> The first years would have been a struggle as the late 1880s were a time of ongoing drought in North Dakota.<sup>215</sup>

Although most German families in North Dakota planted flax as their first crop, wheat soon became the most common crop.<sup>216</sup> Other common crops were barley, oats, rye, and corn.

Although proving up their homestead claims was a consuming task, Ludwig and Julianna found time to get involved in their community, demonstrating their commitment to their lives in a new country. They were among the founders of the Gnadenfeld Church in 1886, a country church in Roloff Township that later became affiliated with the Congregational Church in the town of Kulm.<sup>217</sup> And although their three children were still too young for school, they evidently recognized the importance of education. Ludwig became one of the first school board members when a school was started in 1887 in Roloff Township.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Barbara Handy-Marchello, *Women of the Northern Plains* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), p. 55.

<sup>210</sup> Barbara Witteman, *Prairie in Her Heart: Pioneer Women of North Dakota* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 50.

<sup>211</sup> Pre-emption Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 3 December 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>212</sup> "Ludwig & Julie Billigmeier" in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 35.

<sup>213</sup> Final Proof—Cross-examination of Claimant, 3 December 1886, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing cash no. 1281, 10 December 1886, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>214</sup> "Ludwig & Julie Billigmeier" in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 35.

<sup>215</sup> Barbara Handy-Marchello, *Women of the Northern Plains* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), p. 70.

<sup>216</sup> Gordon L. Iseminger, "The McIntosh County Germans-Russians: The First Fifty Years" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 51 (Summer 1984), p. 15.

<sup>217</sup> "Gnadenfeld Church" in *Fredonia Centennial 1904-2004* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Fredonia Centennial Book Committee, 2004), p. 46.

<sup>218</sup> North Dakota Work Projects Administration, "Pioneer Biography Files, 1936-1940," *North Dakota State University Archives*, Fargo, microfilm F635.P56 1988, McIntosh Co.; transcription by Carolyn Schott, "Biography of Daniel Netz (1868-1948)," *Black Sea German Research* ([https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/bio-daniel\\_netz.pdf](https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/bio-daniel_netz.pdf)).

When Ludwig and Julianna moved to their second homestead claim in June 1887, they first built a 16x30 foot sod house and a barn of the same size, dug a well, and broke six acres.<sup>219</sup> A couple of years later, they'd built a "Doby" [adobe] 16x32 foot brick house, a frame house that was 20x28 feet, and had broken eight acres.<sup>220</sup>

Black Sea Germans in the Dakotas were noted for their skills in constructing adobe houses—a skill they'd learned on the treeless steppes of their homeland in the Russian Empire.<sup>221</sup> Clay, straw, and water were mixed and formed into blocks, which were then dried in the sun. Building houses of these bricks was more time-consuming, but created more permanent homes, than the soddies. These adobe brick houses had thick walls, providing insulation from hot summer days and cold winter nights.<sup>222</sup>

Ludwig and Julianna also worked hard on the timber claim, breaking new land each year to plant trees. When Ludwig made his final affidavit on his timber claim on 30 June 1894, he was managing the required 10 acres, each of which had 1,000 cottonwood trees growing.<sup>223</sup>

Ludwig and Julianna's family likely weathered the winter of 1887-1888 on this new claim. North Dakota winters were far colder than those they'd experienced in Bessarabia; the lower temperatures combined with the constant wind and drifting snow creating bitter and dangerous conditions.<sup>224</sup> The blizzard of January 1888 was considered one of the worst in history, killing around 200 people in the region.<sup>225</sup> Many of these were schoolchildren who died from exposure trying to get home from country schools when the blizzard struck unexpectedly. Fortunately, none of Ludwig and Julianna's children were old enough yet to attend school and were likely safe at home during this blizzard.

As their landholdings grew, Ludwig and Julianna's family also grew during these years. Seven more children were born between 1888 and 1900—Paulina, August, Martha, Daniel, Ella Rosalie (who died at the age of 4), Esther, and Albert.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Homestead Affidavit, 6 August 1892, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>220</sup> Homestead Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 10 July 1899, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) homestead file bearing final certificate no. 4175, 4 August 1899, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>221</sup> Barbara Handy-Marchello, *Women of the Northern Plains* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), p. 60.

<sup>222</sup> Gordon L. Iseminger, "The McIntosh County Germans-Russians: The First Fifty Years" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 51 (Summer 1984), p. 6.

<sup>223</sup> Timber Culture Proof—Testimony of Claimant, 30 June 1894, in Ludwig Billigmeier (McIntosh Co.) Timber Culture file bearing final certificate no. 636, 12 July 1894, Bismarck, North Dakota, Land Office; Land Entry Papers, 1800-1908; Record Group 49: Records of the Bureau of Land Management; NARA, Washington, D.C.

<sup>224</sup> Gordon L. Iseminger, "The McIntosh County Germans-Russians: The First Fifty Years" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 51 (Summer 1984), p. 10.

<sup>225</sup> Christopher C. Burt, "The Blizzard of 1888: America's Greatest Snow Disaster," 12 March 2020, *Weather Underground* (<https://www.wunderground.com/cat6/the-blizzard-of-1888-americas-greatest-snow-disaster>).

<sup>226</sup> For Paulina, see "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1961 > 03201-03600 > image 359 of 400, cert. 3559, Pauline Klein, 27 September 1961; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. For August, see "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/299864098:2238>), card for August Billigmeier, serial no. U211, 27 April 1942, Local Draft Board 1, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746. For Martha, see Obituary for Martha Billigmeier Hofmeister in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 11 July 1974, no page number shown; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415120\\_02320](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415120_02320)). For Daniel, see "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui->

At the same time, more settlers continued to settle nearby, making the Billigmeiers less isolated on their farm. This was likely a relief to Ludwig and Julianna, who had grown up in close-knit Bessarabian communities in which families lived together in a village, with farm fields located outside the village.<sup>227</sup> The Homestead Act's requirement for families to live on their claimed land meant that in North Dakota, families were widely separated from each other.

When the town of Kulm was founded in 1892 just 10 miles northeast of them, Ludwig had a much easier source for provisions than making the 30-mile trip to Ashley.<sup>228</sup> Kulm was also a terminus for the "Soo Line" (officially, the Minneapolis, St. Paul and Sault Ste. Marie Railroad), making it easier for Ludwig to haul his crops to a rail line for sale.

### Trying a new business

After 15 years of farming in Roloff Township, Ludwig decided to try a new endeavor in 1901. He invested in the Kulm Roller Mill, which produced flour for farmers in the area. One incentive for this decision may have been the discouraging agricultural crops of 1900, when all the crops dried up and were unable to be harvested.<sup>229</sup>

Ludwig traded all his land in McIntosh County to the Byer brothers for the flour mill.<sup>230</sup> This trade occurred through three transactions on 9 February 1901:

- Ludwig and Julianna sold the 480 acres they'd earned through homesteading and the timber claim to William Byer for \$3,000.<sup>231</sup>
- Ludwig purchased five lots in Kulm (lots 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 in Block 2), three of which included the flour mill buildings, from the Kulm Roller Mill Company for \$8,000.<sup>232</sup> This transaction included Ludwig taking out a mortgage from David Byer for at least \$1,715.<sup>233</sup>

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content/view/299864100:2238), card for Daniel Billigmeier, serial no. U330, 27 April 1942, Local Board 1, Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746. For Ella Rosalie, see Kulm Congregational Church (North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Sterberegister [Death Register], p. 338, Ella Rosalie Billigmeier, 9 November 1899; church office, Kulm. Burial record shows both date of death and date of birth. For Esther, see Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 14, birth of Esther Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Julia Belz; church office, Kulm. For Albert, see Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 21, birth of Albert Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Juliana Belz; church office, Kulm.

<sup>227</sup> Barbara Handy-Marchello, *Women of the Northern Plains* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), p. 88-89.

<sup>228</sup> "Kulm, No. Dakota. A Substantial Town" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>229</sup> "Wheat Crop" in *Bismarck Weekly Tribune* (North Dakota), 17 August 1900, p. 3, col. 2; digital image, *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042588/1900-08-17/ed-1/seq-3/>).

<sup>230</sup> "Ludwig & Julie Billigmeier" in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 35.

<sup>231</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 9:52, Ludwig Billigmeier and wife to William Byer, no. 2405, 9 February 1901; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>232</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Kulm Roller Mill Company to Ludwig Billigmeier, deed no. 4075, 9 February 1901; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure.

<sup>233</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Ludwig Billigmeier and Juliana Billigmeier to G.J. Dobler, deed no. 4527, 16 September 1901; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure. When Ludwig sold the roller mill in September 1901, the outstanding mortgage was \$1,715, which may or may not have been the original mortgage.

- Ludwig purchased Lot 5 of Block 2 in Kulm, which adjoined the mill lots, from David Byer for \$200.<sup>234</sup> This lot may have had a house where the family lived.

**Figure 5: Kulm Roller Mill**



Cover of *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, ND, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992). Used with permission.

The Kulm Roller Mill, a prominent business in this small town, had initially been built in 1893 by the Rott brothers and Helwick.<sup>235</sup> They hired M. Frank Smith as the miller, who continued in this role until his death in 1907. Investing in the mill must have seemed like a good business opportunity to Ludwig, as farmers brought wheat from as far as 100 miles away to be ground into flour. At some times of year, the mill would work 24 hours per day, week after week.

Bread was a staple food in pioneers' lives, so families either bought flour directly or traded their wheat to the mill to obtain flour.<sup>236</sup> Flour usage obviously varied based on the size of the family, but one North Dakota woman of this time reported baking nine loaves of bread each day, using 100 pounds of flour every three weeks.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, David Byer to Ludwig Billigmeier, deed no. 4074, 9 February 1901; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure.

<sup>235</sup> Ronald Brost, "The Kulm Mill" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 117.

<sup>236</sup> Barbara Witteman, *Prairie in Her Heart: Pioneer Women of North Dakota* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 66-67.

<sup>237</sup> Barbara Witteman, *Prairie in Her Heart: Pioneer Women of North Dakota* (Charleston, Arcadia Publishing, 2001), p. 68.

Despite the importance of the mill to the town and local farmers, a milling business was difficult to run profitably. Flour was a basic need for all, so customers were never lacking. Yet many people had to buy on credit, leading to cash flow challenges for the mill.<sup>238</sup>

This difficulty may be the reason that Ludwig and Julianna decided to turn back to farming. Although a biography of Ludwig states that he was in the mill business for two years, it appears that one season in the mill business was enough. In the fall of 1901, the same year he'd bought it, Ludwig sold the mill to G.J. Dobler on 16 September 1901.<sup>239</sup>

While still running the mill, Ludwig had already begun to build back his land holdings. In August 1901, he purchased the 160 acres that his mother Justina had homesteaded in Section 10 of Roloff Township for \$500.<sup>240</sup> This included the east half of the southeast quarter, the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter, and the southeast quarter of the northeast quarter of this section. After selling the mill properties, Ludwig purchased two half lots on Block 10 in Kulm from Michael Klaiber and his wife on 24 September 1901 for \$290 (possibly so the family would still have a house in town after selling the roller mill property).<sup>241</sup>

The following spring, on 19 June 1902, Ludwig purchased 160 acres in section 30 of Roloff Township from David and Katharina Leicht for \$1,000.<sup>242</sup> And a year later, on 22 June 1903, Ludwig purchased 160 acres in section 19 from the Northern Pacific Railway for \$400.<sup>243</sup>

Ludwig contracted to purchase another 320 acres in Section 29 from the Northern Pacific Railway. But this plan was disrupted by his death on 3 February 1904. His estate made the final payment of \$396.55 for that contract on 19 May 1904, which was recorded 21 May 1904.<sup>244</sup>

### **Life after Ludwig's death**

Ludwig's estate is a stark example of a life interrupted in its prime as it shows the broad extent of his farming operations. In addition to the 800 acres of land that he left behind, his estate included 89 cattle (59 cows, 21 steers, nine calves), 18 sheep and lambs, four hogs, 40 chickens, 10 horses, and a wide variety of farming equipment that included multiple plows and wagons, disc, mower, harrow, cultivator, and sleighs.<sup>245</sup> He had stored a significant amount of his previous crops (perhaps waiting for a good price

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<sup>238</sup> Ronald Brost, "The Kulm Mill" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 117.

<sup>239</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Ludwig Billigmeier and Juliana Billigmeier to G.J. Dobler, deed no. 4527, 16 September 1901; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure.

<sup>240</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 9:94, Justina Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier, no. 2677, 19 August 1901; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>241</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Michael Klaiber and Christina Klaiber to Ludwig Billigmeier, deed no. 4588, 24 September 1901; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure.

<sup>242</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 9:181, David Leicht and Katharina Leicht to Ludwig Billigmeier, no. 3503, 19 June 1902; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>243</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 10:578, Northern Pacific Railway Company to Ludwig Billigmeier, no. 4505, 22 June 1903; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>244</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 11:232-234, Northern Pacific Railway Company to "Heirs of Ludwig Billigmeier, deceased," no. 6303, 21 May 1904; County Recorder's Office, Ashley. See also McIntosh Co., North Dakota, receipt from Northern Pacific Railway, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 19 May 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>245</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Inventory, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 28 May 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

to sell them)—including 35 bushels of barley, 60 bushels of flax, 300 bushels of wheat, and 300 bushels of spelt (a type of wheat).

Ludwig’s estate consisted of: <sup>246</sup>

Homestead (exempt)	\$3,175.00
Other real estate	\$6,400.00
Personal property (exempt)	\$1,531.00
Personal property	\$3,708.50
Total	\$14,814.50

In 2023 dollars, this would be the equivalent of about \$508,838. <sup>247</sup>

On 16 May 1904, Julia Billigmeier was appointed administratrix of Ludwig’s estate and the Billigmeiers’ neighbor, Samuel Fregien, was appointed as the guardian for the minor children. <sup>248</sup> This excluded daughter Julianna, who was 21 when her father died. All the rest were under the age of majority, which was 21 for boys and 18 for girls. <sup>249</sup>

As Ludwig died without a will, North Dakota law required one-third of the estate to go to the surviving spouse with the other two-thirds divided equally among the children. <sup>250</sup> As a result, Julianna inherited 9/27 of the estate, while each of the nine living children inherited 2/27 of the estate. <sup>251</sup> All of the real estate was divided based on these percentages. <sup>252</sup>

Julianna was savvy enough to include the valuable gang plow as part of the estate’s personal property exemption. These plows turned over multiple furrows at a time and this was likely one of their most valuable pieces of farming equipment. <sup>253</sup> However, since farming equipment and animals were impossible to easily split to meet the legal requirements of the estate division, all other personal

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<sup>246</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Recapitulation, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 28 May 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>247</sup> *CPI Inflation Calculator* (<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1904>).

<sup>248</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Letters of Administration, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 16 May 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck. See also McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Order Appointing Special Guardian, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 16 May 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>249</sup> North Dakota Legislative Assembly, “Persons: Minority Defined” in *The Revised Codes of the State of North Dakota 1899*, (Bismarck, Tribune Company, 1899), p. 690; digital images, *Hathi Trust* (<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010476402>).

<sup>250</sup> North Dakota Legislative Assembly, “Succession: Order of Succession” in *The Revised Codes of the State of North Dakota 1899*, (Bismarck, Tribune Company, 1899), p. 887; digital images, *Hathi Trust* (<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010476402>).

<sup>251</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Final Decree of Distribution, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 6 March 1905, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>252</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Final Decree of Distribution, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 6 March 1905, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck. The final distribution accidentally excluded mention of the real estate in Section 30 of Twp. 132 North Range 67 East although it had been listed as part of the estate in the Letters of Administration. This was corrected in 1957 at the petition of Ludwig’s son August who owned the property at that time. See McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Final Decree of Distribution Nunc Pro Tunc, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 16 December 1957, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>253</sup> “Agricultural Machinery” in *Expositions: Where the modern technology of the times was exhibited (2010-2011)*; *National Diet Library Japan* (<https://www.ndl.go.jp/exposition/e/s2/9.html>).

property was sold and converted to cash. In June 1904, Julianna raised \$1,092.22 by auctioning off several pieces of farm equipment, 11 sheep/lambs, 73 cattle, the stallion, and 30 bushels of barley.<sup>254</sup>

After the auction, the remaining livestock and the most valuable farm equipment was sold to Julianna's neighbor, Daniel Netz, for \$1,643.75.<sup>255</sup> In addition, he purchased the Billigmeiers' organ as well as a new steel kitchen range that Ludwig bought just a couple of days before his death.

It's likely that the Billigmeier and Netz families had close personal ties in addition to being neighbors, as Ludwig Billigmeier's son Daniel and Daniel Netz's daughter Dena would marry in later years. Daniel Netz's purchase of so much of the family's personal property may have been a way help Julianna financially. It's also possible that this was a sale "on paper" that allowed her to officially settle the estate and then immediately buy back the equipment that she would need to keep the Billigmeier farm operations running for the whole family.

