

Ernst August Purfürst  
a.k.a.  
Ernest Purfeerst  
Harris County, Texas

Ernst August Purfürst, hereafter referred to by his chosen Anglicized name of Ernest Purfurst, was born June 13, 1884 in Neustadt an der Orla, Germany. He was the second of two children born to Carl Heinrich Wilhelm Purfürst (1849-1901) and Auguste Karoline Friedericke Müller (1848-1899).

Ernst was a seaman on the German freighter *Inkula* when it departed Hamburg, Germany on January 23, 1910. On February 10, 1910, while berthed at the Port of Galveston, Texas, Ernst secretly left the ship and illegally entered America. He made his way to Houston, Texas where, but ninety days later on May 10, 1910, he would marry Anna Engst.

Just 20 days prior to the wedding, at the time of the April 20, 1910 Federal Census, Anna Engst was living in Runnels County, Texas. This location is in west Texas, a significant distance from the east Texas town of Galveston, Galveston County, Texas where Ernst entered the country and even further from Houston in south east Texas where they were to wed. In view of the geographical separations it is simply amazing that Ernest and Anna could meet and marry in such a short period of time. Our history thus begins with her side of the family.

Anna, born October 08, 1887, was the daughter of F. Herman Engst (1859 -1928) and Wilhelmina Hossendorf (1857-1932).

Herman Engst, Sr. emigrated from Germany about 1880 and made his way to Williamson County, Texas where, about 1886, he married Wilhelmine Hassendorf. They would have five children: Anna Engst, Herman Engst, Jr., Emma Engst, August Peter Engst and Gustav John Engst.

Their son Peter was to later state that the family father was born April 16, 1859 in Lieblich, Germany; however, that is a village that is not identifiable in historic listings. On the other hand, their son Herman Engst, Jr., with whom Herman Engst, Sr. spent his remaining years, would state that both parents were born in Berlin, Germany.

Descendants of their son Gustav later stated that the family mother had been struck by lightning which resulted in her being hospitalized. Indeed, Wilhelmina's January 11, 1932 death certificate indicated that she had been admitted to the Texas State Hospital in Terrell, Kaufman County, Texas on October 25, 1906 where she remained for the remainder of her life. The hospital's 1920 census (at age 63) and the 1930 census (at age 72) confirmed she was a patient there.

At the time of the June 1900 Texas census both Wilhelmina and Herman reported themselves to be a widow/widower. Herman was found living as a "boarder", half a state away with Ernst and Minnie Opitz in Bell County, Texas while Wilhelmina and children Anna and Gus were residing with her parents. The remaining three children were placed in the care of other families as will be outlined in subsequent paragraphs. It is not known if the necessity for fostering the children, or Herman's departure, was a result of Wilhelmina's health limitations or family financial conditions but in any case there probably likely came a time when the advancing age of her parents left them with an inability to care for Wilhelmine as well, thus she was committed to the hospital in 1906.

The June 1900 Williamson County, Texas census for William Friedrich & Helena "Tassmer" (Teschner?) included his "stepdaughter Wilhelmine Engst, granddaughter Anna Engst, born October 1878 and grandson Gustav Engst, born January 1895". Fred indicated seven children had been born to him (of which five were yet alive) and Helena indicated that 3 children had been born to her (of which all were still alive. Coupled with the fact that at the time of her marriage, Wilhelmine's maiden name was listed as Hassendorf, it is apparent that both had previously been married. Fred, born July 1834, Helena, born June 1834 and Wilhelmina, born September 1858 all emigrated from Germany in 1885. As will subsequently be explained, another daughter was a foster parent for one other of Wilhelmina's children. Based on the common immigration dates among everyone it would appear that Wilhelmina's mother and stepfather married in Germany and, along with Wilhelmina and her sisters, all emigrated from Germany in 1885.

