

The Dewig Family
By Cheryl Herrmann
June 2026

In southern Indiana, genealogy is rarely just one family. It was through research on the Mesker name that a marriage connection was made with the Dewig family, revealing another branch of early German Catholic settlers in southern Indiana.

German Catholic settlers played a major role in shaping southern Indiana during the nineteenth century, especially in counties such as Vanderburgh, Gibson, Dubois, Spencer, Perry, and Knox. Families like the Dewigs, Meskers, Laugels, Ziliaks, and Tenbarges were part of a much larger migration pattern that transformed the region into one of the strongest German Catholic settlements in the Midwest. These settlers preserved German language and customs for generations.

Catholic church records in Speyer, Germany, show that the family of Claudius Dewig lived in the villages of Ruchheim and Fußgönheim.

Ruchheim, once a small farming community, is now the westernmost suburb of Ludwigshafen am Rhein in the modern German state of Rhineland-Palatinate. Today, its population has grown to approximately 6,000 residents, but in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it was a quiet agricultural village.

It was there in Ruchheim, on 2 February 1791, that Claudius “Claudy” Dewig was born. He learned the trade of weaving, a respected and necessary profession in his time.



At age 22, Claudy married Anna Margaret Schmidt, who was commonly known as Margaret. Together they raised a large family of nine children:

- Johann (1815–?),
- Anna Maria (1817–?),
- Elizabeth (1820–1872),
- Frederick (1820–1899),
- Anna Margaret (1825–1868),
- Johann (1827–1837),
- Matthew (1829–1898),
- Joseph (1832–1920), and
- Johann (1835–?).

Note: Three sons named Johann reflects the custom of reusing cherished family names after the loss of a child.

1 8 1 7

Nomina Baptizatorum in Ecclesia parochiali Eppstein. ad. S. Legeriac. M. a. G. L. H. pt. parochia

| | | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|
| Ruchheim | 9 na April. hor. 12. merid. | 10ma episd. hor. 2. pomerid. | Anna Maria Dewig fil. legit. | Claudius Dewig, lini-tor, & Margaretha, nata Schmitt, Auef & Conjuges | Anna Maria Schmitt, Soluta, soror matris proij. |
|----------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|

Baptism record for Anna Maria Dewig
 Gender: Female
 Baptism Date: 10 Apr 1817
 Baptism Place: Katholisch, Eppstein, Pfalz, Bavaria
 Father: Claudius Dewig; Mother: Margaretha Schmitt
 Family History Library Film Number: 368518

| Namen und Vornamen | Daten der Akten | | | Natur der Akten und Bemerkungen. |
|------------------------|-----------------|----------|-----|--|
| | Jahr | Monat | Tag | |
| Dewig, Elisabeth | 1820 | December | 4 | Geburtsakt N. 25 |
| Dewig, Friedrich | 1822 | August | 21 | Geburtsakt N. 26 |
| Dewig, Anna Margaretha | 1825 | August | 13 | Geburtsakt N. 38 |
| Dewig, Johann | 1827 | Marsch | 13 | Geburtsakt N. 11 |
| | 1837 | februar | 26 | Taufakt N. 73 |
| Dewig, Mathias | 1829 | februar | 15 | Geburtsakt N. 6 |
| Dewig, Joseph | 1832 | Januar | 15 | Geburtsakt N. 1 |

Dewig Family Index
in Ruchheim, Pfalz, Bavaria
Church records.

- * Elizabeth Dewig
b. 4 Dec 1820
- * Frederick Dewig
b. 23 Aug 1822
- * Anna Margaretha Dewig
b. 13 Aug 1825
- * Johann Dewig
b: 13 March 1827
d: 26 Feb 1837
- * Matthew Dewig
b: 15 Feb 1829
- * Joseph Dewig
b. 15 Jan 1832

Like many German Catholic families of the time, Claudy and Margaret sought greater opportunity in America. In 1840, they immigrated with five of their children, departing from Le Havre, France, aboard the ship *Moscow* and arriving in New York on 22 June 1840.

