

Barbara (Boehmer) Heinlein

Hello to all of you! I am Barbara Heinlein, and I want to tell you my story. It's a story with a very happy ending. And it all began in the beautiful country-side of Lower Franconia in Bavaria, Germany. This was the birthplace of my handsome husband, George Friedrich Heinlein, who was born of nobility in 1794 as Baron George Friedrich Heinlein from the lineage of Heinleins. I myself had more humble beginnings. I was born in a village near the city of Bamberg.

I was a seamstress in the castle where George grew up, sewing clothing for the royalty. I worked very hard except for the times when I would find myself daydreaming about the striking young George, and I have to say, I had my eye on him. George was so handsome and kind, so it didn't matter to him that I wasn't royalty. I was younger than my beloved George, and my family was not near as well off. George and I grew closer and closer, and his family became more and more unhappy about our paring. We decided that we didn't care what would happen to us if we had each other, so we got married.



When George and I wed, his family thought our marriage was beneath him and the Heinlein family stripped him of his title and disowned him. Disowned by your own family?! At least I wouldn't have to deal with my mother-in-law. She had no clue what a German woman's work ethic should be! I don't understand why George's family couldn't see we were truly happy together. By this time, we had five children already! George and his brother fought bitterly, and finally his brother banned him from the castle lands. He told us not to let the drawbridge hit us on the way out! Good riddance, we replied. That castle is drafty and cold anyway!

We took our children, Maria, Nikolaus, Anna Maria, Barbara, and Theresia, along with our one and only valuable possession, the painting of the Fourteen Holy Helpers, and we headed for America. I have great devotion to the Fourteen Holy Helpers. St. Barbara, my namesake, is one of the 14 saints and the painting. It would always remind me of the beautiful pilgrimage church near our home in Bamberg, Germany. As you may know, it is the site of the miraculous visitation of the 14 saints to a young shepherd boy in 1445. Over the years many miracles have taken place at this site.

We set sail on a beautiful, calm day, but once we were out to see a few days, the storms rolled in. We never dreamed we would encounter such ferocious storms!! Oh, it down poured, and the waves crashed upon the sides of the ship for days! The children got so sick and so did I! I could see the fear in George's eyes as the ocean prepared to swallow us and send us to watery graves. Right then I got down on my knees and prayed to God and the Holy Mother to spare us and everyone on that ship! I told God if He brought us safely to America, I would make sure the first parish we joined would receive our only

prize possession, the beautiful painting of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. Don't ever believe God won't answer your prayers, because He answered mine!

We arrived safely in Detroit in 1836. We were so happy to be in America. We had our next daughter, Sophia, the next year. We had hopes of meeting friends from our native Germany, so we eventually ventured north from Detroit. By this time, Rosina and Frances had been born and it was time to establish permanent roots.

We became acquainted with Father Anton Kopp upon arrival to Westphalia in October, 1842. After meeting Father, we knew this was where we wanted to stay! It was so much like home. We were even greeted with pilsners of *bier*! We fell in love with Westphalia and bought some land in Section 16 of Westphalia Township, and a house right in town where Larry and Erma Feneis now live. We loved our little farm south of town where we raised our own crops and raised poultry and other livestock. It was enough to sustain our family of seven daughters and one son. What a beautiful place to raise a family.

We took our precious treasure, the Fourteen Holy Helpers, to the parish and insisted that Father Kopp accept it as a gift for the blessings Almighty God bestowed on our family in the safe passage to America. Father Kopp was so honored to receive our painting that he had Westphalia craftsmen make a frame for it from local black walnut wood. This is why you see the massive painting of the Fourteen Holy Helpers hanging in a very prominent place in St. Mary Church.

My George lived to the ripe old age of 79, and our only son Nikolaus died at the age of 40 years. They are buried here also. I trudged on without them the last two decades of my life, attending daily Mass at St. Mary and gazing at the beautiful masterpiece of the Fourteen Holy Helpers. It reminded me of my love for George, the sacrifices he made and the life we shared across two continents with our children. I thank God for bringing us to Westphalia, Michigan.