After selling some of the stored crops to the Kulm Roller Mill and settling all the bills of the estate, a cash amount of \$2,859.03 and notes due totaling \$378.45 were divided among the heirs.<sup>256</sup>

### **Julianna—single mom and Land Queen**

Ludwig's death left Julianna with 800 acres of land and eight children at home, seven of whom were under 18. This was a significant land holding as the average farm size in North Dakota at that time was just 342 acres.<sup>257</sup> She continued running the farm, probably relying on her 20-year-old son, John, to manage the day-to-day operations.

Julianna's granddaughter Evelyn credited Ludwig as being a Land King but may not have realized that Julianna could also have earned the title of Land Queen. After Ludwig's death, Julianna continued to expand her landholdings.

- In February 1905, she bought 160 acres in Stark County from her sister, Caroline Fink. They may not have wanted to record the amount of money exchanged as the sale price is recorded as \$1.<sup>258</sup>
- In August 1908, she bought 320 acres in Stark County from the Northwestern Improvements Company for \$1,120 based on a contract originally made by her sister Caroline.<sup>259</sup> Julianna sold a half interest in all of her Stark County land to her son John in March 1910 for \$1,350.<sup>260</sup> However, Julianna and John apparently had difficulty keeping up with the taxes on the Stark

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<sup>254</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Report of Sale of Personal Property, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 17 June 1904, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>255</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Exhibit A in the matter of sale of personal property, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 18 February 1905, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>256</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Final Decree of Distribution, Ludwig Billigmeier probate file, 6 March 1905, Probate Case Files 1886-1925, Collection 41011; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>257</sup> "Agriculture: Table 121" in *Abstract of the Twelfth Census of the United States 1900* (Washington D.C., Government Printing Office, 1902), p. 234, line 41; United States Census Bureau (<https://www.census.gov/library/publications/1902/dec/abstract.html>).

<sup>258</sup> Stark Co., North Dakota, Carolina Fink to Julie Billigmeier, deed no. 4632, 3 February 1905; County Recorder's Office, Dickinson.

<sup>259</sup> Stark Co., North Dakota, Northwestern Improvement Company to Mrs. Julie Billigmeier, deed no. 6756, 11 August 1908; County Recorder's Office, Dickinson.

<sup>260</sup> Stark Co., North Dakota, Julie Billigmeier to John Billigmeier, deed no. 44962, 22 March 1910; County Recorder's Office, Dickinson.



County properties as they were listed (under Julia Billigmeier's name) as being behind on taxes for 1913 and 1914.<sup>261</sup>

- In December 1909, she purchased 160 acres in section 29 of Roloff Township from William Hoerr for \$969.<sup>262</sup> She sold this to her son John on 23 December 1919, for \$5,000 and the agreement that he assume the outstanding \$1,000 mortgage.<sup>263</sup>
- In December 1910, she purchased 320 acres in sections 30 and 31 of Roloff Township from Jacob and Karolina Mueller for \$7,040.<sup>264</sup> In February 1922, she sold the 160 acres in section 30 to Daniel Opp for \$2,500 plus Opp took over her \$1,500 mortgage.<sup>265</sup>

Despite her continued land dealings, in 1909 at age 47 she retired from farming and moved into Kulm.<sup>266</sup> This decision might have been made partly to let John and his new wife Amalia have full responsibility for the farm after they married in November of 1909.<sup>267</sup>

Julianna's three youngest children—Daniel, Esther, and Albert—were all registered in the Kulm school for the 1909-1910 school year, making it likely that the family had moved into town by September or October of that year.<sup>268</sup> However, the exact composition of the family that moved to town is unknown as Julianna's family does not show up in the 1910 census.<sup>269</sup> It seems likely that her unmarried daughter Paulina, age 21, also moved into town with them. It's likely that son August, age 19, stayed on the farm in Roloff Township because he was married and farming side-by-side with his brother by 1915.<sup>270</sup>

From life on the farm, Julianna and the younger children moved into the heart of exciting changes in the up-and-coming town of Kulm. One example is that in June 1912, the Billigmeiers' home church, Kulm Congregational, hosted the denomination's General Conference.<sup>271</sup> With speakers from as far away as

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<sup>261</sup> "Delinquent Tax List for Stark County, N.D., for the Year 1913," *The Dickinson Press* (North Dakota), 28 November 1914, p. 7, col. 1; digital image, *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88076013/1914-11-28/ed-1/seq-7/>). See also "Delinquent Tax List," *The Dickinson Press* (North Dakota), 27 November 1915, p. 9, col. 1; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/606204577/>).

<sup>262</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 20:185, William Hoerr to Julia Billigmeier, no. 13985, 30 December 1909; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>263</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 30:333, Julia Billigmeier to John Billigmeier, no. 32732, 23 December 1919; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>264</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 23:21, Jakob Müller and Karolina Müller to Julia Billigmeier, no. 17685, 9 December 1910; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>265</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 31:380, Julia Heer, formerly Billigmeier, and Jakob Heer to Daniel J. Opp, no. 36342, 1 February 1922; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>266</sup> "Ludwig & Julie Billigmeier" in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 35.

<sup>267</sup> Morton Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate no. 2040, Billigmeier-Gittel, 25 November 1909; Marriage Records Collection, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>268</sup> Sandy Knudsen, Clerk of Courts (LaMoure, LaMoure Co., North Dakota) to Carolyn Schott, email, 1 June 2023. Provided list of school years that Billigmeier children were enrolled in the Kulm school. Copy of school census not provided due to confidentiality issues.

<sup>269</sup> Negative findings for Julia Billigmeier family in 1910 U.S. census, North Dakota, pop. sch.; NARA microfilm publication T624, roll 1143; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/7884/>). Line-by-line search of LaMoure Co., Kulm, ED 0124, and of McIntosh Co., Twp. 132 Range 67, ED 0077.

<sup>270</sup> 1915 North Dakota state census, McIntosh Co., pop. sch., township not shown, no page number, dwelling/family 23, August Billigmeier household next to John Billigmeier household; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2572646:1078>), image 61 of 101; State Archives and Historical Research Library, Bismarck.

<sup>271</sup> Photo captioned "General Conference Congregational Church – 1912" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 90.

Chicago, Denver, and New York, it was a major event and likely every family in the congregation was involved.<sup>272</sup>

By 1913, only Julianna's youngest child, Albert, was still registered in school in Kulm.<sup>273</sup> In 1914, Julianna's oldest daughter, also named Julianna, died from tuberculosis at age 32, leaving behind her husband and three children.<sup>274</sup> Julianna nursed her daughter during her final days.

Julianna continued to live with her son Daniel in Kulm for at least part of 1920.<sup>275</sup> But after Daniel married that year, Julianna decided to make a new life for herself too. In 1920, at the age of 58, she married Jacob Heer of Kulm.<sup>276</sup>

### **Julianna's final days**

Even in what turned out to be the last year of her life (1925), Julianna continued to acquire more land. In May 1925, she purchased lot 17 of Block 9 in Kulm from Maria Dobler.<sup>277</sup> Problems with title to this property cropped up in October 1925, when an announcement in the local newspaper said that David Brost, as guardian for Alvin, Wilbert, and Katharina Brost, was selling their share of this property—which Julianna had already purchased.<sup>278</sup> Julianna subsequently settled with the Brost family in a series of three transactions that totaled 13/15 of the lot (about 87%).<sup>279</sup>

- 1/3 (or 5/15) of lot was purchased from David Brost for \$1 on 7 December 1925.
- 2/15 of lot was purchased from Nora Brost for \$1, finalized on 1 January 1926 (after Julianna's death).
- 6/15 of lot was purchased from minors Alvin, Wilbert, and Katharina Brost (David Brost acting as guardian) for \$600, finalized on 4 January 1926 based on a court order dated 8 December 1925.

During the time these real estate transactions were being settled in the fall of 1925, Julianna became ill and her daughter Friedericka nursed her during her last three months of life.<sup>280</sup> In December, her health

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<sup>272</sup> "General Conference of the German Congregational Churches Held at Kulm, North Dakota," *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 20 June 1902, p. 1, col 2.

<sup>273</sup> Sandy Knudsen, Clerk of Courts (LaMoure, LaMoure Co., North Dakota) to Carolyn Schott, email, 1 June 2023. Provided list of school years that Billigmeier children were enrolled in the Kulm school. Copy of school census not provided due to confidentiality issues.

<sup>274</sup> "Obituary [for Julia Anna Gross nee Billigmeier]" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 3 December 1914, p. 5, col. 4; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02378.

<sup>275</sup> 1920 U.S. census, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Kulm city, no page number, ED 150, sheet 6A, dwelling 113, family 128, Julia Billigmeier; NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1335; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/66481090:6061>).

<sup>276</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > LaMoure > 1917-1921 > image 1190 of 1401, Heer-Billigmeier, 28 July 1920; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>277</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Mrs. Maria E. Dobler to Julia Heer, deed no. 63857, 28 May 1925; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure.

<sup>278</sup> "Private Sale of Real Estate," in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 29 October 1925, p. 1, col. 5; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02381.

<sup>279</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, David F. Brost and Margaret Brost to Julia Heer, deed no. 63858, 7 December 1925; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure. See also LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Nora W. Brost to Julia Heer, deed no. 63859, 1 January 1926; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure. See also LaMoure Co., North Dakota, David F. Brost, "acting Guardian of the persons and Estates of Alvin O. Brost, Wilbert A. Brost and Katharina A. Brost, Minors" to Julia Heer, deed no. 63860, 4 January 1926; County Recorder's Office, LaMoure.

<sup>280</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Creditor's Claim of Friedrika Hiller, Julia Heer probate file, 13 September 1926; Clerk of Courts, LaMoure.

took a turn for the worse and her daughter Esther, then living in nearby Napoleon, rushed to her side.<sup>281</sup> On 10 December 1925, Julianna joined Ludwig in death, although not in burial location. Julianna was buried in the Heer plot of the Kulm Congregational Cemetery rather than being buried next to Ludwig in the remote country cemetery by the Gnadenfeld church.<sup>282</sup>

Julianna had proved herself a savvy businesswoman in handling Ludwig's estate and she had applied that business acumen to her own affairs as well. On 27 July 1920, the day before her marriage to Jacob Heer, the couple signed a prenuptial agreement (also called an ante-nuptial agreement).<sup>283</sup> The agreement called for them to be independent in managing their affairs, and Jacob agreed that as his wife, Julianna would have full rights to control her property "in the same manner as if the said proposed marriage had never been celebrated." This allowed her to retain all the income generated from renting the land she owned. (In 1926, the income from these properties totaled \$288.50.)<sup>284</sup>

Julianna also secured the right to pass on all her property to her children as Jacob forfeited his right to any part of her property as surviving spouse in the event of Julianna's death. However, if Jacob died before Julianna, she would retain full rights to inherit her share of Jacob's property.

Without the prenuptial agreement, one-third of Julianna's property would have gone to Jacob.<sup>285</sup> This prenuptial agreement preserved Julianna's ability to pass on her and Ludwig's hard-earned property to her children.

At the time of her death, Julianna owned:<sup>286</sup>

Description	Value
320 acres in McIntosh County (in sections 31 and 10)	\$3,500.00
One-half interest in 480 acres in Stark County (in sections 32 and 33)	\$3,800.00
Lots in Kulm	\$1,250.00
Certificates of deposit in a Kulm bank	\$3,781.48
Notes due her	\$1,471.58
Total	\$15,803.56

In 2023 dollars, this would be worth \$276,057.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>281</sup> "Esther Billigmeier came down from Napoleon..." *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 10 December 1925, p. 5, col. 3; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02381.

<sup>282</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 106378801, Julia Heer (1862-1925), Kulm Congregational Cemetery, Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; photo by Stephanie Kay.

<sup>283</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Ante-Nuptial Agreement Heer-Billigmeier, Julia Heer probate file, 27 July 1920; Clerk of Courts, LaMoure.

<sup>284</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Final Report and Accounting, Petition for Distribution, Julia Heer probate file, 24 November 1926; Clerk of Courts, LaMoure.

<sup>285</sup> North Dakota Legislative Assembly, "Succession: Order of Succession" in *The Compiled Laws of the State of North Dakota 1913*, vol. I (Rochester, NY, The Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Company, 1914), p. 1377; digital images, *Hathi Trust* (<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010476343>).

<sup>286</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Inventory and Appraisement, Julia Heer probate file, 24 March 1926; Clerk of Courts, LaMoure.

<sup>287</sup> *CPI Inflation Calculator* (<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1925>).

Julianna's estate was equally divided among her nine children.<sup>288</sup> The portion for her eldest daughter, (Julianna Billigmeier Grosz who predeceased her) was divided among her children—Paul Grosz, Harry Grosz, and Adelina Grosz.

## Children

Ludwig and Juliana had the following children:

- 14 i. JULIANNA BILLIGMEIER was born on 14 April 1882 in Russia.<sup>289</sup> Although Julianna's birth is not recorded in her parents' home village of Leipzig, Bessarabia, numerous records are consistent with a birth month/year of April 1882.<sup>290</sup> The earliest record of Julianna is the 1885 ship's passenger list that shows her as age 3.<sup>291</sup> The 1900 U.S. census states her birth month/year as April 1882.<sup>292</sup> Her marriage license, obtained 28 February 1901, states she was 18, which is consistent with a birth in April 1882.<sup>293</sup> Julianna died on 30 November 1914 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>294</sup>

Julianna married Gustav Grosz on 3 March 1901 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>295</sup> Gustav was born 10 January 1881 in Hutchison Co., South Dakota.<sup>296</sup> Gustav died 29 July 1949 in Jamestown, Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> LaMoure Co., North Dakota, Application for Determination of Inheritance Tax, Julia Heer probate file, 24 November 1926; Clerk of Courts, LaMoure.

<sup>289</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, death cert. 1676, Juliana Gross, 30 November 1914; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. See also "Obituary" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 3 December 1914, p. 5, col. 4; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02378.

<sup>290</sup> Negative findings for Julianna's birth in Leipzig in "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino: Leipzig > 1882: Births, marriages, deaths; citing *Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg* (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>291</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10096811:7488>), images 9 of 13, manifest, SS *Ems*, 7 November 1885, New York, no page number, line 515, Juliane, 3; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>292</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, Juliana Belligmeier in Ludwig Belligmeier family [indexed as Relligmeyer]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207134:7602>).

<sup>293</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Register, 1885 Dec 18-1911 Jan 5 > image 366 of 766, p. 232, Grosz-Billigmeier, 3 March 1901; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>294</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, death cert. 1676, Juliana Gross, 30 November 1914; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck.

<sup>295</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Register, 1885 Dec 18-1911 Jan 5 > image 366 of 766, p. 232, Grosz-Billigmeier, 3 March 1901; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>296</sup> "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/299687490:2238>), card for Gustave Grosz, serial no. U389, 27 April 1942, Local Draft Board 1, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746.

<sup>297</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, death cert. 231, Gust Grosz, 29 July 1949; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. See also Obituary for Gustav Grosz from *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 11 August 1949; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415119\\_07889](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415119_07889)).

- 15 ii. JOHANN (JOHN) BILLIGMEIER was born 19 April 1884 in Russia.<sup>298</sup> John died 6 April 1940 in Jamestown, Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>299</sup>

He married Amalia Gittel on 25 November 1909 in Morton Co., North Dakota.<sup>300</sup> She was born 3 January 1890 in Russia.<sup>301</sup> Amalia married second Theodore Hillius on 13 April 1946 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>302</sup> She died on 22 February 1982 in Glen Ullin, Morton Co., North Dakota.<sup>303</sup>

- 16 iii. FRIEDERICKA BILLIGMEIER was born 2 April 1886 in Hutchinson Co., Dakota Territory, and was baptized on 23 April 1886 in Eigenfeld Evangelical Lutheran Church, near Parkston, Hutchinson Co.<sup>304</sup> She died 29 March 1938 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>305</sup>

Her obituary shows her birthplace as Scotland [Bon Homme Co.], South Dakota. However, it is more likely that she was born in Hutchinson County where the Billigmeiers spent that winter because:

- Friedericka was baptized at Eigenfeld Church near Parkston, Hutchinson Co.
- Friedericka's mother Julianna's obituary states the family wintered near Parkston.<sup>306</sup>
- At least one of Friedericka's godparents (Heinrich Pöpke) can be identified as living in Hutchinson County (Susquehanna Township, Twp. 99 Range 61).<sup>307</sup>

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<sup>298</sup> "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/25837884:6482>), card for John Billigmeier, order no. A324, 12 September 1918, Local Draft Board C-33-1-26, Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; NARA, microfilm publication M105. The birth date would likely have been provided by John.

