

**Blankenheimerdorf,  
September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014**

**a report by  
Peter Baales**





*Vic, Bob, und Jay Langer  
found their roots in Blankenheimerdorf*

## *Home, My Sweet Home*

"Du met dengem ale Krom! Ech levve höck!" (You and your old stuff! I'm living for today!) Some time ago, a friend of mine surprised me with this

statement. For a moment, I was a confused, but then I answered with a statement by Theodor Heuss, the first President of the Federal Republic of Germany. He said, "He who has no past, has no future!"

Alois Mayer expressed this similarly in the journal "Prümer Landbote" No. 94: "The Eifel has never had a time that was so rich and free, so good and precious as today. No generation has grown up as we have, without fear and so care-free. We owe that to our ancestors and their achievements and work, their blood and tears, their lives and deaths and senseless victims, their fears and desperation and their unbreakable will to survive. We will never forget that. We look up to our ancestors. We should be proud of them and their accomplishments and try to understand their mistakes. Even if they only remain in yellowed sheets of paper and old photos, we still can identify with them. We cannot tear them out of our memories; we must allow them to live within us, so we can feel how they lived and what they felt. We call it the 'good old days.' We, too, are a part of those 'good old days.'"

This "being rooted in the home of our ancestors" seems to especially move Americans. That is the only explanation for the location of the largest worldwide family archive in the U.S. (The Family History Library in Salt Lake City/Utah.) And it explains why Americans are doing so much to get closer to the feelings and thinking of their ancestors. That counts especially as they seek out their ancestry, homeland and roots. A major theme here is the immigration from Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Americans don't just deal with this theoretically; a journey into the old world, the home of the ancestors, is a 'must' for nearly every American.

On September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014, a group of seven Americans whose ancestors immigrated in 1843 from our village, visited us on their "Routes to the Roots" tour. They spent 10 days crossing Germany and the Czech Republic with a central idea, namely to "Explore and Enjoy Culture, Folklife and Heritage, To Meet the People and See Highlights of Germany" escorted by Doctor Wolfgang Grams from Oldenburg. The stone marker



**All Fotos: Hejo**





in the church yard dated 721 A.D. quickly produced unbelievable amazement in our guests. Such old time periods are not com- prehensible to the Americans!

The request from Oldenburg to help the Langer family in their search for their heri- tage required a lot of preparation. Docu- ments were acquired and examined, ma- triculation registers of our church were bor- rowed and selected, and the time, place and course of the meeting was agreed upon. During that time, I received the marriage certification "Ehlen-Heß" from 1817 A.D. at 1:00 am on my computer, as sent by

