

Joseph Bohr and Son, William Bohr

Joseph: Hello, I'm Joseph Bohr and this is my son, William Herman Bohr. You may remember him as Tinner Bohr, and next to me is Katherine.

I am the Joseph Bohr who built the brick church – St. Mary in Westphalia.

I was born on January 25th, 1822 in the Eifel area of the German Rhineland in the little village called Langenfeld. My sister Anna and my brothers, John and Mathias, also were born in Langenfeld.

When I was 5 years old, my father, Michael, died. Then my mother, she was Anna Schueller, married Michael Schafer. That marriage produced 4 more children – 3 girls and 1 boy – Sophie, Anna Maria, Maria Katherine, and Anton Schaefer.

Many of you have heard or maybe you have read about the hard life our ancestors had in Germany. The wages were so poor, but the taxes were high. Many of the big families at times had very little to eat. There was no hope for better times. A few families from our village had left for America. John Fox and family had already left and with him went Nick Pohl and John Lehmann. Their letters told us of the good life in America, especially in a place called Westphalia. There you could buy land for about one dollar an acre. So my parents made plans to leave Germany.

On the 7th of June in 1842, my step-father was given a passport to emigrate to America. We were so excited. My brothers and I ran through our town telling everyone, “We're going to America!” My sister Anna remained in Germany – she was then 25 years old.

We arrived in Westphalia in September of that same year – 1842. My step-father bought 25 acres of land in section 8. This cemetery was at one time part of his farm. Some time in the 1860's my half-brother Anton Schafer gave the Church the land for this cemetery.

I bought my land just east of here and my brother Mathias's land ran along the south side of this cemetery. He and his wife, Gertrude Doll, made their

home on Jones Road. Sadly, my brother, John, died of cholera. That's when 18 children and young adults died of that disease – all within 35 days in 1854.

When I was 27 years old, Antoinette Rademacher and I were married. You may know this, her brother, Joseph, was a bishop with the Catholic Church. Antoinette was only 6 years old in 1836 when her family sailed from Hamburg, Germany aboard the ship the “Columbia” for America.

Antoinette and I had a big family – 7 boys and 4 girls. Our daughter, Theresa, married Casper Cook and Elizabeth married Albert Martin. Our Gertrude died at a young age and Katherine here (point to Katherine) remained single. Maybe you'll remember her as the Kate Bohr who had a millinery shop right in town on Main Street.

Kate: Yes, I'm Katherine Bohr, and yes I had a Millinery Shop on Main Street in town. I sold the latest fashions in dresses and hats directly from New York. If you're a young bride, I could help you with your bridal accessories. My shop is now the John Nobach Photographer's Shop.

Joseph: My son Bernard was a carpenter, Anthony was a music teacher and married Agnes Lennon. Frank died when he was 15 years old and Albert died at the age of 2 years. My youngest son, Theodore remained single. He lived in St Louis, Mo. where he was a well-known builder of church organs. And Joseph was a banker and was married. His first wife was Josephine Simon and Anna Pung was his second wife. Anna and Joseph lived in the house that is now the home of David and Leanne O'Brian.

Perhaps my son who is best remembered is William. Ladies and gentlemen, this is my son, Tinner Bohr.

Tinner: Yes, I'm Tinner Bohr. Does anyone here need a new roof? I can install a metal roof that will last for many years. Come down to my shop on Main Street. I can sell you quality paints and oils. Maybe you need plumbing work done or repairs in your barn. I also build windmills and do eavestroughing. And right now I have a new shipment of seeders – my “Wil-Bo” is the seeder you will want. I make that seeder in my shop and my

daughter helps me sew the bags. I had that seeder patented in 1903. Many times I went to New York. Ja, I've been in business – a tin-smith – in Westphalia for 50 years. As you may know, my shop was formerly known as St Peter. And now in its place is Ox's Smoked Meats.

I learned my trade from my father (point to Joseph). This man, my father, was a highly skilled builder. I believe his greatest work was the building of St Mary Church in 1869. The brick for that church came from Westphalia's brickyard. To build that church cost the parish \$70,000. My father also built the parish rectory and several other brick buildings which are still in use today. Yes, Pa, you had a God-given gift and you used it.

My father was one of Westphalia's early entrepreneurs. He was one of the founders of the town's Milling company and a partner with Joseph Platte and John Schmidt in the operation of the sawmill, and a co-owner with Joseph Arens in the operation of a general store. My father served as the Westphalia Township Supervisor.

My father accomplished many wonderful things. His last great building project – and maybe one he enjoyed the most – was our house just to the east on Main Street – that house was a tall upright and a wing with many dormers.

I married Mathilda Simon on November 17th, 1896 in St. Mary Church and we lived in that beautiful home my father built, but our first home was a house on West Main Street. That house soon became too small for my large family. We needed a bigger house. Mathilda and I had 10 children. We wanted some chickens and a cow, and so we moved into the house my father built – a house my brother Theodore owned after Joseph, my father, died. Theodore lived on one side and my family lived on the other side. Some years later my brother moved to St Louis, Mo.

Like I said, Mathilda and I had 10 children – 5 girls and 5 boys. A girl and a boy died as infants. My surviving 8 all left Westphalia as young adults: Viola, whose married name was Olson, lived in Detroit, as did Herman and Hilda who was Mrs. Wilkinson. Martin, better known as Max, was a police officer in Detroit and Ralph was married and had twin sons, also lived in that

city, and Alfred – we called Fritz – was married and had 2 children. My daughter Dorothy, “Dot”, was Mrs. Baker and lived in Grand Ledge and had 8 children. And I can't forget Elizabeth – she was our Elsie. She went to work in Detroit as a nanny and met Sam Miller at a dance hall. Sam had come to Detroit and worked for Dodge and Ford. They were married and moved to North Carolina. Sam and Elsie had 6 children.

Now Pa, Kate, it's time to say good-bye to our good friends here and to say thank you for remembering the Joseph Bohr Family.