<sup>299</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1940 > 04001-04500 > image 17 of 500, cert. 4017, John Billigmeier, 6 April 1940; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>300</sup> Morton Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate no. 2040, Billigmeier-Gittel, 25 November 1909; Marriage Records Collection, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>301</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1982 > 00401-00800 > image 356 of 500, cert. 82-000756, Amelia Hillius, 22 February 1982; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>302</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Hillius-Billigmeier, 13 April 1946; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>303</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1982 > 00401-00800 > image 356 of 400, cert. 82-000756, Amelia Hillius, 22 February 1982; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>304</sup> Immanuel Parish (Hutchinson Co., South Dakota), "Immanuel Parish Baptism Registry, 1879-1900," digital images, *Beulah Williams Library, Northern State University* (<http://digitalcollections.northern.edu/digital/collection/hutchinson/id/576/rec/5>) > DSC\_0232 and DSC\_0233, p. 70, birth of Friederika Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Juliana Pelz.

<sup>305</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1938 > 02001-02500 > image 231 of 499, cert. 2231, Friederika Hiller, 29 March 1938; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. See also Obituary for Friedericka Billigmeier Hiller in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 7 April 1938; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415120\\_01696](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415120_01696)).

<sup>306</sup> Obituary for Julia Heer, *Der Kirchenbote* [The Church Messenger] vol. 44 no. 3 (7 January 1926), no page number shown in clipping; digital image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415138\\_00680](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415138_00680)).

<sup>307</sup> For godparents' names, see Immanuel Parish (Hutchinson Co., SD), "Immanuel Parish Baptism Registry, 1879-1900," digital images, *Beulah Williams Library, Northern State University* (<http://digitalcollections.northern.edu/digital/collection/hutchinson/id/576/rec/5>) > DSC\_0232 and DSC\_0233, p. 70, birth of

- The records for the Eigenfeld Church are maintained with Zion Lutheran Church in Scotland, which could create confusion about Friedericka's birth location.<sup>308</sup>

Friedericka married Johannes (John) Hiller on 23 April 1905 in Logan Co., North Dakota.<sup>309</sup> Johannes was born 1 December 1883 in Dennewitz, Bessarabia, Russia.<sup>310</sup> He died 21 October 1967 in French Camp, San Joaquin Co., California.<sup>311</sup>

- 17 iv. PAULINA BILLIGMEIER was born 16 June 1888 in North Dakota, likely in McIntosh County where the Billigmeiers lived at the time.<sup>312</sup> There are no birth records extant for her as civil records for McIntosh County don't start until 1895 and church records for the Gnadenfeld Church where the Billigmeiers attended don't start until 1896.<sup>313</sup> However, her birth date is shown on her death certificate and other records are consistent with a June 1888 birth month/year.<sup>314</sup> Her age (29) on her March 1918

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Friederika Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Juliana Pelz. For Popke family location see 1885 South Dakota territorial census, Hutchinson Co., pop. sch., township 99, p. 13 (penned), dwelling 122, family 132, Henry Popke household [indexed as Papke]; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/49472:6247>), image 27 of 53; South Dakota State Archives, Pierre, microfilm 9527-9528.

<sup>308</sup> Immanuel Parish (Hutchinson Co., South Dakota), "Immanuel Parish Baptism Registry, 1879-1900," digital images, *Beulah Williams Library, Northern State University* (<http://digitalcollections.northern.edu/digital/collection/hutchinson/id/704/rec/5>). Contents list show churches included in these records.

<sup>309</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Certificates, 1887 Mar 31-1908 Dec 20 > image 606 of 1225, Hiller-Billigmeier, 23 April 1905; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>310</sup> Evangelische Kirche Dennewitz (Bessarabien), "Taufen [Baptisms] 1835-1901 Tote [Deaths] 1837-1901," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSJG-RYML>), DGS #8107011, image 306 of 428, birth of Johannes Hiller to Christoph Hiller and Salome Keller; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>311</sup> "San Joaquin County death records, 1904-1968; indexes, 1893-1967," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/2001287>) > San Joaquin > Death certificates 1967 no 2101-2411 > image 447 of 775, cert. 2222, John Hiller, 21 October 1967; San Joaquin County Recorder, Stockton, California. See also Obituary for John Hiller in *The Christian Fellowship Messenger* vol. 3 no. 6 (21 February 1968), clipping doesn't show page number; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_103160246\\_00009](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_103160246_00009)).

<sup>312</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1961 > 03201-03600 > image 359 of 400, corrected certificate 3559, Pauline Klein, 27 September 1961; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. For birth month/year, see also 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, Paulina Belligmeier in Ludwig Belligmeier family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeier]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>).

<sup>313</sup> "McIntosh Co., North Dakota Genealogy" in *FamilySearch Research Wiki, FamilySearch* ([https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/McIntosh\\_County,\\_North\\_Dakota\\_Genealogy](https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/McIntosh_County,_North_Dakota_Genealogy)). For start date of congregational church records, see Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad; church office, Kulm.

<sup>314</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, Paulina Belligmeier in Ludwig Belligmeier family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeier]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>).

marriage certificate is consistent with a birth month/year of June 1888.<sup>315</sup> Paulina died 27 September 1961 in Fargo, Cass Co., North Dakota.<sup>316</sup>

She married John Klein on 4 March 1918 in Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>317</sup> He was born 7 Aug 1890 in North Dakota and died 29 September 1955 in Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>318</sup>

- 18 v. AUGUST LUDWIG BILLIGMEIER was born 7 July 1890 in North Dakota, likely in McIntosh County.<sup>319</sup> There are no birth records extant for the year of his birth. Although he stated on his WWI draft card that he was born in Kulm (LaMoure Co.), his WWII draft card says he was born in McIntosh Co. and that is where the Billigmeier family lived at the time of his birth. The 1900 U.S. census confirms a birth month/year of July 1890.<sup>320</sup> August died on 23 April 1966 in Jamestown, Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>321</sup>

August married Adilea (Adelia) Zink on 5 November 1910.<sup>322</sup> Adelia was born 20 March 1891 in South Russia and died 23 June 1962 in Jamestown, Stutsman Co., North Dakota.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Certificates, 1914 Dec 12-1919 Feb 16 > image 845 of 1009, Klein-Billigmeier, 4 March 1918; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>316</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1961 > 03201-03600 > image 359 of 400, cert. 3559, Pauline Klein, 27 September 1961; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>317</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Certificates, 1914 Dec 12-1919 Feb 16 > image 845 of 1009, Klein-Billigmeier, 4 March 1918; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>318</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1955 > 02401-02800 > image 143 of 40, cert. 2543, John E. Klein, 29 September 1955; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>319</sup> "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/299864098:2238>), card for August Billigmeier, serial no. U211, 27 April 1942, Local Draft Board 1, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746. See also "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/51119:6482>), card for August Billigmeier, no. 38, 5 June 1917, Local Draft Board 25-1-22-A, Rosebud Co., Montana; NARA, microfilm publication M105.

<sup>320</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, August Belligmeyer in Ludwig Belligmeyer family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeyer]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>).

<sup>321</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1966 > 01601-02000 > image 170 of 402, cert. 1769, August Billigmeier, 23 April 1966; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>322</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 287, Billigmeier-Z-?-k, 5 November 1910; church office, Kulm. See also Obituary for August Billigmeier, *The Christian Fellowship Messenger* (5 July 1966), no page number shown; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415126\\_00548](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415126_00548)).

<sup>323</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1962 > 02401-02800 > image 210 of 400, cert. 2610, Adelia Billigmeier, 23 June 1962; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

- 19 vi. MARTHA BILLIGMEIER was born 5 July 1892, likely in McIntosh Co.<sup>324</sup> Although her obituary states she was born near Kulm (LaMoure Co.), it's most likely she was born in McIntosh County where the Billigmeiers lived at the time, which is just 10 miles from Kulm. The 1900 U.S. census confirms a birth month/year of July 1892.<sup>325</sup> Martha died 29 Jun 1974 in Forsyth, Rosebud Co., Montana.<sup>326</sup>

Martha married John Hofmeister on 27 September 1909 in Logan Co., North Dakota.<sup>327</sup> John was born 20 April 1879 in Waverly, Wright Co., Minnesota, and died 7 February 1967 in Forsyth, Rosebud Co., Montana.<sup>328</sup>

- + 20 vii. DANIEL BILLIGMEIER was born 27 October 1894 likely in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>329</sup> There are no birth records extant for his birth year. Although his WWI draft card shows a birth date of 27 October 1895, his age of 22 shown on the draft card (created 5 June 1917) is consistent with a birth year of 1894. The 1900 U.S. census and Daniel's WWII draft card confirm 1894 as his year of birth.<sup>330</sup> Daniel died 13 August 1974 in Aberdeen, Brown Co., South Dakota.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>324</sup> Obituary for Martha Billigmeier Hofmeister in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 11 July 1974, no page number shown; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415120\\_02320](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415120_02320)).

<sup>325</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, Martha Belligmeyer in Ludwig Belligmeyer family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeyer]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>).

<sup>326</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1974 Jun-1974 Jul > image 8 of 503, cert. 74-3007, Martha Hofmeister, 29 June 1974; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena.

<sup>327</sup> Logan Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate no. 404, Hofmeister-Billigmeier, 27 September 1909; Marriage Records Collection; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>328</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1967 Jan-1967 Feb > image 390 of 502, cert. 67-0889, John Hofmeister, 7 February 1967; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena. Negative findings for original birth records for any Hofmeisters in Wright Co., Minnesota, in "Minnesota, U.S., Births and Christenings Index, 1840-1940," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/2550/>). Also, negative findings for Wright Co. birth records in "Minnesota, County Birth Records, 1863-1983," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/1920099>).

<sup>329</sup> "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/29990028:6482>), card for Dan Billigmeir, no. 29, 5 June 1917, Local Draft Board A-33-1-23, Kulm City, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; NARA, microfilm publication M105. See also "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/299864100:2238>), card for Daniel Billigmeier, serial no. U330, 27 April 1942, Local Board 1, Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746.

<sup>330</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, Daniel Belligmeyer in Ludwig Belligmeyer family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeyer]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>). See also "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/299864100:2238>), card for Daniel Billigmeier, serial no. U330, 27 April 1942, Local Board 1, Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746.

<sup>331</sup> South Dakota Department of Health, death cert. 140-1974-003739, Daniel Billigmeier, 13 August 1974; Vital Statistics Office, Pierre. See also "Dan Billigmeier, 79 Passes Away In Aberdeen" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 22 August 1974, p. 4, col. 6; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 08071.



Daniel married first Dena Netz on 15 January 1920 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>332</sup> Dena was born 7 February 1895 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>333</sup> Dena died on 24 May 1941 in Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>334</sup>

Daniel married second Mary (Reich) Ketterling on 10 December 1942.<sup>335</sup> Mary Reich was born 18 December 1897 in North Dakota.<sup>336</sup> Mary died 15 June 1985 in Billings, Yellowstone Co., Montana.<sup>337</sup>

Mary married first Edward Ketterling on 31 December 1914 in Herreid, Campbell Co., South Dakota.<sup>338</sup> Edward died on 11 December 1939 in San Haven, Rolette Co., North Dakota.<sup>339</sup>

- 21 viii. ELLA ROSALIE BILLIGMEIER was born 17 September 1896 and died 9 November 1899.<sup>340</sup>

There is no baptism record for Ella Rosalie, but the church death register shows both birth and death dates. Ella Rosalie's parents' names are not listed in the church death register, but Julianna's obituary names Ella Rosalia as a daughter who died in

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<sup>332</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Certificates, 1919 Mar 25-1922 Feb 28 > image 361 of 998, Billigmeier-Netz, 15 January 1920; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>333</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, delayed birth certificate no. 2205858, birth of Dena Netz to Daniel Netz and Maria Keller; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck.

<sup>334</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1941 > 02501-03000 > image 31 of 500, cert. 2531, Dena Marie Billigmeier, 24 May 1941; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck. See also "Mrs. Daniel Billigmeier Rites Held Yesterday" in *The Wishek News* (North Dakota), 29 May 1941, p. 1, col. 2; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 00234.

<sup>335</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Billigmeier-Ketterling, 10 December 1942; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>336</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1985 Jun-1985 Jul > image 244 of 501, cert. 85-3244, Mary Billigmeier, 15 June 1985; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena. Negative findings for birth certificate at "Birth Records," database, *State Historical Society of North Dakota* (<https://statemuseum.nd.gov/births/>); citing North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Vital Records. Searched surname Reich, births 1894-1901.

<sup>337</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1985 Jun-1985 Jul > image 244 of 501, cert. 85-3244, Mary Billigmeier, 15 June 1985; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena.

<sup>338</sup> "South Dakota, U.S., Marriages, 1905-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8561/>) > 1911-1928, Index > image 290 of 304, Ketterling-Reich, 31 December 1914; South Dakota Department of Health, Pierre. (Date and location incorrectly indexed as 14 January 1918 in Miner Co.)

<sup>339</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1939 > 03501-04000 > image 316 of 500, cert. 3816, Edward Ketterling, 11 December 1939; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>340</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Sterberegister [Death Register], p. 338, Ella Rosalie Billigmeier, 9 November 1899; church office, Kulm. Burial record shows both date of death and date of birth. Negative findings for a baptismal record for Ella in Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad; church office, Kulm.

infancy.<sup>341</sup> The obituary makes a small error in date, saying that Ella Rosalia died in 1901 rather than 1899. It's likely that Ella Rosalie was born and died in McIntosh County, as that's where the Billigmeier family lived at the time.

- 22 ix. ESTHER BILLIGMEIER was born 28 August 1898 and baptized 16 July 1899 at Gnadefeld Church, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>342</sup> Both her obituary and death certificate say she was born in August 1899, however, the baptismal record, which was the record closest in time to her birth, shows her birth year as 1898.<sup>343</sup> Although the baptismal record consulted is a transcription, making it vulnerable to error, baptisms were recorded in date order and her entry is in the correct place in the register for a July 1899 baptism, making it impossible for her to have been born in August 1899. Also, the 1900 U.S. census confirms a birth year of 1898.<sup>344</sup> Her obituary says she was born near Kulm (LaMoure Co.), but she likely was born in McIntosh Co. where she was baptized and where the Billigmeiers lived at the time. Esther died on 7 September 1957 in Minneapolis, Hennepin Co., Minnesota.<sup>345</sup>

She married Harold Berger on 14 September 1930 in Bismarck, Burleigh Co., North Dakota.<sup>346</sup> Harold was born 20 November 1898 in Luverne, Rock Co., Minnesota.<sup>347</sup> Harold died 3 October 1987 in Hennepin Co., Minnesota.<sup>348</sup>

- 23 x. ALBERT BILLIGMEIER was born 2 November 1900 and was baptized 5 May 1901 at Gnadefeld Church in Roloff Twp. of McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>349</sup> On his WWII draft card he said he was born in Kulm, but it is more likely he was born in McIntosh Co. where he was baptized and where the Billigmeiers lived at the time. He died on 19 May 1963 in Jackson, Amador Co., California.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> "Mrs. Julia Heer" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 17 December 1925, p. 1, col. 4; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 02381.

<sup>342</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 14, birth of Esther Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Julia Belz; church office, Kulm.

<sup>343</sup> "Mrs. H. Berger Dies at Minneapolis" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 19 September 1957, p. 1, col. 7; North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 7684.

<sup>344</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, Ester Belligmeier in Ludwig Belligmeier family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeyer]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>).

<sup>345</sup> Minnesota Department of Health, death cert. 25155, Esther Berger, 7 September 1957; Death Records Collection; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

<sup>346</sup> Burleigh Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Berger-Billigmeier, 14 September 1930; County Recorder's Office, Bismarck. See also "Billigmeier-Berger Nuptial Vows Spoken" in *The Bismarck Tribune* (Bismarck, North Dakota), 15 September 1930, p.5, col. 2; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/851838399/>).

<sup>347</sup> "Minnesota, County Birth Records, 1863-1983," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-95NT-9J9G>) > Rock > Birth Index, 1872-1908, vol. B > image 21 of 205, In. 2, birth of Harold Berger to H.H. and Hilda Berger, 20 November 1898; Rock Co. Courthouse, Luverne.

<sup>348</sup> Minnesota Department of Health, death cert. 2287025791, Harold L. Berger, 3 October 1987; Death Records Collection; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

<sup>349</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 21, birth of Albert Billigmeier to Ludwig Billigmeier and Juliana Belz; church office, Kulm. See also "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/18693655:2238>), card for Albert Billigmeier, serial no. T1563, 27 April 1942, Local Draft Board 35, Lodi, San Joaquin Co., California; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644723.