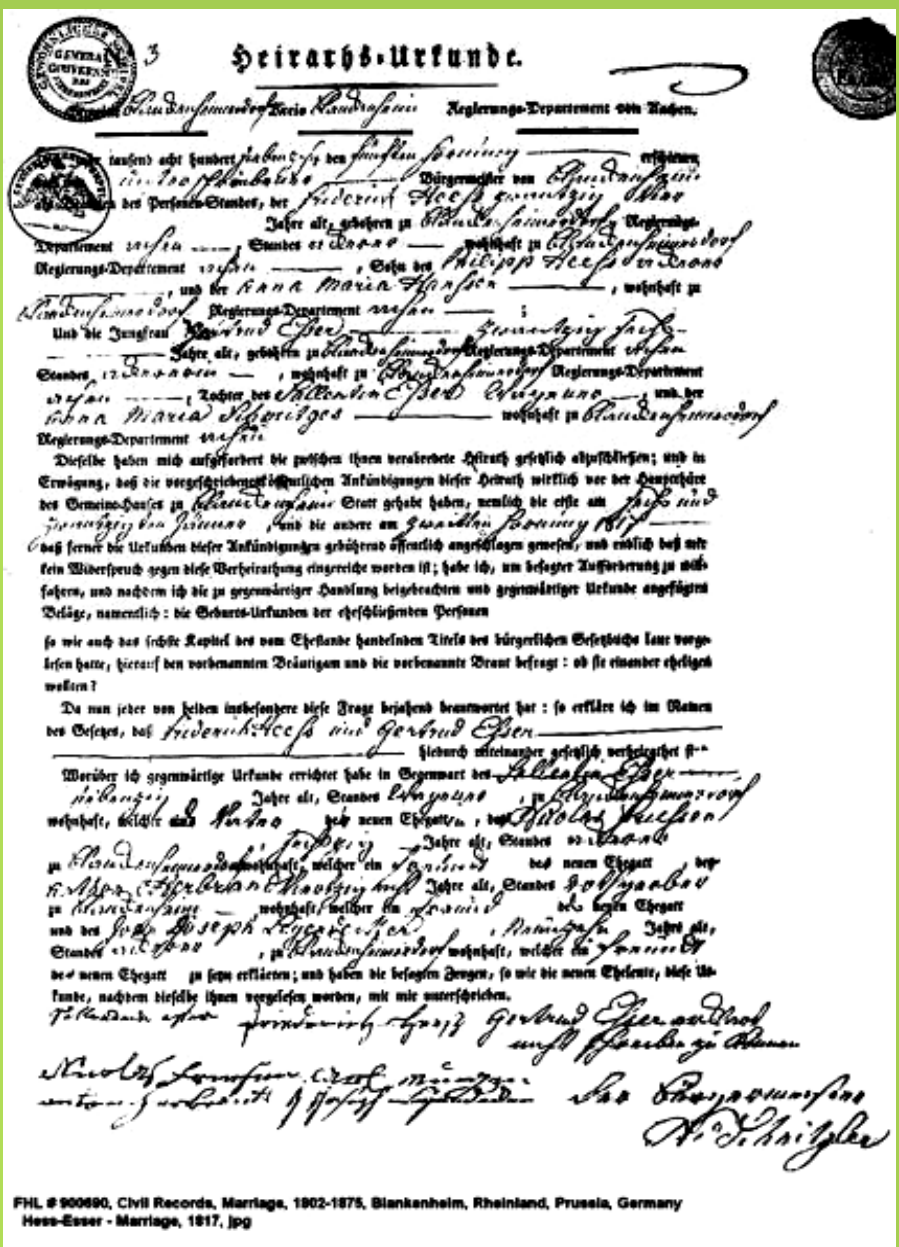


Our American guests and their "expedition leader" Dr. Grams are absolutely thrilled by the materials that Bernd Michels from Hüngers- dorf gathered for them.

Mike Itzin from Idaho. Our meeting from there was quite emotional and mov- ing. The uncomplicated nature of our guests led to a quick feeling of familiar- ity; we got along brilliantly. I will never for- get that afternoon. It was very im- pressive.

The Americans were enthusiastic seeing how Dr. Grams mas- tered both languages. Ed Langer speaks a little German, and I could add some bits of English, based on my school time 60 years ago.

A couple of days later I received an e-mail which reflected the enthusiasm in these closing words, "Hey Peter, thank you



FHL # 900690, Civil Records, Marriage, 1802-1875, Blankenheim, Rheinland, Prussia, Germany Hess-Esser - Marriage, 1817, jpg



for your wonderful hospitality that day in September! You and your group are more proof that my ancestors came from a great part of the world. Sincerely, Jay and Connie."

