

Anthony Arens – Civil War Soldier

Good day to all of you. I'm Anthony Arens. I was born here in Westphalia many years ago, and let me tell you, the town in my day was very different from your Westphalia of today.

My Parents Establish a Life in America

My mother and father were born in the German Sauerland, in Westfalen, Germany where the little villages are not far from one another. My father, John Peter, was born in Altenhunden and my mother, Anna Catherine Pulte, in Mecklinghausen. I like to think that they left Germany at the same time and fell in love while sailing on the same ship bound for America. While I don't know if that is true, I do know that they were married in Detroit in St. Mary Catholic Church and Fr. Kopp was their celebrant. This was July 9th of 1837.

My parents did not plan to stay in Detroit. I'm sure they had heard about the German Catholic settlement in the Grand River Valley. In October of 1838, Fr. Kopp noted their arrival in Westphalia. They bought 40 acres of land in Section 9—that's east of town on Price Road.

I was born August 4, 1841; the first son - one of six children - born to John and Anna. I had 3 brothers and 2 sisters. Elizabeth was the oldest; she never married. My brother Peter married Rosina Droste, Joseph married Anna Thome, John J. married Mary Walter, and Anna married John J. Lehman.

When I was six or maybe seven years old I started going to school. Father Godez was one of my teachers. I also had the chance to learn English from Moses Bartow. I walked to the log school which was not far from my home. Some of my classmates were the Rademacher boys—Joseph and William. They lived to the east on Price Road. Joseph continued his schooling in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and eventually became a bishop.



The Westphalia village was not in existence during my early years. There were no stores—only the

frame church known as St. Peter located on what is now North Westphalia Street. Main Street was just a trail. Many people would carry a gun on their walk to church or the neighbor's in case they met up with a bear or a wolf.

My father and all the farmers worked very hard in those days. In order to raise crops, they had to clear the trees and brush from the land. My brothers and I became expert trappers. We would sell the pelts in the fur market in Lyons. That brought in a little cash. I like to think that my brothers and I were a big help to my father. My father, John Peter Arens, died at the age of 50 years.

The Civil War

I made a big decision in 1862. I was then 20 years old and if you're a history buff, you'll know that the Civil War was being fought. Many Westphalia men—137 to be exact—enlisted with the Union forces. My neighbors, Michael and Jacob Cook, enlisted and in February 1862. I then joined Company K, in 14th Infantry. The induction center was in Westphalia under the command of First Lieutenant Charles Rose of Westphalia Township. I signed up for 3 years. As other Civil War soldiers, I would be paid \$13.00 a month.

We left the state in April 1862 for St. Louis, Missouri where we joined General Grant's army at Pittsburgh Landing/Shiloh. Here we heard that preparations were being made for a great battle—the siege of Corinth, Mississippi. Locals Peter Sontag, Andrew Seckinger and Ulrich Thoma lost their lives in that battle, as did Lieutenant Rose.

Did you know that the Civil War provided the first recorded incident of American soldiers making an effort to ensure their identities would be known should they die on the battlefield? Their methods varied depending on the soldiers' initiative. Some soldiers wrote their names, unit designation and next of kin on pieces of paper and either pinned it to their clothing or stuffed it into their pockets before going into battle. Some troops even fashioned their own "ID" tags out of pieces of wood boring a hole in one end as they then could be worn on a string around the neck. And yet, 42% of the Civil War dead remain unidentified according to a December 1988 report from the US Army Quartermaster Foundation. I am glad my fellow Civil War soldiers founded what you call today "dog tags" to assist in identifying our soldiers.

But let me continue --My regiment continued fighting in Tennessee and Kentucky. We were on active duty during the summer and into the winter of 1864. We joined General Sherman in Georgia. The 14th Infantry was successful in breaking the enemy's lines in the Battle for Atlanta.

After the fall of Atlanta, we marched with Sherman to the sea at Savannah, Georgia. That march to the sea was brutal. Our troops destroyed property—anything that might help the South continue fighting. We continued our fighting through South Carolina into North Carolina. The last severe battle was at Bentenville in March, the 19th and 20th. Many men were killed in the hand-to-hand combat. My good friend, Henry Rochol was killed on the 19th.

Finally the war was over. My regiment arrived in Washington for the Grand Review of Sherman's Army. I was mustered out at Louisville, Kentucky and sent to Detroit where I was paid and discharged on July 20th 1865. In 2015 we celebrated the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War—a war that I survived but so many did not.

Post War Years

I was home at last in Westphalia. I helped with the farm work and many times worked as a farm-hand with the neighboring farmers.

I married Theresia Diebold on April 24th, 1866. She was the daughter of Jerome H. Diebold and Maria Ocks. We were married in St. Peter Catholic Church in Westphalia and Father Godez was our celebrant. (In 1867, the brick church, later called St. Mary, was started and finished in 1869.)

Theresia and I made our home at the house that was once owned by Daniel and Carol Martin on Price Road, just east of town. It was a large house. We needed a large house for our 11 children. Our first girl was Anna Maria. She died at the age of four of scarlet fever. We named our next girl Anna Maria. She married Alfred Simon. Joseph Anthony was our first son and he married Anna Hengesbach. Our son Albert married Philomena Nau. Our next son was William Henry. He married Maria Pohl. Mathilda Anna was our sixth child and she married Theodore Hengesbach. Maria Catherine never married. Our daughter Sophia married Anton Schmitt. Anthony J. married Louise Bauer. Rosa married

Joseph Stump. Our last child was Eleanora, and she married Edward Hengesbach.

I was a farmer and I also had a cider mill. My customers would bring in their apples, and for two or three cents a gallon, I would press the apples into cider.

Theresia died September 24, 1906, and I died November 23, 1918. We rest here with many of our relatives in St. Mary Cemetery.

And now, ladies and gentlemen, it is time to say good-bye. I hope to be remembered for my love for my family, my faith, my community and for servicing our country. Thank you for spending time with me today.

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