The June 1900 Williamson County, Texas also contained the family of Paul and Theresa Streich. Paul was born February 1871 and that Theresa was born December 1875, both in Germany. While Paul immigrated in 1873, Theresa immigrated in 1885. They indicated they had been married but 2 years (about 1898). At the time of this census, they had a daughter Helena Streich, born February 1896 and a son Adolph Streich born January 1897. Both children were born in Texas. Also living with the Streich family was Paul's "nephew" Peter Engst, born August 1890 in Texas. Based on her birth date we conclude that Theresa was Wilhelmina Engst's half-sister, the daughter of Fred and Helena Tessmer, and that she too immigrated with the family. Peter Engst, however, is Wilhelmina's son.

Also found in the Williamson County, Texas 1900 census was Joseph and Henrietta Faulk. Joseph was born July 1840 in Germany and Henrietta was born March 1840 in Texas. They had been married 23 years. They were living with Maria's parents, Herman and Maria Jost (sp?). Living with Joseph and Henrietta was a "daughter, Emma Faulk" and "son, Herman Faulk". Both children were born February 1889 and, in reality, are Wilhelmina Engst's two remaining children, twins Emma Engst and Herman Engst. Maria's relationship to the Engst's, if any, is not known.

As previously indicated, Herman Engst, Sr, was living as a "boarder" with the family of Ernst and Minnie Opitz in Bell County, Texas at the time of the 1900 census. He stated he was a widower. At the time of the subsequent 1910 census he is still in Bell County but now states he is married and has been for 24 years (about 1886). The 1920 census finds him living in Washita, Bessie County, Oklahoma where his son Herman Engst, Jr. and family reside. F. Herman Engst, Sr. was born April 16, 1859 in Germany and died May 8, 1928 in Bessie, Washita County, Oklahoma. He was interred in the Union Hatchett Cemetery in Bessie County, Oklahoma.

The children of Herman and Wilhelmine (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr.:

Herman Engst married Jennie Courvisier on December 4, 1909 in Runnels County, Texas.  
Emma Engst married Antone Courvoisier, Jr. on December 4, 1909 in Runnels County, Texas.  
Peter Engst left for Canada in 1913 where he married Elizabeth Friesen in 1914.  
Gus John Engst married Mary Stout in 1920 in Comanche County, Oklahoma  
Anna Engst married Ernst Purfurst on May 10, 1910 in Harris County, Texas



**Herman and Wilhelmina (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr. Family – 1909**

**Left to Right**

**Standing: August Peter Engst, Herman Engst, Jr., Gustav ‘Gus’ John Engst**

**Seated: Anna Engst, Emma Engst**

The 1910 census finds Herman and Jennie (Courvisier) Engst, Jr. living in Tom Green County, Texas. Herman is listed at age 21 and Jennie as age 23. That stated they had been married two months. Living with them was Herman's brother, Gus J. Engst, age 18. Also living with them was Jennie's mother, Emilie Prodhon, her mother's married name from her second marriage. Emilie was age 63 and was born in Switzerland. She stated that three children had been born to her of which two were yet alive. The 1920 census now finds Herman and Jennie Engst, Jr. living in Bessie, Washita County, Oklahoma. Herman is listed as age 30 and Jennie as age 33. Their children are Paul Engst, Maggie Engst, Alfred Engst, and Mable Engst. The children were all born in Texas. Still living with them was Jennie's mother, Emilie Prodhon. In the 1930 census Herman Engst, Jr., age 41, is now a widower with an additional child, Jessie Engst. Still living with Herman was his mother-in-law, Emilie Prodhon, age 74, born August 04, 1857 in Aubbone, Canton de Vaud, Switzerland. Herman said his parents were born in Berlin, Germany. Jennie, the daughter of Antone and Emilie (Favre) Courvisier Sr., was born February 08, 1885 in Texas and died about 1925 in Oklahoma. Herman, the son of Herman and Wilhelmine (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr. was born February 28, 1889 in Taylor, Williamson County, Texas and died in Arizona.