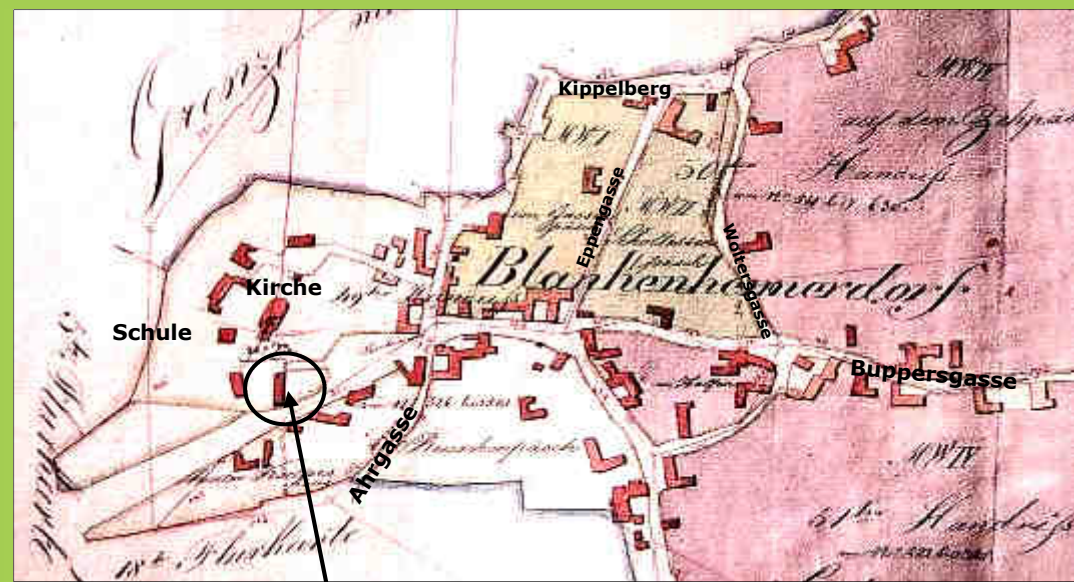
And we learned a lot of things we'd never heard of before. In 1842, Wilhelm Bierter and his family (consisting of his wife



Elisabeth Hess and three sons and three daughters) received permission to emigrate to America via Antwerp/Belgium. They could no longer subsist as farmers in the

Eifel because the soil was too bad to be farmed. He already sold all his belongings: the house and garden near the "Ahrgrasse" (later called the Thomas Kastenholz House or also "Gasthaus Görgens-Cremer"). They were the first villagers who tried their luck in the new world.

Four years later his brother-in-law, Friedrich Hess, followed him in the same way with his family consisting of his wife, six children, a son-in-law and two grandsons. The land council of Schleiden certified, "Hess doesn't emigrate to protect his sons from military service. He has already sold all his possessions. Also from the police perspective there is nothing against the emigration." The married couple Schlemmer from the Mander-scheider Hof bought everything for the price of 2545 thaler. The family arrived in New York aboard the ship "Edwina" in July. One year later Friedrich bought a farm with 160 acres of



*Bernd knew that the present house "Hellefjes" stands on the site where the original home of the emigrant family Hess - Esser - Ehlen once stood. Nothing remains of the original buildings..*

land in Brighton, Wisconsin. His diligence and assertiveness were proven. Twelve years later the farm was valued at \$3,000. The machinery, inventory and livestock were valued at almost \$400. He died at the ripe old age of 87.



The farm was already taken over by his son Peter in 1870. Next to this farm, Nicolaus Ehlen bought 115 acres of land for

**Hess - Esser - Ehlen from Blankenheimerdorf  
emigrated to USA / Wisconsin in 1846**

Philipp Heß, 1739-1805  
∞ 1788  
Anna Maria Hansen,?-1802

Salentin Esser, 1745-1823  
∞ 1785  
Anna Maria Schmidges, 1759-1834

Friedrich Hess  
\* 28.04.1792, Bl-dorf  
+ 07.08.1879, Brighton

∞  
11.02.1817

Anna Gertrud Esser  
\* 1.2.1790, Bl-dorf  
+ 27.08.1870, Brighton



FATHER NICKLAUS  
1817 - 1880  
MOTHER MARY-ANNA  
HIS WIFE  
1817 - 1907  
E H L E N

*St. Francis Cemetery in Brighton  
Township, Kenosha County, Wisc.*

Anna Maria Hess  
\* 17.11.1817 Bl-d.  
+ 1907, Brighton

∞  
14.02.1843

Nikolaus Ehlen  
Stellmacher und Wagener  
\* 23.09.1817, Ripsdorf  
+ 16.06.1880, Brighton/Wisc.