<sup>350</sup> California Department of Public Health, death cert. no. 63-049414, Albert Billigmeier, 19 May 1963; Center of Health Statistics and Informatics, Vital Records, Sacramento.

He married Molly (Mollie, Amalia) Weidmeier (Wiedmayer) on 18 September 1926 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>351</sup> Amalia Wiedmayer was born 19 December 1905 in Neu Freudental, Kherson, Russia.<sup>352</sup> Mollie died on 7 December 1975 in San Joaquin Co., California.<sup>353</sup>

24 xi. STILLBORN DAUGHTER born/died in October 1902<sup>354</sup>

Julianna had a stepchild, son of her second husband, Jacob Heer, and his first wife, Elisabeth Marg. Walker (married 2 February 1878).<sup>355</sup> Jacob and his second wife, Caroline Heine (married 13 July 1894), had no children together.<sup>356</sup>

25 GOTTLIEB HEER was born between 1886 and 1888 in Russia. His birth is recorded as November 1886 in the 1900 U.S. census, but when the family arrived in the U.S. in 1889, he was recorded as being 10 months old, implying a birth year of 1888.<sup>357</sup> His death date is unknown and in his father's 1934 obituary, he is described as "whereabouts unknown."<sup>358</sup>

### Proof summary for parents of Johann (John) Billigmeier

Johann Billigmeier (who went by John in the U.S.) was born 19 April 1884 in Russia, the son of Ludwig and Julianna Billigmeier. Some sources say that John was born in Leipzig (where Ludwig and Julianna

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<sup>351</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Billigmeier-Weidmeier, 18 September 1926; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>352</sup> Hoffnungstal Parish (Tyraspol Uyezd, Kherson Province, Russia), "The Roll of Born, Baptised, Deaths and Marriages, 1906," birth of Amalie Wiedmayer to Friedrich Wiedmayer and Elisabeth Hildebrand on 19 December 1905 in Нейфрейденталь [Neu Freudental], p. 112, ln. 1; digital image supplied by Serge Yelizarov to Dale Wahl in 2004, copy given by Robert Wahl to Carolyn Schott in 2008; citing file 894-1-17, State Archives of Odesa, Odesa, Ukraine. In Russian records, December births are often included in the following year's records.

<sup>353</sup> San Joaquin Co., California, death cert. 3900-2448, Amalia Billigmeier, 7 December 1975; County Recorder's Office, Stockton.

<sup>354</sup> Valentina Billigmeier Gross (daughter of August Billigmeier), handwritten sheet listing children of Ludwig and Julianna Billigmeier, undated; Valentina Gross Bible and papers, privately held by Tara Lopez, Arizona [contact information held by author]; digital image provided to Carolyn Schott 23 November 2023. Tara confirmed that the handwriting is Valentina's. The Billigmeiers' church has no burial record for this child per negative findings in Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad; church office, Kulm.

<sup>355</sup> "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Kherson > Odessa > Neu-Freudental: Gnadenfeld > 1878 Births, marriages, deaths > image 34 of 55; Heer-Walker, 2 February 1878; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchive, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>356</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Register, 1885 Dec 18-1911 Jan 5 > image 194 of 766, p. 114, Heer-Olsen, 13 July 1894; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>357</sup> 1900 U.S. census, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Bluebird Township, p. 90 (stamped), ED 87, sheet 4, dwelling 45, family 45, Gottlieb Haar in Jacob Haar family; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68197388:7602>). See also "Baltimore, Maryland, U.S., Passenger Lists, 1820-1964," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/1185234:8679>), image 34 of 485, manifest, *SS America*, 5 June 1889, p. 16, line 36 for Jacob Heer [indexed as Keer], 31; citing NARA microfilm publication M255.

<sup>358</sup> Obituary for Jacob Heer in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 13 September 1934, no page number shown; transcription, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415128\\_01459](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415128_01459)).

lived when they first married), however, his birth is not recorded there.<sup>359</sup> Ludwig and Julianna's entry in the Leipzig church family register shows no children.<sup>360</sup>

John's obituary states that he was born in Peterstal, South Russia.<sup>361</sup> Like Leipzig, Peterstal was part of the Tarutino parish.<sup>362</sup> No records are extant for this village within the Tarutino parish records.<sup>363</sup>

However, numerous records exist to corroborate Ludwig and Julianna as John's parents.

- The passenger list for the SS *Ems*, which brought the Billigmeier family to New York on 7 November 1885, is the earliest documentation of John's existence. It shows Johann, age 9 months, as part of the family group headed by Ludwig Billigmeier, age 26.<sup>364</sup> Although Johann is not specifically identified as Ludwig's son, this provides indirect evidence for his parentage as a child of that age would typically be traveling with his parents. It also confirms that John was born prior to the family's arrival in the U.S. The stated age of 9 months implies that John was born about February 1885 (rather than April 1884). However, it's plausible that his age was purposely listed as 9 months (rather than 19 months) as there were sometimes special fares for infants.
- The 1900 U.S. census shows John Billigmayer, age 16, as the son of head-of-household Ludwig Billigmayer.<sup>365</sup> Juliana is shown as Ludwig's wife of 19 years, indicating that they were married at the time of John's birth.
- John's 1940 death certificate shows his parents as Ludwig Billigmeier and Julia Peltz.<sup>366</sup> His wife, Amalia, was the informant and it's reasonable that she would accurately know her in-laws' names as she and John were partners with Julianna in owning land.

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<sup>359</sup> "John Billigmeier" in *Ashley's Golden Jubilee 1888-1938* (Ashley, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee 1938), p. 154. Negative findings for birth record in page by page search of "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman > Tarutino:Leipzig for 1883 through 1885; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive). Negative search for original Leipzig church records for 1884 at Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Kirchenbuch, 1824-1900," digital images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/catalog/256576>); citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>360</sup> Evangelische Kirche Leipzig (Bessarabien), "Familienbuch 1881," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS6V-B9D4-V>), DGS #8003630, image 92 of 541, family register for Ludwig Billigmeier II; citing Zentralstelle für Genealogie, Leipzig.

<sup>361</sup> Obituary for John Billigmeier in *Der Kirchenbote* vol. 59 no. 18 (20 May 1940), clipping doesn't show page number; image, "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," digital image, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415126\\_00555](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415126_00555)).

<sup>362</sup> *Kulm Community Homeland Book*, trans. by Allen E. Konrad (Rowley, Iowa, 2005), image 25 of 197; digital images, *Black Sea German Research* (<https://www.blackseagr.org/pdfs/konrad/Kulm%20Community%20Homeland%20Book.pdf>).

<sup>363</sup> Negative findings for Peterstal in "Россия, дубликаты Лютеранских метрических книг, 1833-1885 [Russia, Lutheran Church Book Duplicates, 1833-1885]," digital image, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/search/collection/1469151>) > Bessarabia > Akkerman; citing Russland Historischen Staatsarchiv, St. Petersburg (Konsistorium Petersburg, Russian State Historical Archive).

<sup>364</sup> "New York, U.S., Arriving Passenger and Crew Lists (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10096811:7488>), image 9 of 13, manifest, SS *Ems*, 7 November 1885, New York, no page number, line 516, Johann Billigmeier, 9 mon.; citing NARA microfilm publication M237.

<sup>365</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 4, dwelling 60, family 62, John Belligmeyer in Ludwig Belligmeyer family [indexed as Suditty Relligmeyer]; NARA microfilm publication T623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207132:7602>).

<sup>366</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1940 > 04001-04500 > image 17 of 500, cert. 4017, John Billigmeier, 6 April 1940; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

- John’s obituary identifies his parents as “Ludwig Billigmeier and his wife, Julia, nee Pelz.”<sup>367</sup> It is likely that his wife Amalia would have been the informant for the obituary as well as for the death certificate, so it is not surprising that this information would be consistent with the death certificate.

## Generation 3

20. **Daniel Billigmeier** (Ludwig<sup>2</sup>, Christian Ludwig<sup>1</sup>, Christian Hecker<sup>A</sup>) was born 27 October 1894 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>368</sup> Daniel died 13 August 1974 in Aberdeen, Brown Co., South Dakota.<sup>369</sup> He was buried in the Lehr City Cemetery.<sup>370</sup>

He married first **Dena (Dina, Tina) Netz** on 15 January 1920 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>371</sup> Dena was born 7 February 1895 in McIntosh Co., North Dakota, the daughter of Daniel Netz and Maria Keller.<sup>372</sup> Dena died on 24 May 1941 in Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>373</sup> She was buried in the Lehr City Cemetery.<sup>374</sup>

Daniel married second **Mary (Maria) (Reich) Ketterling** on 10 December 1942.<sup>375</sup> Mary was born 18 December 1897 in North Dakota, the daughter of John Reich and Barbara Meyer.<sup>376</sup> She married first

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<sup>367</sup> Obituary for John Billigmeier in *Der Kirchenbote* vol. 59 no. 18 (20 May 1940), clipping doesn’t show page number; image, “U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012,” digital image, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS\\_100415126\\_00555](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/62188/images/FS_100415126_00555)).

<sup>368</sup> “U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/29990028:6482>), card for Dan Billigmeir, no. 29, 5 June 1917, Local Draft Board A-33-1-23, Kulm City, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; NARA, microfilm publication M105. Although his WWI draft card shows a birth date of 27 October 1895, his age of 22 shown on the draft card (created 5 June 1917) is consistent with a birth year of 1894. See also “U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/299864100:2238>), card for Daniel Billigmeier, serial no. U330, 27 April 1942, Local Board 1, Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644746.

<sup>369</sup> South Dakota Department of Health, death cert. 140-1974-003739, Daniel Billigmeier, 13 August 1974; Vital Statistics Office, Pierre.

<sup>370</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 58851686, Daniel Billigmeier (1894-1974), Lehr City Cemetery, Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; gravestone photo by Jae Miller.

<sup>371</sup> “North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Certificates, 1919 Mar 25-1922 Feb 28 > image 361 of 998, Billigmeier-Netz, 15 January 1920; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>372</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, delayed birth certificate no. 2205858, birth of Dena Netz to Daniel Netz and Maria Keller; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. See also, “Mrs. Daniel Billigmeier Rites Held Yesterday” in *The Wishek News* (North Dakota), 29 May 1941, p. 1, col. 2; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 00234.

<sup>373</sup> “North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1941 > 02501-03000 > image 31 of 500, cert. 2531, Dena Marie Billigmeier, 24 May 1941; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>374</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 58851687, Dena Marie “Tina” Netz Billigmeier (1895-1941), Lehr City Cemetery, Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; gravestone photo by Jae Miller.

<sup>375</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Billigmeier-Ketterling, 10 December 1942; County Recorder’s Office, Ashley.

<sup>376</sup> “Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1985 Jun-1985 Jul > image 244 of 501, cert. 85-3244, Mary Billigmeier, 15 June 1985; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena. For parents’ names, see also 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sched., district 199, township 132, no page number, ED 219, sheet 8, dwelling 115, family 120, Maria Reich in John Reich family; NARA microfilm publication 623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207516:7602>). Her birth was not registered with the state per negative findings at “Birth Records,” database, *State Historical Society of North Dakota* (<https://statemuseum.nd.gov/births>); citing North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Vital Records. Searched surname Reich, births 1894-1901.

**Edward Ketterling** on 31 December 1914 in Herreid, Campbell Co., South Dakota.<sup>377</sup> Edward died on 11 December 1939 in San Haven, Rolette Co., North Dakota.<sup>378</sup> He was buried in the Lehr City Cemetery.<sup>379</sup> Mary died 15 June 1985 in Billings, Yellowstone Co., Montana.<sup>380</sup> She was buried in the Lehr City Cemetery.<sup>381</sup>

## Family story of Daniel and (1) Dena, (2) Mary

**Figure 6: Daniel and Dena Billigmeier**



Wedding photo of Daniel Billigmeier and Dena Netz, 15 January 1920; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, WA, 2023. Carolyn inherited photo from Evelyn (Billigmeier) Schott in January 2008.

### Childhood

Daniel's family had been in the U.S. for nine years when he was born in 1894, giving them time to establish their farm. However, the family likely was working hard to get by during Daniel's childhood as his brother August remembered the family being quite poor and going "barefooted and bareheaded" six months of the year.<sup>382</sup>

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<sup>377</sup> "South Dakota, U.S., Marriages, 1905-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8561/>) > 1911-1928, Index > image 290 of 304, Ketterling-Reich, 31 December 1914; South Dakota Department of Health, Pierre. (Date and location incorrectly indexed as 14 January 1918 in Miner Co.)

<sup>378</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1939 > 03501-04000 > image 316 of 500, cert. 3816, Edward Ketterling, 11 December 1939; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>379</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 58851961, Edward Ketterling (1894-1939), Lehr City Cemetery, Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; gravestone photo by Jackie Winn Ross.

<sup>380</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1985 Jun-1985 Jul > image 244 of 501, cert. 85-3244, Mary Billigmeier, 15 June 1985; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena.

<sup>381</sup> *Find a Grave*, database with images (<https://www.findagrave.com>), memorial 58851962, Mary Reich Ketterling [Billigmeier] (1897-1985), Lehr City Cemetery, Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota; gravestone photo by Jackie Winn Ross.

<sup>382</sup> "August Billigmeier" in *Fredonia Golden Jubilee 1904-1954* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1954), p. 54.

It's said that "Childhood was short on Dakota homesteads," meaning that children were put to work at an early age.<sup>383</sup> Even as young as 8, Daniel would likely have had age-appropriate responsibilities, such as herding cattle, until he was old enough to join his father and older brothers in the fields.

When Daniel was 9, tragedy struck the Billigmeier family with the death of his father Ludwig. Daniel's mother continued to run the farm with the assistance of Daniel's oldest brother, John. Daniel and his siblings would have had to pitch in to help to ensure the family's survival—plowing and sowing the fields, milking cows, gathering eggs, and cultivating the kitchen garden for vegetables.<sup>384</sup>

Daniel probably started school at the age of 6 or 7, attending Springfield School District #17, which was the nearest one-room school to the Billigmeier farm. This is probably when he began to learn English, as German children in McIntosh County typically spoke only German until they attended school.<sup>385</sup> He was registered in that school through the 1908-1909 school year.<sup>386</sup> However, farmwork obviously had priority for 15-year-old Daniel as he is shown as attending zero days of school that year.

The following year brought big changes to Daniel's life. His mother retired from farming and moved from rural Roloff Township into the city of Kulm with the youngest of her children. Daniel and his younger siblings, Esther and Albert, were registered in the Kulm school for the 1909-1910 school year.<sup>387</sup>

Moving into town would have been an eye-opening experience for Daniel, coming from the wide-open spaces of a prairie farm to the bustling young city of Kulm. Kulm's early reputation was as a "'wild and wooley' [sic] frontier town."<sup>388</sup> But it rapidly grew into a major population hub at the corner of four counties—LaMoure, McIntosh, Logan, and Dickey. Kulm had officially become a city a few years before Julianna's family moved into town (with a distant cousin, Peter Billigmeier, becoming the first mayor).<sup>389</sup>

Daniel, Esther, and Albert had to adapt to a much larger school. The year before the Billigmeiers moved into town, the four-room school in Kulm (already a much bigger school than the one-room school they were used to) had been expanded to be even larger.<sup>390</sup> Daniel was registered in school in Kulm one

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<sup>383</sup> Barbara Handy-Marchello, *Women of the Northern Plains* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), p. 64.

<sup>384</sup> Barbara Handy-Marchello, *Women of the Northern Plains* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2005), p. 61.

<sup>385</sup> Gordon L. Iseminger, "The McIntosh County Germans-Russians: The First Fifty Years" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 51 (Summer 1984), p. 12.

<sup>386</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, School Census for Springfield School District 17, 7 June 1909, line 37, Daniel Billigmeier; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>387</sup> Sandy Knudsen, Clerk of Courts (LaMoure, LaMoure Co., North Dakota) to Carolyn Schott, email, 1 June 2023. Provided list of school years that Billigmeier children were enrolled in the Kulm school. Copy of school census not provided due to confidentiality issues.

<sup>388</sup> "Kulm, No. Dakota: A Substantial Town" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 3.

<sup>389</sup> Robert Smith and Phyllis Bethke, "100 Years of City Council Notes" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 107.

