

Antonia (nee EIBEN) MOENICH

Born: 15 May 1881 – Ober-Metzenseifen, Austria-Hungary
Married: 25 March 1913 – St. Boniface Church, Cleveland, Ohio, USA
To: John MOENICH, also of Ober-Metzenseifen
Died: 9 June 1961 – Chicago, Illinois, USA
Buried: Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Worth, Illinois

Submitted by Barbara (nee WINDAUER) Wolgast

The following was told to Antonia's youngest daughter Eleanor in September 1977 as she was having lunch with her father. She asked him to tell some details of her (deceased) mother's life as he remembered hearing them. Interspersed are also some memories of their middle daughter Bernardine, my mother.

When Antonia's mother died in 1890, her father remarried. Her stepmother Elizabeth had three sons. Two of them, Philip and Albert, were both deaf and mute (as children). It was said that the two were sitting together as babies when the chair they were in tipped backwards. Their heads struck the floor. They could not speak or hear after that. They were sent to school and learned to read lips and reply, speaking in Hungarian.

Because Antonia's stepmother was quite unkind to her, she came to the United States in 1897 when she was 16 years old. She stayed with an aunt and uncle, Anna Maria and Casper Eiben, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for a while before she went to work for a very wealthy Jewish family by the name of Nusser. She was their cook and household helper. Working for them helped Antonia learn the English language. From the Nusser family, Antonia got the recipe for the Hazelnut Torte Cake which her family continues to enjoy.

However, Antonia developed typhoid fever and was in very poor health, causing her to lose all her hair. Her doctor suggested that she take the longest boat trip back to Europe to regain her health, which she did. By the time the ship was in the middle of the ocean, she threw all of her medication overboard.

When she returned to Metzenseifen, she was petitioned to serve as a midwife for the area. The local government sent her to school in Budapest, Hungary to become a midwife. She studied there for approximately one year. All her expenses were paid. As part of her contract, she was committed to serve for five years in the town of Metzenseifen.

Antonia not only delivered babies in their village, but also in Lucia which was about an hour's walk from Metzenseifen. Many times she had to stay quite late. One night, on her way home, a shepherd's dogs attacked her and almost tore her to pieces. When the shepherd heard her screams, he whistled and the dogs left her. Antonia also had to take care of the gypsies on the outskirts of town, delivering their babies.

Although there was a doctor serving both towns, he would not go for the births except if a woman was in danger. The worst case occurred when a woman was a bleeder. The mother called the midwife, but the young woman bled to death because her mother failed to watch her. If the mother would have watched her, the young woman would not have died. The mother buried the afterbirth and then called the doctor after it was too late. Antonia was later exonerated of the blame for the death. During the five years of her service, Antonia delivered about 47 babies.

During his one (John Moenich's) visit from Cleveland to Ober-Metzenseifen, he became acquainted with Antonia. After her contract as midwife was completed, he (John) asked her to marry him. He returned to the United States in 1912. Antonia came in 1913 and stayed with his sister Mary (nee Moenich) and her husband George Schuerger. John and Antonia were married on March 25, 1913 at St. Boniface Catholic Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

After their marriage, they moved to Chicago. They rented a cottage at 11306 Langley Avenue in the Pullman area from the Bucholtz Family. While living there, Antonia also went to night school during the first year of their marriage. Then, while doing some house cleaning, she fell from a ladder, broke her wrist and could not continue with her schooling. Long hobble skirts were worn in those days and that is what caused the accident. They lived on Langley Avenue for five years and during that time their three daughters (Julia, Bernardine and Eleanor) were born.

In October, 1918, they bought a two-flat house on 117th street in the Roseland area of Chicago. Their son John was born there. During the time that Antonia's children were young, her step-brothers corresponded with her and she kept pictures of them in her home.

Antonia was a wonderful mother and homemaker and was completely devoted to her family. She died on June 9, 1961 of pneumonia. At that time, she had eighteen grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

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