The April 1910 census finds Antone and Emma (Engst) Courvisier, Jr. living in Runnels County, Texas. They had no children and stated they had been married less than a year. Antone is listed as age 29 and Emma as age 21. Living with them were Emma's foster parents, Joseph and Henrietta Faulk. Joseph was age 72 and Henrietta was age 70. The 1920 census finds Antone and Emma still living in Runnels County, Texas. Antone is listed as age 39 and Emma as age 30. They now have four children: Lena Courvisier, Lydia Courvisier, Willie Courvisier and Eddie Courvisier. The 1930 census finds them still

in Runnels County, Texas. Antone is age 49 and Emma age 41. They now with three additional children: Johnnie Courvisier, Ruth Courvisier and Frank Courvisier. They indicate that Antone married at age 27 and Emma married at age 21. Antone, the son of Antone and Emilie (Favre) Courvisier, Sr., was born December 18, 1880 in Switzerland and immigrated in 1882. He died October 26, 1952 in Ballinger, Runnels County, Texas. Emma, the daughter of Herman and Wilhelmine (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr., was born February 28, 1889 in Taylor, Williamson County, Texas. She died July 19, 1959 in Ballinger, Runnels County, Texas. They both were interred in Evergreen Cemetery, Runnels County, Texas.

In a family history later written by his daughter, Peter Engst was said to have arrived in the Canadian Province of Alberta in the fall of 1913. He accompanied friends Mr. & Mrs. Jake Johnson from Texas. It was initially planned that his brother Gus was to join him on the trip but they failed to meet prior to Peter's departure. It was in Alberta, Canada that Peter married Elizabeth Friesen in 1914 and, on a farm near the town of Provost, raised two children: son Leo Clarence Engst who was born about 1916 and daughter Irene Engst who remained unmarried. Son Leo and his wife Lillian had three children: Elmer Engst, Leonard Engst and Allen Engst. Lillian died 1961 in Provost, Province of Alberta, Canada. After her death Peter, remained in Provost until 1971 at which time he moved to Penticton, Province of British Columbia, Canada to be near his children. Peter Engst the son of Herman and Wilhelmine (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr., was born August 12, 1890 in Taylor, Williamson County, Texas and died October 10, 1976 in Penticton, Okanagan-Similkameen, Province of British Columbia, Canada. He was interred in Lakeview Cemetery, Penticton, Okanagan-Similkameen, Province of British Columbia, Canada.

The 1920 census finds Gus John and Mary (Stout) Engst living in Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma. They were just recently married and are living with Mary's mother, Nora Stout, the widow of William Stout. Also in the household are Mary's siblings. Gus was using his middle name of John and is listed as age 25. Mary is listed at age 15. The subsequent 1930 census finds Gus and Mary Engst still living in Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma. Gus is listed as age 35 and Mary as age 25. Their children are Virginia Engst, Mary Engst and Gus Engst, Jr. The children were all born in Oklahoma. Mary, the daughter of William and Mary Stout, was born January 19, 1906 in Comanche County, Oklahoma and died August 25, 1993 in Ft Worth, Tarrant County, Texas. Gus, the son of Herman and Wilhelmine (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr., was born January 29, 1895 in Taylor, Williamson County, Texas and died April 23, 1933 in Lawton, Comanche County, Oklahoma.

As previously stated, Ernest Purfurst was a seaman on the German freighter *Inkula* when it departed Hamburg, Germany on January 23, 1910. On February 10, 1910, while berthed at the Port of Galveston, Texas, Ernst secretly left the ship and illegally entered America. He made his way to Houston, Texas where he lived for the remainder of his life. There, but ninety days later on May 10, 1910, Ernst would marry Anna Engst.