<sup>390</sup> "History of Kulm Special School" in *Kulm, N. Dak. 1892 to 1957* (Kulm, North Dakota, Historical Book Committee, 1957), p. 26.

more year (1910-1911), but then left school for good.<sup>391</sup> He'd completed a 5<sup>th</sup> grade education in about 10 years of schooling.<sup>392</sup>

By today's standards, that would seem a low educational achievement level. However, it was typical for the time as boys were pulled out of school for much of the school year to help with the farmwork. A 1913 study in North Dakota showed that only 7% of boys in rural areas completed one grade for each year of school attended.<sup>393</sup> And although it might seem that living in town would have given Daniel the opportunity to attend high school, it didn't become the norm for German families to send boys to high school until decades later in the 1940s.<sup>394</sup>

After leaving school, Daniel worked at a number of jobs—farming (1910-1914), carpenter work (1912-1914), and even working in the confectionary/billiards parlor (1914-1917) owned by George Renz.<sup>395</sup>

## WWI Service

As the United States entered WWI, Daniel, like the other young men of Kulm, was required to register for the draft. He registered 5 June 1917 with the LaMoure County draft board and was inducted into the army three months later on 18 Sept 1917.<sup>396</sup>

Daniel was sent to Camp Dodge in Iowa for training, and initially assigned to Battery D of the 338<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery.<sup>397</sup> He would have been one of the earliest to arrive in this camp, which just began receiving new recruits on 1 Sept 1917, two and a half weeks before his induction.<sup>398</sup> After slightly more than two months at Camp Dodge, he was transferred to Battery D of the 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery on 1 December 1918,

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<sup>391</sup> Sandy Knudsen, Clerk of Courts (LaMoure, LaMoure Co., North Dakota) to Carolyn Schott, email, 1 June 2023. Provided list of school years that Billigmeier children were enrolled in the Kulm school. Copy of school census not provided due to confidentiality issues.

<sup>392</sup> For educational level, see 1940 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Lehr, no page number, ED 26-2, sheet 3A, dwelling 49, Daniel Billigmeier; NARA microfilm publication T627, roll 3005; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/100629892:2442>).

<sup>393</sup> Kyle Jansson, "Mathilda L.J. Overby: The Life and Times of a 1920s County School Superintendent" in *North Dakota History: Journal of the Northern Plains*, State Historical Society of North Dakota, vol. 87 no. 1 (2022), p. 6.

<sup>394</sup> "Fredonia History" in *Fredonia Centennial 1904-2004* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Fredonia Centennial Book Committee, 2004), p. 7, col. 2.

<sup>395</sup> Untitled sheet of work history, 30 January 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri. For George Renz's ownership of the billiards hall, see 1920 U.S. census, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Norden Twp., no page number, ED 150, sheet 5A, dwelling 97, family 112, George Renz; NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1335; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/66481032:6061>).

<sup>396</sup> For registration date, see "U.S., World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/29990028:6482>), card for Dan Billigmeier, no. 29, 5 June 1917, Local Draft Board A-33-1-23, Kulm City, LaMoure Co., North Dakota; NARA, microfilm publication M105. For induction date, see "United States, Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS1Q-23QB-N>), DGS # 105124154, image 5726 of 6690, card for Daniel Billigmeier, serial no. 2114042; NARA, microfilm publication 76193916.

<sup>397</sup> "United States, Enlisted and Officer Muster Rolls and Rosters, 1916-1939," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-X3CV-FRC7>), DGS # 106370645, image 1448 of 1982, initial muster roll of Battery D, 338<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 1 September - 31 October 1917, Camp Dodge, Iowa, Dan Bellegmeier; NARA, record group 64, roll 1008.

<sup>398</sup> "Dodge, Camp Iowa" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: Zone of the Interior: Territorial Departments Tactical Divisions Organized in 1918 Posts, Camps, and Stations*, vol. 3, part 2 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 870; digital image, *U.S. Army Center of Military History* ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-4/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-4.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-4/CMH_Pub_23-4.pdf)).



where he spent the rest of his time in the service.<sup>399</sup> The 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery was part of the 87<sup>th</sup> Division, which was training at Camp Pike near Little Rock, Arkansas. The insignia of the 87<sup>th</sup> Division was a circular patch of green with a brown acorn in the center, representing an oak tree “stalwart and strong.”<sup>400</sup>

The first couple months of Daniel’s time at Camp Pike had cold and rainy weather, resulting in “two months of forced inactivity” in which “the boys have done little or no real drilling.”<sup>401</sup> But by 21 February, it was reported that they were making up for lost time and “getting ready for the rifle range. Time is a most precious commodity when a nation is preparing a million men for the battle line ... .”

This damp weather may have also led to illness, as Daniel was off duty and in the base hospital from 31 Jan 1918 through 7 Feb 1918.<sup>402</sup> The first recognized cases of the Spanish influenza pandemic were slightly later, in March 1918 at Camp Funston.<sup>403</sup> It’s unknown whether Daniel was an earlier undiagnosed case of this influenza pandemic or whether he had another illness.

However, once the weather cooperated, the training at Camp Pike seems to have been very thorough. Gas mask drills were held regularly, and the men were timed—the best had their masks on in less than five seconds and almost all managed to get them on within 10 seconds.<sup>404</sup> In May 1918, a local newspaper described Camp Pike’s training:

There are some twenty miles of open trenches and many hundred yards of tunnels twenty feet or more underground. All phases of the underground warfare system may be seen, and bunks are built along the passage way for men, with larger rooms for the officers, ammunition rooms, orderly rooms, etc. A wonderful amount of time and money has been spent here that the men and officer may be thoroughly familiar with this work when they reach France.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> "United States, Enlisted and Officer Muster Rolls and Rosters, 1916-1939," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-F3CV-NWK>), DGS # 106370645, image 1464 of 1982, muster roll of Battery D, 338<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 31 October - 31 December 1917, Camp Dodge, Iowa, transfer of Dan Bellegmeier to 87<sup>th</sup> Division; NARA, record group 64, roll 1008. See also "United States, Enlisted and Officer Muster Rolls and Rosters, 1916-1939," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-X3CV-FTMN>), DGS # 106370644, image 26 of 1566, muster roll of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 31 October - 31 December 1917, Camp Pike, Arkansas, transfer of Daniel Billigmeier from 338<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery; NARA, record group 64, roll 1007.

<sup>400</sup> "A.E.F. Divisions: Their Records, Their Marks" in *The Stars and Stripes* (Paris, France), 14 February 1919, p. 3, col. 3; digital image, *Library of Congress* (<https://www.loc.gov/resource/20001931/1919-02-14/ed-1/>), Washington D.C.

<sup>401</sup> "Notes from Camp Pike" in *The Carlisle Independent* (Arkansas), 21 February 1918, p. 3, col. 4, digital image, *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92050006/1918-02-21/ed-1/seq-3/>).

<sup>402</sup> "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920347>), p. 6., morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., January 1918, Pvt Billigmeier to hospital, 31 January 1918; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136. See also "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920350>), p. 3, morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., February 1918, Pvt Billigmeier from base hospital, 7 February 1918; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136.

<sup>403</sup> "The 1918 Flu Pandemic: Why It Matters 100 Years Later," 14 May 2018, *Public Health Matters Blog* (<https://blogs.cdc.gov/publichealthmatters/2018/05/1918-flu>).

<sup>404</sup> "Camp Pike Notes" in *The Home News* (McCrory, Arkansas) 5 April 1918, p. 4, col. 1; digital image, *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90050115/1918-04-05/ed-1/seq-4>).

<sup>405</sup> "Camp Pike Notes" in *The Carlisle Independent* (Arkansas), 9 May 1918, p. 8, col. 2, digital image, *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92050006/1918-05-09/ed-1/seq-8>).

Of course, Daniel and his fellow soldiers also had time for recreation. Daniel had the opportunity to hear President Woodrow Wilson's daughter Margaret sing when the YMCA arranged for her to visit Camp Pike in May 1918.<sup>406</sup>

In June 1918, Daniel's unit was ordered to move from Camp Pike to Camp Dix in New Jersey, which was a major embarkation center for troops.<sup>407</sup> During the two months that the unit spent at Camp Dix before shipping out to France, there was an influx of new recruits and many of the existing sergeants and corporals were transferred to new units. Daniel and nine other privates in the 335<sup>th</sup> were promoted to corporal on 22 June 1918.<sup>408</sup>

Daniel's company shipped out to France on 31 August 1918 aboard the SS *Lancashire*.<sup>409</sup> The ship departed either from New York or Hoboken, NJ.<sup>410</sup> They left Camp Dix just in time to avoid a major influenza outbreak at that camp during September and October.<sup>411</sup>

Daniel arrived in Liverpool, England, about 16 September 1918.<sup>412</sup> After a brief stay in rest camps, they continued on to France, landing in either Cherbourg or Le Havre. On 16 September, the entire 87<sup>th</sup> Division was assigned to the Services of Supply, which was responsible for construction, labor, convoy, guard, and police duties.<sup>413</sup> Daniel's unit was assigned to the base at Montierchaume and arrived there

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<sup>406</sup> "Camp Pike Notes" in *The Carlisle Independent* (Arkansas), 16 May 1918, p. 6, col. 1; digital image, *Chronicling America* (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92050006/1918-05-16/ed-1/seq-6>).

<sup>407</sup> "Field Artillery Regiments: 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: Zone of the Interior: Directory of Troops*, vol. 3, part 3 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 1255; digital image, *U.S. Army Center of Military History* ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-5/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-5.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-5/CMH_Pub_23-5.pdf)).

<sup>408</sup> "United States, Enlisted and Officer Muster Rolls and Rosters, 1916-1939," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-F3CV-FG57>), DGS # 106370644, image 83 of 1566, muster roll of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, 30 April – 30 June 1918, Camp Dix, N.J., promotion of Daniel Billigmeier to corporal; NARA, record group 64, roll 1007. See also "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920375>), p. 4, morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., June 1918, Pvt Billigmeier promoted to corporal on 22 June, logged on 24 June 1918; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136.

<sup>409</sup> "U.S., Army Transport Service Arriving and Departing Passenger Lists, 1910-1939," database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/61174/images/46920\\_3421606189\\_0103-00109](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/61174/images/46920_3421606189_0103-00109)), image 89 of 170, manifest, SS *Lancashire*, 31 August 1918, departure from New York, p. 81, line 89, Daniel Billigmeier corp[oral]; citing NARA record group 92. Manifest is incorrectly categorized in Ancestry as an incoming ship.

<sup>410</sup> Passenger manifest says New York but official U.S. Army publications show their embarkation from Hoboken. See "Field Artillery Regiments: 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: Zone of the Interior: Directory of Troops*, vol. 3, part 3 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 1255; digital image, *U.S. Army Center of Military History* ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-5/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-5.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-5/CMH_Pub_23-5.pdf)).

<sup>411</sup> "Dix, Camp, N.J.: Description" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: Zone of the Interior: Territorial Departments Tactical Divisions Organized in 1918 Posts, Camps, and Stations*, vol. 3, part 2 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 724; digital image, *U.S. Army Center of Military History* ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-4/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-4.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-4/CMH_Pub_23-4.pdf)).

<sup>412</sup> "Record of Events: Movement Overseas, June 14-Sept 16, 1918" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 389; digital image, *U.S. Army Center of Military History* ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-2/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-2.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-2/CMH_Pub_23-2.pdf)). Although the arrival date of the *Lancashire* is not shown, the 87<sup>th</sup> Division left the U.S. from 23 August to 31 August and arrived in England from 3 September to 16 September. Since Daniel's ship left on the last day of the group, it is likely that his ship landed the last day of the group.

<sup>413</sup> "Record of Events: Activities Overseas, Sept 6-Dec 23, 1918" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 391; digital image, *U.S. Army Center of Military History* ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-2/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-2.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-2/CMH_Pub_23-2.pdf)).

by 30 September 1918.<sup>414</sup> Their arrival coincided with the camp becoming operational, as it received its first shipment of supplies for the front on 26 September.<sup>415</sup>

The depot at Montierchaume, Indre, France, was authorized for construction on 15 April 1918 as a key U.S. Army supply depot for war materials for the front due to lack of capacity at the depot at Gievres.<sup>416</sup> As a depot in the "intermediate zone," its function was to receive war supplies from the base ports where they arrived by ship, then forward them to the front lines. Montierchaume was designed to hold supplies for one million soldiers for 30 days, and the design plan included four million square feet of covered warehouses, 216 miles of railroad track, and 200 acres of open storage.<sup>417</sup> However, only about 30% of the planned construction was completed prior to the war ending.

Daniel's company was assigned to numerous tasks that supported the Army's war effort. Soldiers from his unit were assigned duties at the gas mask factory in nearby Chateauroux, as well as working on the railroad and with the military police and motor pool.<sup>418</sup>

Daniel had several health issues during his service in France, being off duty as "sick in quarters" from 19 October 1918 through 29 October 1918, as well as 28 November 1918 through 1 December 1918.<sup>419</sup> It's unknown what his illness was, but on 1 November 1918, just after his recovery, the Stars and Stripes reported that the influenza epidemic was waning. This suggests that Daniel might have been one of the men struck by the flu.<sup>420</sup> However, the following week, the Stars and Stripes continued to advise soldiers how to prevent illnesses including "diphtheria, scarlet fever, meningitis, measles, tonsillitis, common colds, bronchitis, pneumonia and influenza."<sup>421</sup> So any number of different diseases could be the culprit for Daniel's sick time.

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<sup>414</sup> "United States, Enlisted and Officer Muster Rolls and Rosters, 1916-1939," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-X3CV-FLJ6>), DGS # 106370644, image 112 of 1566, monthly roster of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, end of September 1918, Montierchaume (Indre), France, Daniel Billigmeier, corporal; NARA, record group 64, roll 1007.

<sup>415</sup> "Montierchaume Depot" in *Historical Report of the Chief Engineer: Including All Operations of the Engineer Department: American Expeditionary Forces 1917-1919* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1919), p. 312; digital image, *Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/details/historicalreport00unit/>).

<sup>416</sup> "Montierchaume Depot" in *Historical Report of the Chief Engineer: Including All Operations of the Engineer Department: American Expeditionary Forces 1917-1919* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1919), p. 312; digital image, *Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/details/historicalreport00unit/>).

<sup>417</sup> "Montierchaume Depot" in *Historical Report of the Chief Engineer: Including All Operations of the Engineer Department: American Expeditionary Forces 1917-1919* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1919), p. 313; digital image, *Internet Archive* (<https://archive.org/details/historicalreport00unit/>).

<sup>418</sup> "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920395>), p. 2-7, morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., October 1918, entries show various duties assigned; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136.

<sup>419</sup> "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920399>), p. 5 and 7, morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., October 1918, Corp Billigmeier sick in quarters on 19 October, logged on 20 October 1918, Corp Billigmeier returned to duty 29 October, logged on 30 October 1918; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136. See also "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920407>), p. 6, morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., November 1918, Corp Billigmeier sick in quarters on 28 November, logged on 29 November 1918; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136. See also "US, Morning Reports, 1912-1939," digital images, *Fold3* (<https://www.fold3.com/image/708920409>), p. 2, morning reports of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> F.A., December 1918, Corp Billigmeier return to duty on 1 December, logged 1 December 1918; NARA, record group 64, box 00894, reel 3.136.

<sup>420</sup> "Gauze Masks for Men on Transport Keep Flu at Bay" in *The Stars & Stripes* (Paris, France), 1 November 1918 p. 1, col. 5; digital image, *Library of Congress* (<https://www.loc.gov/resource/20001931/1918-11-01/ed-1/>), Washington, D.C.

<sup>421</sup> "Dreaded Diseases Start Like Colds" in *The Stars & Stripes* (Paris, France), 8 November 1918, p. 7, col. 2; digital image, *Library of Congress* (<https://www.loc.gov/resource/20001931/1918-11-08/ed-1/>), Washington, D.C.

When the armistice with Germany was signed on 11 November 1918 to end the war, the 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery was slated almost immediately for return to the U.S., being ordered on 17 November to report to base ports.<sup>422</sup> Although Montierchaume would be used after the war to receive and manage surplus supplies from the front lines, Daniel was not part of that effort.<sup>423</sup>

The 335<sup>th</sup> was transferred to St. Loubes, Gironde, by the end of November.<sup>424</sup> Although established initially as an ammunition depot, St. Loubes became a major embarkation point for troops headed home from the war.<sup>425</sup> However, the massive number of troops and the unpredictability in the number of ships available resulted in delays in getting the troops home.<sup>426</sup> Daniel and his unit were forced to wait for more than two months before finally leaving Pauillac, France, on the SS *Powhatan* on 17 Feb 1919.<sup>427</sup>

A stormy sailing and an outbreak of influenza forced the *Powhatan* to turn back to France almost immediately so they could leave 25 of the worst flu cases in hospitals in France.<sup>428</sup> Daniel, as part of the Camp Dodge detachment of the 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, finally arrived in Hoboken, New Jersey, at 7 a.m. on 5 March 1919.<sup>429</sup>

Daniel was discharged from his army service on 18 Mar 1919 at Camp Dodge.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>422</sup> "Record of Events: Activities Overseas, Sept 6-Dec 23, 1918" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces: Divisions*, vol. 2 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 391; digital image, U.S. Army Center of Military History ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-2/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-2.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-2/CMH_Pub_23-2.pdf)).

