

John MOENICH

Born: 28 August 1883 – Ober-Metzenseifen, Austria-Hungary
Married: 25 March 1913 – St. Boniface Church, Cleveland, Ohio, USA
To: Antonia EIBEN, also of Ober-Metzenseifen
Died: 27 November 1979 – Chicago, Illinois, USA
Buried: Holy Sepulchre Cemetery, Worth, Illinois

Submitted by Barbara (nee WINDAUER) Wolgast

The following was told to John's youngest daughter Eleanor while she was having lunch with her father in September, 1977. She asked him to tell some details of his life.

In 1896, when John was about thirteen years old, his mother (Juliana nee Schuerger) died at the age of 32 years. His father Ferdinand sent him to Ócsárd, which was about 300 miles away, to serve a five-year apprenticeship in a general store. As payment, he was given food, clothing and shelter. Eventually, he worked up to the position of store clerk. During the time John was serving his apprenticeship, Ferdinand, a blacksmith, remarried. He left the general store in 1901 when he was eighteen years old.

When John returned to Metzenseifen, he lived, for a while, with his grandmother. (It is unclear where his father was at this time. It is known that Ferdinand died in 1916 at the age of 55.)

John's grandmother thought it might be best if he traveled to the United States to visit some of his aunts. In 1902, when he was nineteen years old, he took some money out of the bank, bought his ticket, and sailed to America, destined for Ohio. After arriving in Cleveland, he stayed with the Gedeon family who were related to John's mother. He remained in Cleveland for one year, worked and also attended night school. He found a job working for Mr. Theodor Kundtz who had a factory that manufactured sewing machine tables for the White Sewing Machine Company. There he earned seven dollars and fifty cents a week working ten hour days at fifteen cents per hour.

After one year, John traveled to Chicago and stayed with his aunt Lottie (Charlotte) Schuerger. He found a job working for the Pullman Sleeping Car Company making eighteen cents an hour while working an eight hour day. He earned approximately seven dollars and twenty cents a week. Out of his earnings, he paid three dollars and fifty cents for room and board at a Pullman boarding house where he had his own room. John worked at the Pullman Shops for ten years as a painter and refinisher before returning to Metzenseifen for a visit. According to his Certificate of Naturalization, John became a United States citizen on September 19, 1908.

During his visit in Metzenseifen in 1912, he became acquainted with Antonia Eiben and courted her. He returned to America a while later in 1912. Antonia followed in 1913 staying with John's sister Mary and her husband George Schuerger. John and Antonia were married on March 25, 1913 at St. Boniface Church in Cleveland, Ohio.

After their marriage, the couple moved to Chicago and rented a cottage in the Pullman area from the Bucholtz family at 11306 Langley Avenue where they lived for five years. This is where their three daughters – Julia, Bernardine and Eleanor – were born. In 1918, the family moved to 117th Street in the Roseland area of Chicago where John bought a two-flat home for \$6,000. Their son John was born there about a year later.

It is unclear when John started to work for the Rock Island Railroad, but he worked there as a painter, refinishing the interior of their cars until the Depression Years. Through the Depression, he was without steady employment for approximately four or five years. To provide for his family, he did odd jobs for the church and for friends.

After the Depression, John found work with the Chicago Transit Authority. When the CTA shops were moved to Skokie, Illinois, John made the four-hour round-trip each working day from their home in Roseland rather than uproot the family. One day, he narrowly missed being burned to death when a tanker truck plowed into a CTA streetcar killing all passengers within. His streetcar had been the last one passing that point prior to the accident.

John retired in 1950 at the age of 67. Then, in 1975, the family decided to sell the home on 117th Street. He moved to the home of his daughter Eleanor and her husband Tom Kinney in the Chicago suburb of Dolton. He was able to enjoy almost 30 years of retirement before he died in 1979 at the age of 96. During his lifetime, he worked very hard and was completely devoted to his wife and family. At the time of his death, he had 18 grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren.

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