Elisabeth Hess  
\*/+1819, Bl-dorf

Peter Hess  
\* 17.07.1820  
Brighton

Salentin Hess  
\* 22.05.1822  
California

Josef Hess  
\* 05.11.1826  
Potosi, Wisc.

Johann Peter Hess  
\* 08.05.1830  
Farley, Iowa

Johann Hess  
\* 14.03.1834  
Madison, Wisc.

Gertrud Ehlen  
\* 23.02.1844, ∞/+ ?

Margareta Ehlen  
\* 14.07.1845, Bl-dorf  
∞1865 John Thom  
+ 24.11.1927, County Osceola  
Iowa  
Mary, 1868-1932

Mary-Ann Ehlen  
\* 1847, Brighton/Wisconsin  
∞ 1871 **Mathias J Thom**  
+ 1919, Trimble, Wisc.

*Both are their  
great-grandparents*

Further Children born in America:  
Maria, Friedrich, Joseph, Peter,  
Gertrud, Magdalena, Katharina



**Mary-Ann Ehlen**  
\*1847, Brighton  
+1919, Trimble



∞ 1871  
**Mathias J. Thom**  
\*1847, Mötsch /  
Bitburg,  
+1924, Trimble

10 Kinder, (6 starben früh  
an Diphtherie), u.a.

Mary Fasbender  
1879-1956

∞ 1902  
Georg Frank Thom  
1877-1949

8 Kinder, u.a.



Victor Edward  
Langer,  
1911-1944



∞ 1935  
Lorraine A.M. Thom  
1916-2004



Vic - Bob - Jay  
L a n g e r

Vic Langer,\*1936

Bob Langer,\*1939

Roger L.,\*1940  
(war verhindert)

Jay Langer,\*1943

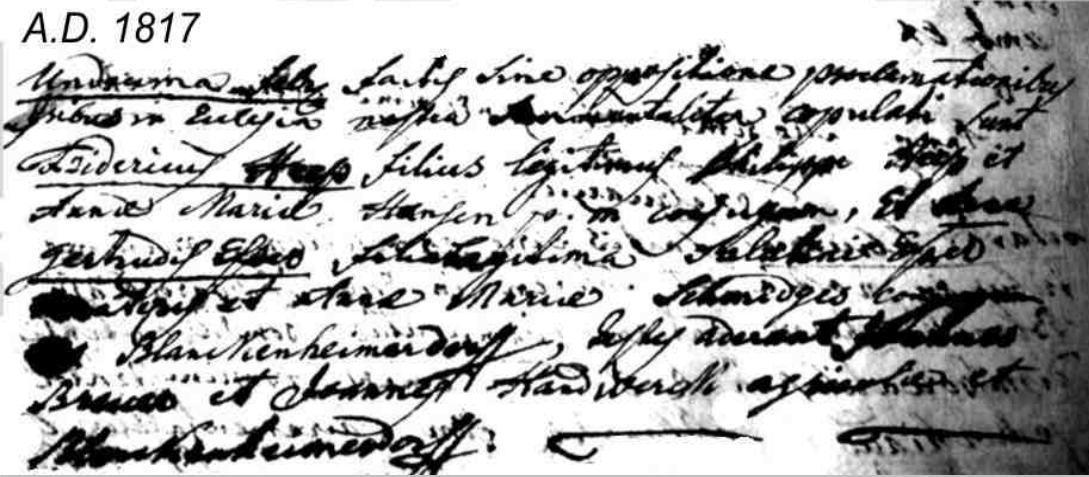
*Data from the parish registers of St. Peter and Paul Church, Blankenheimerdorf, kept in the parish office at Blankenheim, supplemented by Bernd Michels, Hüngersdorf, Mike Itzin, Idaho, and Vic and Bob Langer, Wisconsin*



In the registers of our parish St. Peter and Paul the registrations relevant for our emigrants everybody are included. Because they are written into Latin and the writing is often to be deciphered very hard, only 3 examples (with the suitable translation) are introduced here.