<sup>423</sup> "Montierchaume Depot" in *Historical Report of the Chief Engineer: Including All Operations of the Engineer Department: American Expeditionary Forces 1917-1919* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Publishing Office, 1919), p. 313; digital image, Internet Archive (<https://archive.org/details/historicalreport00unit/>).

<sup>424</sup> "United States, Enlisted and Officer Muster Rolls and Rosters, 1916-1939," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QHV-F3CV-FYFS>), DGS # 106370644, image 118 of 1566, monthly roster of Battery D, 335<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, end of November 1918, St. Loubes (Gironde), [France], Daniel Billingmeier, corporal; NARA, record group 64, roll 1007.

<sup>425</sup> "Services of Supply" in *Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War: American Expeditionary Forces: General Headquarters, Armies, Army Corp, Services of Supply, Separate Forces*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C., Center of Military History, 1931-1949), p. 58 and 60; digital image, U.S. Army Center of Military History ([https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-1/CMH\\_Pub\\_23-1.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/023/23-1/CMH_Pub_23-1.pdf)).

<sup>426</sup> "Return of A.E.F. Is Almost Wholly Question of Ships" in *The Stars and Stripes* (Paris, France), 21 February 1919, p. 1, col. 7; *Library of Congress* (<https://www.loc.gov/resource/20001931/1919-02-21/ed-1/>), Washington D.C.

<sup>427</sup> "U.S., Army Transport Service Arriving and Departing Passenger Lists, 1910-1939," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10060112:61174>), image 802 of 1032, manifest, SS *Powhatan* [incorrectly cataloged as the Pocahontas], 5 March 1919, arrival Hoboken, New Jersey, p. 130, line 4, Daniel Billingmeier, cpl [corporal]; citing NARA record group 92.

<sup>428</sup> "Surgeon of One Transport Prescribes for Patients on Another" in *The Daily Record* (Long Branch, New Jersey), 5 March 1919, p. 1, col. 7-8; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/495874651/>).

<sup>429</sup> "U.S., Army Transport Service Arriving and Departing Passenger Lists, 1910-1939," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/10060112:61174>), image 802 of 1032, manifest, SS *Powhatan* [incorrectly cataloged as the Pocahontas], 5 March 1919, arrival Hoboken, New Jersey, p. 130, line 4, Daniel Billingmeier, cpl [corporal]; citing NARA record group 92.

<sup>430</sup> "United States, Veterans Administration Master Index, 1917-1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS1Q-23QB-N>), DGS # 105124154, image 5726 of 6690, card for Daniel Billingmeier, serial no. 2114042; NARA, microfilm publication 76193916. See also "Billigmeier, Daniel" in *Roster of the Men and Women who served in the Army or Naval Service (including the Marine Corps) of the United States or its Allies from the State of North Dakota in the World War, 1917-1918*, vol. 1 (Bismarck, Bismarck Tribune Company, 1931), p. 280; digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/339296:1873>), image 282 of 930.

## Early marriage years

When Daniel returned from his military duty, he settled back into farming, as he listed his occupation in 1920 as farm manager.<sup>431</sup> Working alongside his brothers on the family land in Roloff Township would have given him the opportunity to reconnect with Dena Netz, who he'd attended school with at the Springfield country school and who he'd continued to correspond with during his Army service.<sup>432</sup> The Netz farmland stood alongside the Billigmeier farmland in Roloff Township. Dena's father Daniel, like Ludwig Billigmeier, had immigrated from Bessarabia, so the families would have had much in common.

On 15 January 1920, nine months after his discharge from the Army, Daniel and Dena were married.<sup>433</sup> They likely settled into the home in Kulm where Daniel was living with his mother.<sup>434</sup> That first year of marriage brought many changes. Daniel's mother, Julianna, moved out in July when she married Jacob Heer. Daniel and Dena welcomed their first child, Evelyn, into the family in April.<sup>435</sup>

After his marriage in 1920, Daniel gave up farming to become a bulk agent for Standard Oil.<sup>436</sup> A bulk agent was responsible for delivering oil products, such as kerosene and gasoline, from tanker trucks to consumers, probably on their farms.<sup>437</sup>

This job gave him the opportunity to move around a bit. The family first moved 15 miles from Kulm to Merricourt by March 1922, when son Wilbert (always called Danny by the family) was born there.<sup>438</sup> A few months later on 28 October 1922, Daniel and Dena purchased a house in Merricourt on lot 4 of block 3 from Caroline and Georg Young for \$700.<sup>439</sup>

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<sup>431</sup> 1920 U.S. census, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Kulm City, no page number, ED 150, sheet 6A, dwelling 113, family 128, Daniel Billigmeier in Julia Billigmeier family; NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1335; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/66481090:6061>). See also Untitled sheet of work history, 30 January 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>432</sup> Set of three WWI postcards sent from Camp Dodge, Camp Pike, and Camp Dix, addressed to "[Unreadable] Netz" and that start out "Hello Dena," "Dear Friend," and "Dear kid[d]o," likely sent by Dan Billigmeier to Dena Netz; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023. Carolyn received these from Cathy Curtis [granddaughter of Dan and Dena Billigmeier], Arizona [contact information held by author], 12 November 2023. Backs are torn making much of the card unreadable, likely from being torn out of a scrapbook.

<sup>433</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., Select County Marriage Records, 1872-2017," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61305/>) > McIntosh > Marriage Certificates, 1919 Mar 25-1922 Feb 28 > image 361 of 998, Billigmeier-Netz, 15 January 1920; State Historical Society of North Dakota and State Archives, Bismarck.

<sup>434</sup> 1920 U.S. census, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Kulm City, no page number, ED 150, sheet 6A, dwelling 113, family 128, Daniel Billigmeier in Julia Billigmeier family; NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1335; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/66481090:6061>).

<sup>435</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, birth certificate no. 6305, birth of Evalyn Lilly Billigmeier to Dan Billigmeier and Dena Netz; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck.

<sup>436</sup> "Dan Billigmeier, 79, Passes Away in Aberdeen" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 22 August 1974, p. 4, col. 6; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 08071. See also Untitled sheet of work history, 30 January 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>437</sup> "Bulk Oil Agents" in *The Bismarck Tribune* (North Dakota), 15 June 1944, p. 11, col. 5; digital image, *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/55156805/>).

<sup>438</sup> Wilbert Theodore Billigmeier, SS no. 502-10-2434, 23 March 1922, Application for Account Number (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration, Baltimore, Maryland. See also "Harry Schott" in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott; nickname of Wilbert was Danny.

<sup>439</sup> Dickey Co., North Dakota, Caroline Young and George Young to Daniel Billigmeier, deed no. 60331, 28 October 1922; County Recorder's Office, Ellendale.

But they soon moved on from Merricourt. Daniel's job next required them to move to Lehr (about 20 miles from Kulm) in 1924.<sup>440</sup> Their third child, Cecelia (always called Sally by the family), was born in Lehr in June 1924.<sup>441</sup> Despite moving around during these early years of their marriage, Daniel and Dena maintained their close ties to Kulm and had all of their children baptized in the Kulm Congregational Church.

Lehr has the distinction of being the smallest city in the U.S. situated in two counties—McIntosh and Logan.<sup>442</sup> When Daniel and Dena first moved their family to Lehr, they lived on the north end of town, on the Logan County side.<sup>443</sup> They probably rented a home initially as there is no record of them purchasing property anywhere in Lehr prior to 1929.<sup>444</sup> Although the 1925 state census doesn't show their address, they may have lived on Logan Street from 1924 to 1929 as two families (the Leischners and Martells) enumerated before and after them in the 1925 state census are shown as living on Logan Street in 1930.<sup>445</sup>

It may be that they rented because they couldn't afford to buy a home in Lehr until they'd sold their home in Merricourt, which they did on 26 March 1925 for \$500.<sup>446</sup> Daniel and Dena and family finally settled down for good in Lehr four years later when they bought 1 ½ lots on McIntosh Street on the McIntosh County side of Lehr, described as "Lot Nine and the north half of Lot Eight, of Block One, in Lehr's Addition to the City of Lehr." on 26 March 1929.<sup>447</sup> Daniel and Dena's daughter Evelyn described that home as "a nice house with electricity, but no inside plumbing."<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> "Dan Billigmeier, 79, Passes Away in Aberdeen" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 22 August 1974, p. 4, col. 6; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 08071. See also "Mrs. Daniel Billigmeier Rites Held Yesterday" in *The Wishek News* (North Dakota), 29 May 1941, p. 1, col. 2; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 00234. However, Dena's obituary says they moved to Lehr in 1923. But the informant for the obituary was also incorrect about some other details of their other residences (excluding their homes in Kulm and Merricourt and including Fredonia).

<sup>441</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, birth certificate no. 6495, birth of Cecelia Elvera Billigmeier to Daniel Billigmeier and Dana Netz; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck; Cecelia Billigmeier Curtis papers; privately held by Mary Catherine Curtis who provided copy to author on 19 September 2023. See also "Harry Schott" in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott; nickname of Cecelia was Sally.

<sup>442</sup> "Lehr, North Dakota: Smallest City in USA (In Two Counties)" in *Roadside America* (<https://www.roadsideamerica.com/tip/62924>).

<sup>443</sup> 1925 North Dakota state census, Logan Co., pop. sch., Lehr, sheet 1 (penned), dwelling/family 10, Dan Billigmeier household; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2984609:1078>), image 177 of 189; State Archives and Historical Research Library, Bismarck.

<sup>444</sup> Negative findings for Logan Co. section of Lehr at "Document search," database with images, *North Dakota Recorders Information Network* (<https://ndrinweb3.hplains.state.nd.us/recordernew/eagleweb/docSearch.jsp>). Search terms County Logan and Grantee Billigmeier. Negative findings McIntosh Co. section of Lehr per Eva Becker, Deputy County Recorder (Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota) to Carolyn Schott, email, 12 September 2023.

<sup>445</sup> 1930 U.S. census, Logan Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Lehr City, no page number, ED 24-11, sheet 1B, dwelling 20, family 20, Fred Martle family; NARA microfilm publication T626, roll 1737; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/108641957:6224>). See also 1930 U.S. census, Logan Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Lehr City, p. 241 (stamped), ED 24-11, sheet 2A, dwelling 28, family 29, Daniel Lechner family; NARA microfilm publication T626, roll 1737; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/108641982:6224>).

<sup>446</sup> Dickey Co., North Dakota, Daniel Billigmeier and Dena Billigmeier to Christian Fey, deed no. 65031, 26 March 1925; County Recorder's Office, Ellendale.

<sup>447</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Karl Kramer and Julia Kramer to Daniel Billigmeier, no. 45420, 26 March 1929; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>448</sup> "Harry Schott" in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott.

Daniel continued his work as a bulk agent for Standard Oil until at least 1930.<sup>449</sup> But in 1933, he opened a Standard Oil station in Lehr.<sup>450</sup>

## The Depression Years

The following decade included happy family times, but the world around them was much bleaker. In addition to the global Depression resulting from the 1929 stock market crash, drought set in throughout North Dakota from 1931 to 1936, which greatly impacted all rural communities.<sup>451</sup> Lack of rain meant that crops wouldn't grow, and in some cases, couldn't even be planted. A young woman's diary from that time provides vivid examples of day-to-day life in drought-stricken North Dakota:

June 1, 1930, Sunday, Kensal, North Dakota

Ted Roy told about the trouble he is having with his crop. He put it in and it blew out. He seeded again and it blew out. So he went fishing.<sup>452</sup>

Year after year, the drought continued. Year after year, few, if any, crops were harvested. The winds whipped through and blew the prairie dirt, covering everything with a layer of North Dakota earth.

April 25, 1934, Wednesday, Kensal, North Dakota

Last weekend was the worst dust storm we ever had. We've been having quite a bit of blowing dirt every year since the drought started, not only here, but all over the Great Plains ... It sifts into everything. After we wash the dishes and put them away, so much dust sifts into the cupboards we must wash them again before the next meal. Clothes in the closets are covered with dust. ... Newspapers say the deaths of many babies and old people are attributed to breathing in so much dirt.<sup>453</sup>

Grain prices plummeted. In 1919, wheat had sold for \$2.06 per bushel and barley for \$1.51 per bushel.<sup>454</sup> By the 1930s, wheat dropped as low as \$0.37 per bushel and barley about \$0.33 per bushel.

Despite the economic bleakness, Daniel and Dena's daughter Evelyn had good memories of those years.

I was a happy girl ... We liked school with our many activities. Basketball being our favorite. ... I thought my Dad was the most wonderful Dad a girl could ever have, his love for Politics and

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<sup>449</sup> 1930 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Lehr City, p. 2951 (penned), ED 26-2, sheet 1B, dwelling 10, family 10, Dan Belligmayer family; NARA microfilm publication T626, roll 1737; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/108663924:6224>).

<sup>450</sup> "Dan Billigmeier, 79, Passes Away in Aberdeen" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 22 August 1974, p. 4, col. 6; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 08071. See also Untitled sheet of work history, 30 January 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>451</sup> Linda Schlenker, "Weather" in *Kulm Centennial 1892-1992* (Gwinner, North Dakota, Kulm Centennial Book Committee, 1992), p. 256.

<sup>452</sup> Ann Marie Low, *Dust Bowl Diary* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 38.

<sup>453</sup> Ann Marie Low, *Dust Bowl Diary* (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1984), p. 95.

<sup>454</sup> "Historic Data," *United States Department of Agriculture: National Agricultural Statistics Service* ([https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Washington/Publications/Historic\\_Data](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Washington/Publications/Historic_Data)) > Small Grains > Wheat: Prices: All 1910-2010 and also see > Small Grains > Barley: Prices: All 1910-2010. Although this data is for Washington State, it provides a consistent tracking of historic prices nationally.

Baseball will always be remembered. In our little town of Lehr, he was the only Democrat for a long time, even his own wife was a Republican. He was known as “Mr. Democrat.”<sup>455</sup>

But it was her mother, Dena, that Evelyn credits as being the heart of the family. “My mother kept things going especially during the Depression.”<sup>456</sup> Although Dena had poor eyesight that made detailed work a strain, she began a sewing business to ensure the family always had money for basic necessities, such as food, clothing, and property taxes.<sup>457</sup> Evelyn said that she and her brother and sister were often the best dressed kids in school, despite their poverty, because of her mother’s sewing.

Although Daniel wasn’t a farmer, anyone living in a rural community like Lehr was impacted by the devastating downturn in agricultural prices. By 1937, he was probably unable to keep the service station open, and in November 1937 he began working for the Works Progress Administration (WPA).<sup>458</sup> The WPA was a program during the Depression specifically designed to move workers from being on unemployment relief to jobs.<sup>459</sup> The philosophy of the program was that by providing jobs (not just handouts), the government was bringing dignity and meaning to workers’ lives—rebuilding not just the country, but the individual.<sup>460</sup>

A main focus of the WPA was road projects, especially in farming states like North Dakota where the “farm-to-market” roads used to bring produce from the fields to town for sale were often rutted or bogged down in mud during winter melt and runoff season.<sup>461</sup> And indeed, when Daniel reported for his first day of work on 4 November 1937, he was assigned to a county road project near Lehr.

Daniel worked steadily for the WPA over the next four years, mostly on road projects. He was promoted from laborer to foreman on 29 March 1938 and supervised county road projects as well as the Schlenker Dam project.<sup>462</sup> He even spent a month in April 1938 as a junior clerk on a highway planning survey.<sup>463</sup>

He had a couple of interruptions in his WPA employment. From 30 November 1940 to 10 April 1941, he found a job outside of the WPA, although no specifics are given other than he was in “private

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<sup>455</sup> “Harry Schott” in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott.

<sup>456</sup> “Harry Schott” in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott.

<sup>457</sup> Evelyn Billigmeier Schott (Seattle, Washington), notes from interview/discussions with Carolyn Schott, 31 December 2007; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023.

<sup>458</sup> Notice to Report to Work, 2 November 1937, in WPA file for Daniel Billigmeier, 4026-2347; Record Group 146: Records of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Personnel Files, 1933–1943; NARA, St. Louis, Missouri. See also Untitled sheet of work history, 30 January 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>459</sup> Nick Taylor, *American Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work*, (New York, Bantam Dell, 2008), p. 532.

<sup>460</sup> Nick Taylor, *American Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work*, (New York, Bantam Dell, 2008), p. 420.

<sup>461</sup> Nick Taylor, *American Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA: When FDR Put the Nation to Work*, (New York, Bantam Dell, 2008), p. 188.