The 1910 census finds Anna Engst, age 22, in Ballinger, Runnels County Texas, She was working as a servant in the residence of Alfred and Emma Doose (? sp). The 1920 census finds Ernest and Anna Purfurst living in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Ernest indicated that he had immigrated in 1910 and had petitioned the court for citizenship in 1918. He was still considered an alien thus, by marrying Ernest, Anna lost her American citizenship and was designated as an alien on the census record. The census indicated that Ernest was age 35 and Anna was age 32. Their children were Henry Purfurst, Arthur Purfurst, Otto Purfurst and Agnes Purfurst

The 1930 census finds Ernest and Anna Purfurst still living in Houston, Texas. They stated that Ernest married at age 25 and Anna married at age 23. They now have two additional children: Gertrude Purfurst and Ernst Purfurst, Jr.

As an illegal alien, Ernest Purfurst may have felt that he would be less apt to be expelled if he was married to an American citizen. He may have even thought that the marriage brought with it automatic citizenship for himself.

In reality it caused Anna Engst to lose hers.

The Citizen Act of March 2, 1907 prescribed that “any American woman who marries a foreigner shall take the nationality of her husband”. By virtue of her 1910 marriage to alien Ernest, Anna lost her American citizenship and became a German national. She would remain in that status for the next 27 years of her life.

The 1907 law allowed an alien's wife to regain her U.S. Citizenship if her husband became naturalized but, as the circumstances surrounding Ernst's citizenship application unfolded, that was not to be the case for Anna.

The 1907 Act also stated that the once the marital relationship was “terminated” the woman could regain her American citizenship; however, the mechanism for regaining citizenship, within the provisions of that law, were not provided. Although the Citizenship Act of 1922 revoked this 1907 loss-of-citizenship provision, it specifically stated “citizenship lost under the 1907 act was not restored”.

Ernest's death on March 20, 1935 caused "termination" of their marriage and thus satisfied the termination provisions of the citizenship law. It was not, however, until June 25, 1936 that Congress provided the mechanism for a woman to regain citizenship: a simple Oath of Allegiance to the United States. In the U.S. District Court of Houston on January 28, 1937 Anna took her oath, “renounced her allegiance to the German Reich” and regained her citizenship; almost 27 years after losing it. As part of the certification process, she presented her Taylor, Texas baptism certificate, her marriage certificate and the Harris County probate of the will of the late Ernst Purfurst.

Aliens interested in becoming citizens had a specified time period in which to complete the naturalization process. If they did not comply they had to start all over again. There were two steps. The Declaration of Intention was the first step and generally initiated by the alien soon after arrival. On these forms the immigrant named the port, date and vessel of arrival. A copy of the form was forwarded to the appropriate port to verify the legal admission of the applicant. This check was to prevent ineligible aliens from becoming citizens and also to prevent more than one person from using the same arrival record. If a record of immigration was found, a Certificate of Arrival was issued which would be filed with subsequent citizenship papers.

Not less than 2, nor more than 7 years after the date the original declaration was made, and after having lived in the United States for at least 5 years, the alien may file a Petition for Naturalization. If the petition was not filed within the 7-year period, it was necessary to file a new Declaration of Intention and wait at least another 2 years thereafter before filing the Petition for Naturalization.

Ernest Purfurst submitted his Declaration Of Intention (for citizenship) in the U.S. District Court of Houston on June 16, 1919. On this form he stated he was born in Neustadt, Germany on June 19, 1884 and immigrated from Hamburg, Germany aboard vessel *Inkula*, arriving at the port of Galveston, Texas on February 6, 1910. He described his current occupation as Ice Dealer, residing at 146 Blanch Street, Houston with wife Anna who was born in Tylor, Williamson County, Texas.

The Army Emergency Increase Act of May 18, 1917 authorized the Military Draft, including all male citizens or male persons who had declared their intention to become citizens. Eligibility was between the ages of 21 and 30. Volunteers between the ages of 18 and 40 were accepted. (Note: Ernst was age 33 at this time). The Army Appropriations Act of July 1918 established procedures for the registration of aliens for military service and stated that any that refuses to do so “shall be subject to all penalties”. The Act also stated, however, that an alien may be relieved of his liability to military service by withdrawing his Intention to become a citizen and thusly cancel his declaration to become an American citizen. To do so, however, “he shall forever be debarred (prohibited) from becoming a citizen of the U.S.”

