

Still Know Nothing About Alois

by Harry Zirkelbach 11-01-2010

Alois Zirkelbach was my grandfather.

Other than this, there remains little factual information of his life.

Sometime in 1906 Alois left his home and family in Pittsburgh, Pa, never returned. Was not heard from again. At home he left a wife, son, four daughters, the one son the middle child, was twelve.

Life was difficult, and cheap.

Here's what is known of Alois. He was believed to be born in Nicestock, Germany 1867, came to America to escape the Prussian Army about 1883. Nothing else, until he wed Catherine Hunter in Erie, Pennsylvania November 27, 1890. There is no mention of siblings, parents.

Even after marriage, no paper trail exist., excepting birth certificates, for both Alois and Catherine were Catholic, baptizing the children soon after birth. There never was a family, or individual, photograph.

The family moved often, between Pittsburgh and Erie, western Pennsylvania. Legend has it that Alois claimed it was less expensive to move than pay rent. In the 16 years Alois was with the family, we know the son had attended 12 schools, completing the 5th grade in that year 1906. When Alois disappeared, the remaining family, wife, four daughters, a son, lived in Pittsburgh Pa.. The six remaining there until the four daughters completed school

Two daughters were to marry, raise a family in Pittsburgh, and the other two daughters, son and mother would migrate to Erie. irregularly, where they spent the remainder of life.

Catherine was one of four daughters from the marriage of Edward Hunter and Winifred Page. Her three sisters wed, two then lived all their lives In Erie, and the third in nearby Youngstown Ohio. It was these magnets that seemed to bring Alois and his family north to Erie, then employment in the steel industry, taking Alois back to Pittsburgh.

With the disappearance of Alois, the family concentrated on survival. In any conversation in later years, Alois was not mentioned. When questions were asked about him, he was neither criticized nor augmented; simply, nothing was volunteered, and to specific questions given the “I don’t know” reply. Alois has been an enigma to wife and children.

The information on Alois in this account, his birth date and location, came from the youngest daughter, who was provided that by her mother shortly before that daughter left to be married.

Zirkelbach is not an uncommon family name in Germany, and in sections of North America. In all contacts with Zirkelbachs by Alois grandchildren, there has been no connection with a common ancestor.

Now you know as much of Alois Zirkelbach as do my sister and myself.