<sup>462</sup> Notice to Report to Work, 29 March 1938, in WPA file for Daniel Billigmeier, 4026-2347; Record Group 146: Records of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Personnel Files, 1933–1943; NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>463</sup> Notice to Report to Work, 4 April 1938, in WPA file for Daniel Billigmeier, 4026-2347; Record Group 146: Records of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Personnel Files, 1933–1943; NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.



employment.”<sup>464</sup> He was also subject to a WPA Reduction in Force (which often happened for budget reasons) from 7 July 1941 to 7 November 1941.<sup>465</sup>

Employment in the WPA was an important part of the family’s survival during the Depression. In 1940, the Billigmeier family’s income was:<sup>466</sup>

Daniel	\$480
Dena	\$ 0
Evelyn	\$385
Total	\$865

(After graduating from high school, Evelyn was working as a teacher in a country school in Roloff Township to help support the family.)<sup>467</sup>

The Billigmeiers’ total income of \$865 for the family was far below the average individual income in 1940 of \$1,368.<sup>468</sup> However, Daniel and Evelyn indicated they had additional income beside their salaries. For Evelyn, that may have included working at the general store or post office in Lehr.<sup>469</sup> For Daniel, that may have included the money Dena earned from her sewing, but it’s also likely that he received rent from the farmland that he still owned.

When Daniel’s father Ludwig died, all of his land was split between Daniel’s mother and the nine children. This led to Daniel and his siblings each owning partial shares of each block of land. Over time, the siblings traded land parcels or bought each out. Daniel retained sole possession of 160 acres in Section 19 of Roloff Township (the east half of the east half of the section), which he kept his entire life.<sup>470</sup> It’s probable that some of the “other income” that Daniel had in 1940 was from renting the land to local farmers since Daniel was not farming it himself.

On 15 December 1941, Daniel left the WPA for good after accepting a new job with the post office.<sup>471</sup> The post office job brought stability to the family income and put Daniel in a place where he could serve his community. The Post Office in rural communities was known not just for delivering letters, but as a

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<sup>464</sup> Notice of Termination of Employment, 30 November 1940, in WPA file for Daniel Billigmeier, 4026-2347; Record Group 146: Records of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Personnel Files, 1933–1943; NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>465</sup> Notice of Termination of Employment, 7 July 1941, in WPA file for Daniel Billigmeier, 4026-2347; Record Group 146: Records of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Personnel Files, 1933–1943; NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>466</sup> 1940 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Lehr, no page number, ED 26-2, sheet 3A, dwelling 49, Daniel Billigmeier family; NARA microfilm publication T627, roll 3005; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/100629892:2442>).

<sup>467</sup> “Springfield School District Teachers (Roloff Township)” in *Fredonia Centennial 1904-2004* (Fredonia, North Dakota, Fredonia Centennial Book Committee, 2004), p. 82, Evelyn Billigmeier, teacher for Springfield #3 1939.

<sup>468</sup> Diane Petro, “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? The 1940 Census: Employment and Income” in *Prologue Magazine* vol. 44 no. 1 (Spring 2012); *National Archives* (<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/spring/1940.html>).

<sup>469</sup> Evelyn Billigmeier Schott (Seattle, Washington), notes from interview/discussions with Carolyn Schott, 31 December 2007; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023.

<sup>470</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 70:375, Daniel Billigmeier, Affidavit of possession of the East half of the East half of Section 19, Twp. 132, Range 67West, 25 April 1961; County Recorder’s Office, Ashley. See also McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 88:547, Estate of Daniel Billigmeier to Mary Billigmeier, Cecelia Curtis, Evelyn Schott, LaVerne Mitzman, Lyle Ketterling, Linda Ketterling, Lynn Ketterling, Lynette Ketterling, East half of the East half of Section 19, Twp. 132, Range 67West included in Final Decree of Distribution, no. 6270, undated; County Recorder’s Office, Ashley.

<sup>471</sup> Notice of Termination, 15 December 1941, in WPA file for Daniel Billigmeier, 4026-2347; Record Group 146: Records of the U.S. Civil Service Commission, Personnel Files, 1933–1943; NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

trusted source of local information and as a social gathering spot for community news and support.<sup>472</sup> This new job led Daniel to tell his children that although he'd worked for the two richest men in America—the Rockefellers of Standard Oil and Uncle Sam—he'd gained neither fame nor fortune.<sup>473</sup>

### Dena's death

The year 1941 brought a new tragedy to the Billigmeier family in the form of a cancer diagnosis for Dena. She consulted specialists in Rochester, Minnesota (likely at the Mayo Clinic), for two weeks in January 1941 and again in February.<sup>474</sup> There was a plan for her to go to Canada for treatment, so her father applied for a delayed registration birth certificate from the state on 1 April 1941 “for traveling to Canada as proof of citizenship.”<sup>475</sup> However, it's unlikely she ever made it to Canada for treatment as Dena died in Lehr in May 1941.<sup>476</sup>

### Daniel and Mary

**Figure 7: Daniel and Mary Billigmeier**



Photo of Daniel Billigmeier and Mary (Reich) Ketterling Billigmeier, undated; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, WA, 2023. Carolyn received this from Cathy Curtis [granddaughter of Dan and Dena Billigmeier], AZ, [contact information held by author] 12 November 2023.

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<sup>472</sup> K. Amy Philipps and Steven R. Bolduc, *The Prairie Post Office: Enlarging the Common Life in Rural North Dakota* (Fargo, North Dakota State University Press, 2017), p. 4 and 31.

<sup>473</sup> “Harry Schott” in *John Peter and Lydia Schott Family History* (privately printed, 1980), unpaginated, p. 2 of chapter; copy privately held by Carolyn Schott.

<sup>474</sup> “Lehr News” in *The Wishek News* (North Dakota), 23 January 1941, p. 5, col. 3; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 00234. Also “Lehr News” in *The Wishek News* (North Dakota), 27 February 1941, p. 4, col. 3.; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 00234.

<sup>475</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, delayed birth certificate no. 2205858, birth of Dena Netz to Daniel Netz and Maria Keller; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. Also, Evelyn Billigmeier Schott (Seattle, Washington), notes from interview/discussions with Carolyn Schott, 31 December 2007; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023.

<sup>476</sup> “North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007,” database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1941 > 02501-03000 > image 31 of 500, cert. 2531, Dena Marie Billigmeier, 24 May 1941; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

Daniel was alone now. He had to face not just the loss of his wife, but all three children had graduated from high school and were pursuing their own lives. (Evelyn graduated in 1937, Danny in 1940, and Sally in 1941.)<sup>477</sup> Daniel decided to make a fresh start for himself by marrying Mary (Reich) Ketterling in December of 1942.<sup>478</sup>

Mary had grown up near Lehr on a farm in Lowenthal Township (township 132, range 69), McIntosh County.<sup>479</sup> Her first husband, Edward Ketterling, had passed away just two years before Dena. It's likely the families knew each other even before Daniel and Mary's marriage. Mary's son Leo and Danny were in the same high school class.<sup>480</sup> Mary's daughter LaVerne and Evelyn were in the same high school class and they remained friends their entire lives.<sup>481</sup>

With the U.S. now involved in WWII, Daniel decided to serve his country again, this time on the home front. From January through July 1944, Daniel and Mary lived in Tacoma, Washington, near where Daniel's daughter Evelyn had moved. Daniel worked at Johnson Engineering, in steel and iron production, and for Todd Pacific Shipyards as a shipfitter.<sup>482</sup>

Although Daniel and Mary returned to Lehr for the last months of 1944, they returned to the West Coast in early 1945 where Daniel got a job in Lathrop, California, which was a major army supply depot.<sup>483</sup> On 30 January 1945, Daniel started working as a carpenter in the Transportation Corps of the War Department, where he worked until 9 June 1945.<sup>484</sup> On 26 June 1945, he transferred to a job as a joiner with the Navy in Stockton, California, where he worked until 1 May 1946.<sup>485</sup>

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<sup>477</sup> Untitled lists and photos of high school graduating classes in *Lehr Centennial 1898-1998* (Lehr, North Dakota, Book Committee, 1998), p. 66-70.

<sup>478</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, marriage certificate, Billigmeier-Ketterling, 10 December 1942; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>479</sup> 1900 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sched., township 132 R69, no page number, ED 219, sheet 8, dwelling 115, family 120, Maria in John Reich family; NARA microfilm publication 623, roll 1229; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/68207516:7602>)

<sup>480</sup> Untitled lists and photos of high school graduating classes in *Lehr Centennial 1898-1998* (Lehr, North Dakota, Book Committee, 1998), p. 66-70.

<sup>481</sup> Evelyn Billigmeier Schott (Seattle, Washington), notes from interview/discussions with Carolyn Schott, 31 December 2007; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023.

<sup>482</sup> Untitled sheet of work history, 30 January 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri. See also Application for Federal Employment, 25 June 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>483</sup> "Lathrop History," *City of Lathrop, California* (<https://www.ci.lathrop.ca.us/community/page/lathrop-history>).

<sup>484</sup> War Department Notification of Personnel Action, 9 June 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri. See also Lathrop Holding and Reconsignment Point, New Employee's Designation and Report Slip, 30 June 1945, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

<sup>485</sup> Retirement Record Card, 31 May 1946, in Personnel Record Folder for War Department Civilian Employee Dan Billigmeier; Official Personnel Folders (OPFs), ca. 1939–December 31, 1952, Record Group 338: Records of U.S. Army Operational, Tactical, and Support Organizations (World War II and Thereafter); NARA, St. Louis, Missouri.

## Daniel and Mary return to Lehr

At the beginning of their marriage, Daniel and Mary lived in the house that Daniel and Dena had lived in together. But when Daniel and Mary returned to Lehr in May of 1946, they sold that house (and the 1 ½ lots of land the house was situated on) to Benjamin and Christina Keim for \$3,000.<sup>486</sup> They then bought the three lots directly north of that house (Lots 10, 11, 12 of Block 1) from Fred Goebels for \$400.<sup>487</sup>

Initially, Daniel and Mary lived in “the little house,” which was on the northern half of their new property near the intersection of McIntosh Street and Third Street.<sup>488</sup> Over time, they built a more modern house on the southern half of their property.<sup>489</sup>

A real estate transaction was not the only connection that Daniel had with the Goebels family, as Daniel had returned to his earlier work as a bulk agent, this time working for the Goebel brothers’ Home Oil Company.<sup>490</sup>

Daniel and Mary were very involved in their community. Daniel’s army service during WWI was always a source of pride for him, so joining the American Legion was a natural extension of that service. When the Klauss-Becker Post 218 in Lehr received its charter on 22 November 1947, Daniel became a charter and lifetime member.<sup>491</sup> The Legion’s focus was community service and the Klauss-Becker Post’s first project was to send a local boy to North Dakota Boys State in 1948 (a week-long workshop on leadership and government). The Post continued this program annually through at least 1973.

Mary’s focus was on service in her church. She was a faithful member of Lehr’s Evangelical United Brethren Church and was an officer in the church’s Women’s Missionary Society, serving as Home Treasurer in 1948.<sup>492</sup> She continued to put her financial knowledge to work, serving on the Building Committee when the church constructed a new building in 1958-1959.<sup>493</sup> She was one of only two women who served on the 13-member committee.

Daniel and Mary also enjoyed spending time as grandparents, as Mary’s son Leo and his family lived nearby on a farm just north of Lehr.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>486</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Daniel Billigmeier and Mary Billigmeier to Benjamin and Christina Keim, no. 73051, 15 May 1946; County Recorder’s Office, Ashley.

<sup>487</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Fred Goebel and Katharina Goebel to Dan Billigmeier, no. 72996, 22 May 1946; County Recorder’s Office, Ashley.

<sup>488</sup> Kay Billigmeier Myers (Highmore, South Dakota), notes from conversation with Carolyn Schott, 6 June 2023; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023.

<sup>489</sup> Evelyn Billigmeier Schott (Seattle, Washington), notes from interview/discussions with Carolyn Schott, 31 December 2007; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2024.

<sup>490</sup> “Home Oil Company—Goebel & Sons” in *Lehr Golden Jubilee 1898-1948* (Lehr, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1948), p. 128-129.

<sup>491</sup> “Klauss-Becker American Legion Post No. 218” in *Lehr Golden Jubilee 1898-1948* (Lehr, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1948), p. 34-25. See also “American Legion Post” in *Lehr Diamond Jubilee 1898-1973* (Bismarck, North Dakota, Book Committee, 1973), p. 174-175.

<sup>492</sup> “Lehr Friedens Evangelical United Brethren Church: Evangelical Church W.M.S.” in *Lehr Golden Jubilee 1898-1948* (Lehr, North Dakota, Golden Jubilee Committee, 1948), p. 17.

<sup>493</sup> “The United Methodist Church (Formerly Evangelical United Brethren Church)” in *Lehr Diamond Jubilee 1898-1973* (Bismarck, North Dakota, Book Committee, 1973), p. 11.

<sup>494</sup> 1950 U.S. census, Logan Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., township 133-69, ED 24-20, sheet 1, household 3, Leo G. Ketterling family; NARA record group 29; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/7050508:62308>).

Daniel continued to work as a bulk agent in 1950.<sup>495</sup> But in the early 1950s, he retired.<sup>496</sup> After a lifetime of hard work providing for his family, he was finally able to relax and do things such as enjoying his garden. But even as he slowed down the pace of his personal activities, Lehr continued to progress. The city installed a sewer system in 1957 (which gave the Billigmeiers access to indoor plumbing for the first time), paved the city streets in 1967, and improved the city park with a picnic shelter.<sup>497</sup> At the time of Daniel's death in 1974, Lehr was considered a "flourishing little city."<sup>498</sup>

Daniel died at age 79 of pulmonary insufficiency, arteriosclerotic heart disease, and lung cancer.<sup>499</sup>

Daniel's will left the farmland he'd inherited from his parents and the north half of the property in Lehr (all of lot 12 and the north half of lot 11, where the "little house" had stood) to his children Evelyn, Wilbert (Danny), and Cecelia (Sally).<sup>500</sup> Although his will left the south half of the Lehr property (the south half of lot 11 and all of lot 10, where his and Mary's house was) to his stepchildren, Mary retained control of this property as there is no record that the final probate settlement put that land in their names; it was likely part of Daniel's estate held in joint tenancy with Mary.<sup>501</sup>

Mary continued to live in Lehr until June 1980, when she sold her home and the south half of the Lehr property to Mary Buchholz for \$27,000.<sup>502</sup> She moved to Montana to be closer to her daughter LaVerne. Mary died in Billings five years later, at age 87, of intracerebral hemorrhage.<sup>503</sup>

## Children

Daniel and Dena had the following children:

- 26 i. EVELYN LILLY BILLIGMEIER was born 13 April 1920 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota, and baptized 28 July 1920.<sup>504</sup> She died 31 January 2008 in Seattle, King Co.,

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<sup>495</sup> 1950 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Lehr, ED 26-3, sheet 71, household 28, Daniel Billigmeier family; NARA record group 29; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/6890696:62308>).

<sup>496</sup> "Dan Billigmeier, 79, Passes Away in Aberdeen" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 22 August 1974, p. 4, col. 6; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 08071.

<sup>497</sup> "History of Lehr Community" in *Lehr Diamond Jubilee 1898-1973* (Bismarck, North Dakota, Book Committee, 1973), p. 7-8.

<sup>498</sup> "History of Lehr Community" in *Lehr Diamond Jubilee 1898-1973* (Bismarck, North Dakota, Book Committee, 1973), p. 8.

<sup>499</sup> South Dakota Department of Health, death cert. 140-1974-003739, Daniel Billigmeier, 13 August 1974; Vital Statistics Office, Pierre.

<sup>500</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Last Will and Testament, Daniel Billigmeier probate file, 29 September 1969; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>501</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Final Decree of Distribution, Daniel Billigmeier probate file, 8 March 1976; County Recorder's Office, Ashley. See also McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Order of County Court Determining Estate Tax, Daniel Billigmeier probate file, 6 January 1975, land listed with certificates of deposit, also held in joint tenancy; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>502</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Deed Record Book 73:678, Mary Billigmeier to Helen Buchholz, no. 10547, 3 June 1980; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>503</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 1985 Jun-1985 Jul > image 244 of 501, cert. 85-3244, Mary Billigmeier, 15 June 1985; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena.

<sup>504</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, birth certificate no. 6305, birth of Evalyn Lilly Billigmeier to Dan Billigmeier and Dena Netz; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. See also Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Taufregister [Baptism Register], p. 85, birth of Evalyn Lillie Billigmeier to Dan Billigmeier and Dena Netz; church office, Kulm.

