

Arno Walter Purfürst
a.k.a.
Walter Purfurst
Cook County, Illinois

Arno Walter Purfürst, hereafter referred to by his chosen Anglicized name of Walter Purfurst, was born July 26, 1897 in Neustadt an der Orla, Germany. He was the second of three children born to Ernst Herman Purfürst (1872- ?) and Ida Lydia Pössner (1876-1903).

On September 21, 1918 in Neumünster, Germany Walter married Therese Peterson. The daughter of Swedish born parents, Therese was born in Neumünster on April 1, 1899.

It is not known how Walter came to be living in the town of Neumünster which was located in the northern German state of Schlesweg-Holstein, a considerable distance from Walter's home in southern Germany. Family descendants indicate that Arno served in the Germany army during World War One and had been a Russian prisoner of war. Neumünster is in the vicinity of the German port city of Hamburg thus it can only be speculated that his release from imprisonment took place in the area and he simply remained there.

Walter and Theresa's daughter Hildagaarde Purfürst was born in Neumünster, Germany on January 12, 1917. Their son Verner Walter Purfürst was born there on April 16, 1924.

On October 26, 1926 Walter Purfurst, age 28, would depart the nearby port city of Hamburg aboard the vessel *Andania* destined for America. He had in his possession the required \$25.00 and would leave his wife and children behind in Germany. It was a common practice that one member of a family would emigrate alone for purposes of earning sufficient funds in order to pay for the later emigration of other family members. Walter arrived in New York City on November 8, 1926 and went directly to Lemont, Cook County, Illinois where his American sponsor lived: Theresa's uncle, John Swanson.

Two years later Therese, age 29, daughter Hildegaarde, age 11 and son Walter, age 4 would follow the same route. On October 12, 1928 they arrived in New York City aboard the vessel *Mauretania*. This ship departed Southampton, England on October 6, 1928 with one stop en route at Cherbourg, France. They were the only German nationals aboard the vessel and, although possible they boarded in France, it is likely the family sailed from Hamburg to England where they met the vessel.

On February 15, 1928 Walter would submit his Declaration of Intention (to become a US citizen) at the US District Court, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

On June 26, 1931 tragedy struck the family when son Verner Walter Purfurst, at the age of 7, died by accidental drowning. He was interred at St Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church Cemetery, Lemont, Cook County, Illinois.

On January 18, 1935 Walter petitioned the US District Court, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois for his citizenship, which was granted on April 24, 1935. Likewise on May 7, 1941 Therese submitted her Petition, which was granted on June 11, 1941. Theresa's papers covered naturalization for daughter Hildegaarde. According to his March 28, 1936 Social Security application, Walter worked at the Globe oil refinery in Lemont, Cook County, Illinois.

Walter, wife Theresa and daughter Hildegarde lived in Cook County, Illinois for the remainder of their lives. It was there Therese would die in 1960 and be interred beside her son in the St. Matthew's Cemetery. Her death would be followed by Walter's on July 11, 1966. He too would be laid to rest in the same cemetery.

On June 14, 1947 in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois Walter and Theresa Purfurst's daughter, Hildegarde Purfurst, married Conrad Frederick Fittig. The son of August Conrad Schniggenfittig and Albertina Winters, he was born September 29, 1916 in Oak Park, Cook County, Illinois. Hildegarde died August 19, 1976 in Chicago, Cook County, Illinois with her cremated remains scattered over the graves of her parents and brother at the St. Matthew's Cemetery, Lemont, Cook County, Illinois. Conrad died December 16, 1987 with his cremated remains scattered over the graves of his parents at the Elmwood Memorial Cemetery, River Grove, Cook County, Illinois. Conrad and Hildegarde Fittig had two children: Alan Walter Fittig and Bruce Randal Fittig.

Alan Walter Fittig married Maureen Toole and had a daughter Shannon Patricia Fittig.

Bruce Randal Fittig married Lynn Magevas and had children Samantha Fittig and Shawn Fittig.

Author's Comment

A January 27, 1890 Chicago, Cook County, Illinois death record has been found for a Wilhelmine Purfurst. She was interred at Waldheim Cemetery, now Forest Home Cemetery, Forest Park, Cook County, Illinois. Although the cemetery record indicated she was survived by a "Mr. Purfurst", no record of a spouse or descendant has yet been located. Her death record indicates she died at age "67 years, 3 months and 21 days" thus she would have been born about October 6, 1822. The record further stated she had been "a resident of Illinois for 22 years" thus she arrived in the state about 1868. It is not known if that was an immigration date or simply a date of relocation from another state. Her place of birth was indicated as "Neustadt an der Orla, Germany"

Although Wilhemine Purfurst and Walter Purfurst were both born in the city of Neustadt, Germany, Wilhelmine died before Walter was even born thus it is doubtful that her earlier presence influenced his decision to live there. Their relationship, no matter how distant, has not yet been determined.

A separate history on Wilhelmine Purfürst will be found elsewhere in this volume.