On December 11, 1922 Ernest submitted his Petition for Naturalization to the U.S. District Court of Houston. Accompanying the Petition was his Certificate of Arrival, issued by the Naturalization service in San Antonio, Texas. The form stated that he arrived at Galveston, Texas aboard the vessel S/S *Inkula* on February 10, 1910, and “entered without inspection, deserting seaman”. Ernest stated that his current occupation was now a carpenter and that he resided at 225 Grace Street, Houston. In addition to repeating those facts contained on his Declaration Of Intention he stated that, at that time, he and wife Anna had four children:

- (1) Henry who was born March 4, 1914 in Sugarland, Texas (Harris County)
- (2) Arthur who was born April 2, 1915 in Ballinger, Texas (Runnels County)
- (3) Otto who was born February 8, 1917 in Houston, Texas (Harris County)
- (4) Agnes who was born April 8, 1918 in Houston, Texas (Harris County)

On November 7, 1923 the courts “dismissed without prejudice” his Petition (for citizenship) and granted him the right to withdraw his Declaration of Intention. The court stated “the Petitioner claimed exemption from Military Service on account of his alienage”. Ernst thusly had chosen not to be being placed into military action against his homeland.

Author's Comment: Elsewhere in this volume will be found a listing of known Purfürst family members who were serving in the Germany military at that time of World War One; included were numerous from Ernest's previous home town in Germany.

On June 15, 1927 Ernest re-submitted his Declaration of Intention. He would have had to wait at least two years before re-submitting his Petition for Naturalization. This was done despite the fact that The Act of 1918 appeared to have prevented Ernst from ever obtaining citizenship because of his claim for military exemption. There is no indication that he ever did obtain citizenship prior to his death.

1. Ernst Purfürst, Sr., the son of Carl and Auguste (Muller) Purfürst was born June 13, 1884 in Neustadt, Germany and died March 20, 1935 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Anna, the daughter of Herman and Wilhelmine (Hassendorf) Engst, Sr. was born October 08, 1887 in Williamson County, Texas and died September 01, 1967 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. They were both interred in the Forest Park Cemetery, Houston, Harris County, Texas. They had six children: Henry Gus Purfürst, Arthur William Purfürst, Otto Paul Purfürst, Agnes Helen Purfürst, Gertrude Anna Purfürst and Ernest Herbert Frederick Purfürst.

1.1. Ernest and Anna's Purfürst's first child, Henry Gus Purfürst, was born March 4, 1914 in Sugar Land, Harris County, Texas. On November 6, 1938 in Houston, Harris County, Texas he would marry Thelma Elizabeth Fisher. The daughter of Henry Fisher and Birdie Alice Spence, she was born April 18, 1918 in Bellville, Austin County, Texas. Henry died December 25, 1987 In Houston, Harris County, Texas. He was interred in Forest Park Lawndale Cemetery,

Houston, Harris County, Texas. They had three children: Linda Darlene Purfurst, Beverly Anna Purfurst and Carl Arthur Purfurst.

1.1.1. Linda Darlene Purfurst married Roger LaMont Peterson and had children Daniel Roger Peterson and Vicki Lynn Peterson

1.1.2. Beverly Anna Purfurst married Scott Montgomery, III and had children Scott Montgomery, IV and Brent Montgomery.

1.1.3. Carl Arthur Purfurst married Lucille Marie East and had children Tish Ann Purfurst and Jana Lynne Purfurst.

2. Ernest and Anna's Purfurst's second child, Arthur William Purfurst, was born April 2, 1915 in Ballinger, Runnels County, Texas. On March 25, 1951 in Houston, Texas he married Mary Francis Jared. The daughter of Augustus Price and Genie Hayes she was born July 1, 1920 in Commerce, Hunt County, Texas. Arthur died July 25, 2000 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. He was interred at Forest Park Cemetery, Lawndale, Houston, Harris County, Texas. They had one daughter: Shirley D Purfurst.