Washington.<sup>505</sup> She married Harry Schott 13 July 1944 in Olympia, Thurston Co., Washington.<sup>506</sup> Harry was born 20 October 1918 in Haag Twp., Logan Co., North Dakota, and baptized 15 August 1920 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>507</sup> Harry died 3 May 1978 in Seattle, King Co., Washington.<sup>508</sup>

- 27 ii. WILBERT THEODORE (DANNY) BILLIGMEIER was born 23 March 1922 in Merricourt, Dickey Co., North Dakota, and baptized 16 March 1923 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>509</sup> (See Proof Summary below for discussion of his birth location.) Wilbert died 13 October 1979 in Bird Island, Renville Co., Minnesota.<sup>510</sup>

He married Pauline Uthe 2 July 1949 in Bird Island, Renville Co., Minnesota.<sup>511</sup> Pauline Lucile was born 15 July 1924 in Melville Twp., Renville Co., Minnesota.<sup>512</sup> Pauline died 12 February 2019 in Bird Island, Renville Co., Minnesota.<sup>513</sup>

- 28 iii. CECELIA ELVERA (SALLY) BILLIGMEIER was born 5 June 1924 in Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, and baptized 9 August 1925 in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>514</sup> Cecelia died 10 November 1993 in Mesa, Maricopa Co., Arizona.<sup>515</sup> She married Harry B. Curtis on 10 May 1947 in Hennepin Co., Minnesota.<sup>516</sup> Harry was born as Harry B.

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<sup>505</sup> King Co., Washington, death cert. 1104, Evelyn Lilly Schott, 31 January 2008; Public Health-Seattle and King County Vital Statistics, Seattle.

<sup>506</sup> "Washington, U.S., County Marriages, 1855-2008," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/60226/>) > Thurston > Marriage certificates 1944 vol11H > image 193 of 498, certificate no. 22269, Schott- Billigmeier, 13 July 1944; citing Thurston County Auditor and Washington State Archives.

<sup>507</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, delayed birth certificate no. 16235, birth of Harry Peter Schott to John Peter Schott and Lydia Siewert; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. See also Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Kirchenbuch Deutschen Congreg'l Gemeinde Kulm und Umgebung [Church book for German Congregational Congregation of Kulm and Surrounding Area]," Taufregister [Baptism Register], p. 85, birth of Harry Peter Schott to Peter Schott and Lydia Siewert; church office, Kulm.

<sup>508</sup> King Co., Washington, death cert. 3384, Harry Peter Schott, 3 Mary 1978; Public Health-Seattle and King County Vital Statistics, Seattle.

<sup>509</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 94, birth of Wilbert Theodore Billigmeier to Danile Billigmeier and Dina Netz; church office, Kulm. For birth location, "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/18693669:2238>), card for Wilbert T. Billigmeier, serial no. N36, 30 June 1942, Local Draft Board 35, Lodi, San Joaquin Co., California; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644723.

<sup>510</sup> Minnesota Department of Health, death cert. 2279025027, Wilbert Theadore Billigmeier, 13 October 1979; Death Records Collection; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. See also "Obituary: Wilbert Billigmeier" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 8 November 1979, p. 5, col. 3.

<sup>511</sup> Renville Co., Minnesota, marriage certificate, Billigmeier-Uthe, 2 July 1949; County Recorder's Office, Olivia.

<sup>512</sup> Minnesota Department of Vital Statistics, birth certificate no. 26588, birth of Pauline Lucile Uthe to Henry Berman Uthe and Mary Ann Dummer; Birth Records Collection; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

<sup>513</sup> Minnesota Department of Health, death cert. 2019-MN-005428, Pauline Lucille Billigmeier, 12 February 2019; Office of Vital Records, St. Paul.

<sup>514</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, birth certificate no. 6495, birth of Cecelia Elvera Billigmeier to Daniel Billigmeier and Dana Netz; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck; Cecelia Billigmeier Curtis papers; privately held by Mary Catherine Curtis who provided copy to author on 19 September 2023. See also Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 100, birth of Cecelia Alvina Billigmeier to Danile Billigmeier and Dina Netz; church office, Kulm.

<sup>515</sup> "Obituaries" in *The Arizona Republic* (Phoenix), 15 November 1993, p. 14, col. 1; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/123169974/>). "Cecelia Curtis" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 24 November 1993, p. 4, col. 5; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 12927.

<sup>516</sup> Hennepin Co., Minnesota, marriage certificate no. 261-99, Curtis-Billigmeier, 10 May 1947; Licensing/County Auditor's Office, Minneapolis.

Cikanek on 25 February 1918 in Chicago, Cook Co., Illinois, but later used the last name of Curtis.<sup>517</sup> He died 26 February 1969 in Superior, Douglas Co., Wisconsin.<sup>518</sup>

Daniel had the following stepchildren, children of his wife Mary Reich and her first husband Edward Ketterling:

- 29 LAVERNE KETTERLING was born 18 October 1918 in Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>519</sup> She died 15 June 2010 in Billings, Yellowstone Co., Montana.<sup>520</sup> She married Harry Mitzman on 3 July 1942 in Webster, Day Co., South Dakota.<sup>521</sup> Harry was born 20 March 1918 in Brooklyn, Kings Co., New York.<sup>522</sup> Harry died 6 October 2007 in Billings, Yellowstone Co., Montana.<sup>523</sup>

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<sup>517</sup> "Chicago birth certificates, 1878-1922," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HT-D43T-DL> : accessed 4 October 2023), DGS 4402505, image 1232 of 1387, birth of Harry B. Cikanek to John J. Cikanek, 25 February 1918; Cook County Courthouse, Chicago. Article about the death of John Cikanek identifies Harry Curtis as his son and connects him to the Cikanek surname shown on his birth certificate. "John Cikanek of Chicago Dies Here," in *The Rhinelander Daily News* (Wisconsin), 27 August 1954, p. 3, col. 6; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/11099434/>).

<sup>518</sup> Wisconsin Department of Health and Social Services, death cert. 372, Harry B. Curtis, 26 February 1969; Division of Health, Madison.

<sup>519</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 2010 Jan-2010 Dec > image 3874 of 8843, cert. 201056-003883, LaVern Mitzman, 15 June 2010; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena. The birth date on the death certificate is consistent with LaVerne's age being 1 year old in the 1920 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., district 2, Lowenthal School District #10, no page number, ED 184, sheet 4B, dwelling 10, family 10, Laverne Ketterling in Edward Ketterling family; NARA microfilm publication T625, roll 1336; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/107590260:6061>).

<sup>520</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 2010 Jan-2010 Dec > image 3874 of 8843, cert. 201056-003883, LaVern Mitzman, 15 June 2010; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena.

<sup>521</sup> "South Dakota, U.S., Marriages, 1905-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8561/>) > 1942-1943 > image 956 of 4078, Mitzman-Ketterling, 3 July 1942; South Dakota Department of Health, Pierre.

<sup>522</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 2007 Jan-2007 Dec > image 6604 of 8612, cert. 200756-006635, Harry Mitzman Sr., 6 October 2007; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena. See also "Obituaries: Harry Mitzman" in *The Billings Gazette* (Montana), 9 October 2007, p. 23, col. 1; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/411356998/>). It's possible Harry was originally named Aaron, as the only Mitzman born in Brooklyn in 1918 is an Aaron Mitzman, born 20 March 1918—the same birth date as on Harry's death certificate. See New York Department of Health, "Births Reported 1918 in Borough of Brooklyn," p. 519, certificate 14195, birth of Aaron Mitzman, parents not shown; digital image of typed list, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS4R-HF5P> : accessed 5 October 2023), DGS 7900143, image 2708 of 3072.

<sup>523</sup> "Montana, U.S., State Deaths, 1907-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/5437/>) > Montana Death Records > 2007 Jan-2007 Dec > image 6604 of 8612, cert. 200756-006635, Harry Mitzman Sr., 6 October 2007; State of Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, Office of Vital Statistics, Helena.

- 30 LEO KETTERLING was born 5 July 1922 in Lehr, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>524</sup> Leo died 27 October 1967 in Ashley, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>525</sup> He married Leona Koepplin on 27 June 1942 in Aberdeen, Brown Co., South Dakota.<sup>526</sup> Leona was born 10 March 1924 near Lehr, North Dakota.<sup>527</sup> Leona married second Paul Meidinger on 5 April 1974 in Logan Co., North Dakota.<sup>528</sup> Leona died 12 November 2008 in Wishek, McIntosh Co., North Dakota.<sup>529</sup>
- 31 INFANT SON KETTERLING, birth and death date unknown.<sup>530</sup> Mary's obituary says she was predeceased by an infant son. As she was already 45 years old when she married Daniel Billigmeier, the infant son is most likely from her first marriage to Edward Ketterling. Also, there are no death records for an infant Billigmeier from the time of her marriage to Daniel in 1942 until 1957 (when she would have been 60 years old).<sup>531</sup>

### Proof summary for parents of Wilbert Theodore Billigmeier

Wilbert Theodore (Danny) Billigmeier was born 23 March 1922, in Merricourt, Dickey Co., North Dakota, the son of Daniel Billigmeier and Dena Netz. Due to North Dakota state law, a birth certificate for Wilbert cannot be obtained until the year 2047. However, there is substantial evidence corroborating the names of his parents.

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<sup>524</sup> "Leo Ketterling Service Tuesday" in *The Bismarck Tribune* (North Dakota), 31 October 1967, p. 22, col. 2; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/413742443/>). The birth date in the obituary is consistent with being 2 years old as of the 1 April 1925 North Dakota state census, see 1925 North Dakota state census, McIntosh Co., pop. sch., township not shown, sheet 33 (penned), dwelling/family 4, Leo Ketterling in Ed Ketterling household; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/3003778:1078>), image 77 of 200; State Archives and Historical Research Library, Bismarck, North Dakota.

<sup>525</sup> "North Dakota, U.S., State Death Certificates, 1908-2007," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/61747/>) > 1967 > 04001-04400 > image 243 of 402, cert. 4240, Leo Ketterling, 27 October 1967; North Dakota Department of Health, Bismarck.

<sup>526</sup> "South Dakota, U.S., Marriages, 1905-2018," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/search/collections/8561/>) > 1942-1943 > image 461 of 4078, Ketterling-Koepplin, 27 June 1942; South Dakota Department of Health, Pierre.

<sup>527</sup> "Leona L. Meidinger" in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 19 November 2008, p. 5, col. 1; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 16225. A 1924 birth date is consistent with being 1 year old in the 1925 North Dakota state census. 1925 North Dakota state census, Logan Co., pop. sch., Twp. 133-70, sheet 1 (penned), dwelling/family 1, Leona in Wm Kopplin; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2982355:1078>), image 131 of 189; State Archives and Historical Research Library, Bismarck.

<sup>528</sup> Untitled obituary for Paul J. Meidinger in *The Wishek Star* (North Dakota), 10 May 1995, clipping doesn't show page number; "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2926218:62188>). Information for obituary likely came from his wife, who would have first-hand knowledge of their wedding date.

<sup>529</sup> North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, death cert. 002199650, Leona Meidinger, 12 November 2008; Bureau of Vital Statistics, Bismarck. See also "Deaths: Leona Meidinger" in *The Bismarck Tribune* (North Dakota), 14 November 2008, p. 9, col. 2; *Newspapers.com* (<https://www.newspapers.com/image/347755269/>).

<sup>530</sup> Untitled obituary for Mary (Reich) Billigmeier in *The Ashley Tribune* (North Dakota), 26 June 1985, clipping doesn't show page number; "U.S., American Historical Society of Germans from Russia Obituaries, 1899-2012," digital image, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/6645400:62188>).

<sup>531</sup> "Public Death Index, Division of Public Records," database, North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (<https://apps.nd.gov/doh/certificates/deathCertSearch.htm>). Negative findings using search terms Billigmeier, 1942-1957.



- Wilbert Theodore was baptized on 16 March 1923 in the Kulm Congregational Church in Kulm, LaMoure Co., North Dakota.<sup>532</sup> The baptismal register shows his parents as Danile Billigmeier and Dina Netz.
- Although specific relationships are not identified in the 1925 North Dakota state census, at age 4, he is shown in the family of Dan and Dina Billigmeier.<sup>533</sup>
- At age 8 in 1930, he is shown as the son of Dan Billigmayer in the U.S. census.<sup>534</sup> Dan and his wife Dina are both shown as 35 years old and married at age 25, implying they'd been married for 10 years and were married at the time of Wilbert's birth.
- Wilbert was identified as a child of Daniel Billigmeier in Daniel's will and was the executor of his estate.<sup>535</sup>
- Dena Netz Billigmeier's obituary in 1941 identified him as the son of her and Dan Billigmeier, although the obituary mistakenly identifies him as Wilfred.<sup>536</sup>
- Wilbert's obituary in 1979 identified him as the son of the "late Mr. and Mrs. Dan Billigmeier of Lehr."<sup>537</sup>

Wilbert was born in the town of Merricourt, Dickey County.

- Wilbert stated on his 1942 WWII draft registration that he was born in Merricourt.<sup>538</sup>
- Wilbert stated on his Social Security card application that he was born in Merricourt.<sup>539</sup>
- The Billigmeier family moved to Merricourt in 1922, the year of his birth. Although they didn't purchase a house there until October, seven months after his birth, the deed shows Daniel was already a resident of Merricourt at the time of the house purchase.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), "Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996," transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 94, birth of Wilbert Theodore Billigmeier to Danile Billigmeier and Dina Netz; church office, Kulm.

<sup>533</sup> 1925 North Dakota state census, Logan Co., pop. sch., Lehr, sheet 1 (penned), dwelling/family 10, Wilbert Billigmeier in Dan Billigmeier household; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/2984609:1078>), image 177 of 189; State Archives and Historical Research Library, Bismarck.

<sup>534</sup> 1930 U.S. census, McIntosh Co., North Dakota, pop. sch., Lehr City, p. 2951 (penned), ED 26-2, sheet 1B, dwelling 10, family 10, Dan Belligmayer [indexed as Bellejmyen] family; NARA microfilm publication T626, roll 1737; *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/108663924:6224>).

<sup>535</sup> McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Last Will and Testament, Daniel Billigmeier probate file, 29 September 1969; County Recorder's Office, Ashley. See also McIntosh Co., North Dakota, Letters Testamentary, Daniel Billigmeier probate file, 30 August 1974; County Recorder's Office, Ashley.

<sup>536</sup> "Mrs. Daniel Billigmeier Rites Held Yesterday" in *The Wishek News* (North Dakota), 29 May 1941, p. 1, col. 2; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 00234.

<sup>537</sup> "Obituary: Wilbert Billigmeier" in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 8 November 1979, p. 5, col. 3; digital image, North Dakota State Archives, Bismarck, microfilm 07713.

<sup>538</sup> "U.S., World War II Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947," database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/18693669:2238>), card for Wilbert T. Billigmeier, serial no. N36, 30 June 1942, Local Draft Board 35, Lodi, San Joaquin Co., California; NARA, record group 147, NAID 7644723.

<sup>539</sup> Wilbert Theodore Billigmeier, SS no. 502-10-2434, 23 March 1922, Application for Account Number (Form SS-5), Social Security Administration, Baltimore, Maryland.

<sup>540</sup> Dickey Co., North Dakota, Caroline Young and George Young to Daniel Billigmeier, deed no. 60331, 28 October 1922; County Recorder's Office, Ellendale.

- Wilbert’s older sister Evelyn stated Wilbert was born in Merricourt.<sup>541</sup> Although she would have had first-hand knowledge about where the family lived when he was born, because she was only about 2 years old at the time, it’s likely her knowledge of this actually came from her parents.

There is some evidence that could suggest different birth locations, however, it is less convincing than the evidence for Merricourt.

- Wilbert was baptized in the Kulm Congregational Church, implying a possible birth location of Kulm.<sup>542</sup> However, his sister Cecelia, who was born in Lehr, was also baptized in Kulm.
- Wilbert’s marriage license said he was “of McIntosh County.”<sup>543</sup> However, this implies that he was from there at the time of his marriage, which is consistent with residence in Lehr. This does not necessarily imply he was born there.
- His death certificate and obituary do not include a specific location.<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> Evelyn Billigmeier Schott (Seattle, Washington), notes from interview/discussions with Carolyn Schott, 31 December 2007; privately held by Carolyn Schott, Seattle, Washington, 2023.

<sup>542</sup> Kulm Congregational Church (Kulm, North Dakota), “Baptism, Marriage, Burial and Confirmation Records 1896-1996,” transcribed by LeRoy and Karen Konrad, p. 94, birth of Wilbert Theodore Billigmeier to Danile Billigmeier and Dina Netz; church office, Kulm.

<sup>543</sup> Renville Co., Minnesota, marriage certificate, Billigmeier-Uthe, 2 July 1949; County Recorder’s Office, Olivia.

<sup>544</sup> Minnesota Department of Health, death cert. 2279025027, Wilbert Theadore Billigmeier, 13 October 1979; Death Records Collection; Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. See also “Obituary: Wilbert Billigmeier” in *The Kulm Messenger* (North Dakota), 8 November 1979, p. 5, col. 3.