	Eltern	Kind	Taufpaten
1. Febr. 1790	Salentin Esser und Anna-Maria Schmidges, Eheleute	Anna Gertrud, getauft am 2. des Monats	Petrus Esser und Anna-Gertrud Schmidges
28. April 1792	Philipp Heß - Anna Maria Hansen, Eheleute	Friederich	Friedrich Hansen aus Engelgau und Anna Maria Breuers von hier



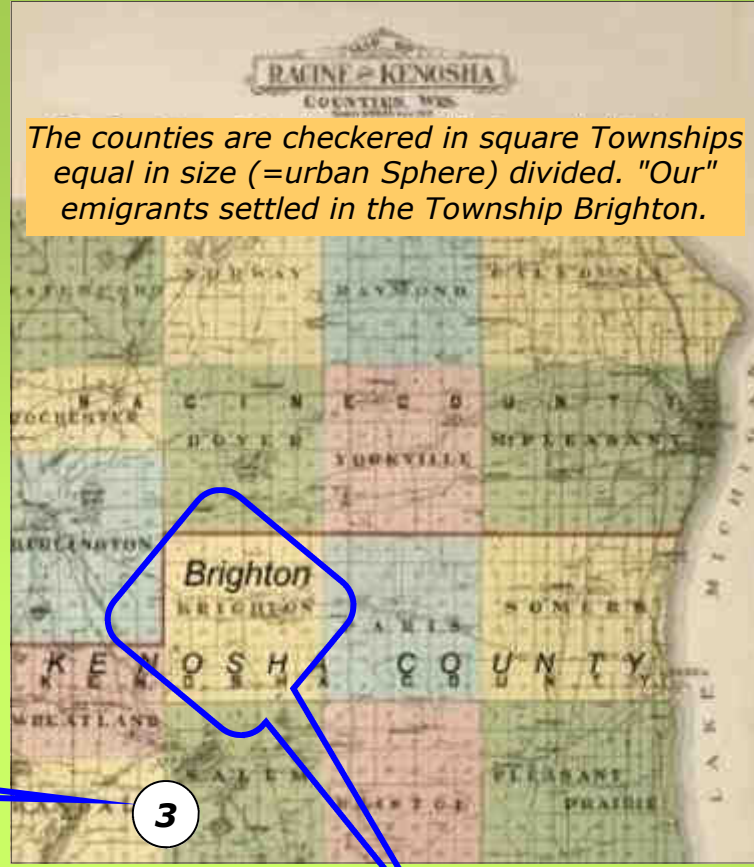
On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February after three marriage proclamations in our church have remained without objection, Friederich Hess, lawful son of Philipp Hess and Anna-Maria Hansen, and Anna-Gertrud Esser, lawful daughter of Salentin Esser and Anna Maria Schmidges, both married couples from Blankenheimerdorf, were connected matrimonially. As witnesses were present Johannes Breuers and Johannes Handwerck, farmers from Blankenheimerdorf.

"Road crosses" do not exist in this form in America. Therefore, it was important to show our guests the village crosses that their ancestors would have known and probably prayed in front of. The idea that Nikolaus Ehlen and his family would have stood under the big chestnut by the Zollstock and the church was a very emotional experience for them. Some had tears in their eyes!

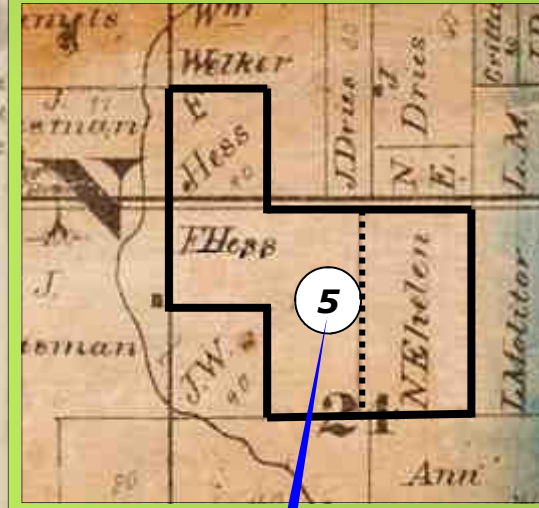
Additional:  
On the cross on the Zollstock is engraved the name Peter Esser who is a son of Salentin Esser and Anna-Maria Schmidges and thus the brother/brother-in-law of the emigrants Friedrich Hess and Anna Gertrud, born Esser.