2.1. Shirley D Purfurst married Kenneth Lamar Jennings and had children Jason Nicolas Jennings and David Alan Jennings.

3. Ernest and Anna Purfurst's third child, Otto Paul Purfurst, was born February 8, 1917 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. About 1940 in Houston, Harris County, Texas he married Lillie Wolfe. The daughter of Robert and Olive Wolfe, she was born October 22, 1916 in Mc Comb, Pike County, Mississippi. Otto died May 25, 1993 in Dayton, Liberty County, Texas. Lillie died November 08, 1974 in Baytown, Harris County, Texas. They had three children: Susan Elaine Brown, Jeanne Leola Brown and Margaret Fay Brown.

3.1. Susan Elaine Purfurst married James Melvin Brown and had children Walter Brown, James Brown, Curtis Brown, Michael Brown and Steven Brown.

3.2. Jeanne Leona Purfurst married Clifford Bernard Wolfe.

3.3. Margaret Fay Purfurst married Ronald Sterling Troxell and had children Troy Garrick Troxell and Jon Sterling Troxell.

4. Ernest and Anna's fourth child, Agnes Helen Purfurst, was born April 8, 1918 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. In March 1937 she married Woodrow Wilson Rivers. The son of Benjamin Franklin Rivers and Nonie B. Wilson, he was born September 16, 1917 in Shelby County, Texas. They had one daughter: Marlene Agnes Rivers.

4.1. Marlene Agnes Rivers married Wendell Nolan Foster and had children Dair Foster and Mindi Foster.

On August 10, 1946 in Houston, Harris County, Texas, Agnes Purfurst remarried to Joseph Claude Fatheree. The son of Claude O' Banion and Ira Dorothy Rice, he was born June 13, 1917 in Yoakum, DeWitt County, Texas. They had one daughter: Charlotte Jo Fatheree.

- 4.2. Charlotte Jo Fatheree married Robert Powell Haight and had a daughter Autumn Powell Haight.
5. Ernest and Anna Purfurst's fifth child, Gertrude Anna Purfurst, was born October 24, 1925 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. About 1944 she married Leonard Eugene Ard, Sr. who was born in Texas on May 11, 1919. Gertrude died December 12, 1978 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Leonard died July 27, 1980 in Hammond, Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana. They were interred in Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Houston, Harris County, Texas. They had three children: Kevin Ard, Leonard Eugene Ard, Jr. and Annette Lavonne Ard.
  - 5.1. Kevin Ard
  - 5.2. Leonard Eugene Ard, Jr
  - 5.3. Annette Lavonne Ard married Jerry L. Snelson.
6. Ernest and Anna Purfurst's sixth child, Ernest Herbert Frederick Purfurst, was born November 12, 1926 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. On February 25, 1966 in Houston, Harris County, Texas he married Joy S. Waldrop who was born January 30, 1932 in Beaumont, Jefferson County, Texas. Ernest died September 6, 2000 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. They had one son: Eric Downs Purfurst.
  - 6.1. Eric Downs Purfurst married Cynthia Marie Naples.

On January 1, 1930 Ernest and Anna Purfurst sponsored the immigration from Germany, Ernest's niece, Gertrude Elsa Purfürst. The daughter of Ernest's brother, Heinrich Wilhelm August Purfürst (1882-1965) and Corona Arminia Martha Haupt (1889-1968), she was born January 4, 1907 in Neustadt an der Orla, Germany.

On August 14, 1931 in Houston, Harris County, Texas Gertrude Purfurst married Vernard (Bernard) Wilhelm Ufer. He was born on August 6, 1901 in Wallenfels, Germany. Gertrude died April 18, 1976 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Vernard died September 26, 1956 in Houston, Harris County, Texas. They were interred in Resthaven Cemetery, Houston, Texas. They had sons Claus Dieter Ufer and Norman Bernard Ufer.