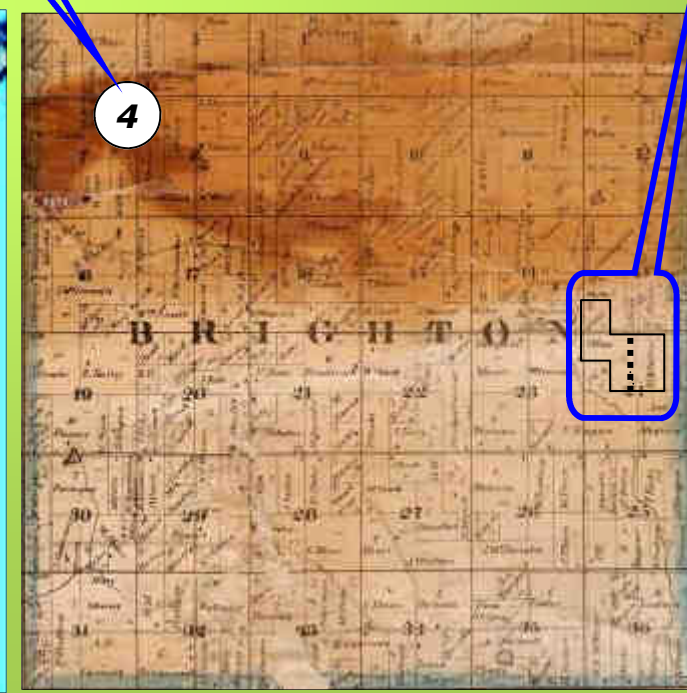




- The New Homeland of the Families Ehlen - Esser - Thom**
1. USA
  2. State of Wisconsin
  3. County Kenosha
  4. Township Brighton
  5. Section 24



Every **Township** is divided into 36 **sections** of a square mile = 640



mornings and every section in 4 **areas**. According to her needs the **Settlers** 1,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{3}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{8}$ ,  $\frac{3}{8}$  acquired etc. the shares of an area which they were able to manage. The families Hess-Ehlen settled in the sections 13 and 24 together more than  $1\frac{3}{8}$  areas. Exactly 275 mornings enclosed our "layer-villages".





*The brothers Bob, Vic and Jay Langer in the history of their family show the three successive houses of Frank Langer built in 1888, 1893 and 1915 which documents their growing prosperity.*

him and his family. In 1870 his farming operation was valued at almost \$2,000 and ten years later with a value of \$5,000. One of his daughters is the ancestor of the Langer family, who visited us on their "Routes to the Roots" tour.

From today's perspective you can hold only the highest esteem for our ancestors, who sold everything in their town and left their home to emigrate to an unknown country. We can't imagine the strain of the journey across country and then across the Atlantic.

These familiar connections gave the DGKV's (Dörfer Geschichts- und Kulturverein 1992 e.V.) members no rest. They wanted to know every detail. The result is the family tree shown here: Bob, Vic and Jay Langer are the great-great-grandsons of Nicolaus Ehlen and Anna-Maria Heß and the great-grandsons of Mary-Ann Ehlen and Matthias "Tis" Thom.

So they are original "Blankenheimer-Dörfer"!

*This presentation would not be possible without the help of many people. I would especially like to thank:*

*Bernd Michels from Hüngersdorf, who brought and presented a lot of material;*

*The Parish of Blankenheim, which allowed us to borrow the church registers;*

*Hejo Mies for taking photos of the meeting;*

*Vic and Bob Langer for a copy of their booklet "Langer and Thom Families, 1847-1888 settlers in Wisconsin," August 2014.*

*My grandsons Tom and Lucas with Michelle and Ed Langer for their translations.*

For all who were present at this meeting, it will remain unforgettable.

December 2014, Peter Baales