Their reasons for emigrating were familiar:

- limited land and inheritance opportunities in Germany
- economic hardship for farming and weaving families
- religious and cultural support through established Catholic communities in America
- the opportunity to own land, which was difficult for many in Europe.

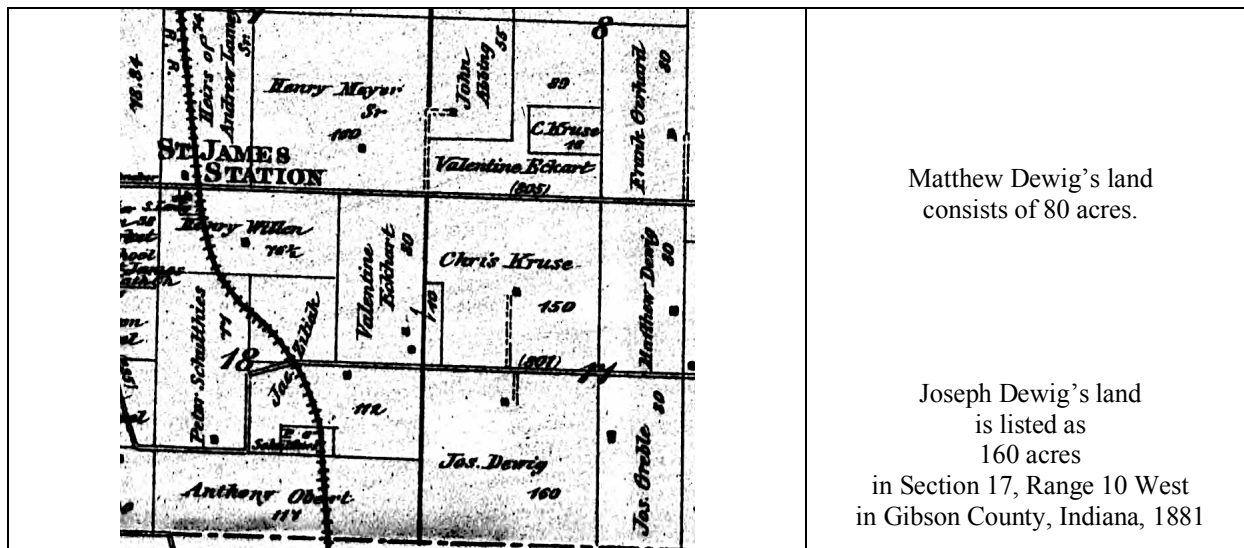
Passenger Ship List for Claudius Dewig family: Departed from Havre on Ship Moscow,
Arrived in District of New York – New York Port, on 22 June 1840.

| NAMES. | AGE. | Name | Age |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|-----|
| | Yours. 1840 | | |
| Claudius Dewig | 48 | Claudius Dewig | 48 |
| Margaret | 49 | Margaret | 49 |
| Elizabeth | 19 | Elizabeth | 19 |
| Fred | 17 | Fred | 17 |
| Anna | 15 | Anna | 15 |
| Mathew | 11 | Mathew | 11 |
| Joseph | 8 | Joseph | 8 |

Although no naturalization records have been located for the Dewig family in Vanderburgh or Gibson Counties, later census records provide clues. The 1900 and 1910 Federal Census entries for their son Joseph Dewig indicate that he was a naturalized citizen. This suggests that the family may have completed the naturalization process either during their journey west from New York or in Indiana, sometime between their arrival in 1840 and their first land purchase in 1845.

For families like the Dewig family, land ownership was especially important. Owning a farm meant independence, stability, and a future for their children. Land ownership was an important goal for immigrant families, and the Dewig family was no exception. Their earliest record in Indiana appears in Vanderburgh County land purchases. In 1845, Frederick Dewig purchased two parcels of forty acres each in Range 11 West, Township 5 South, Sections 15 and 22. In 1851, Claudy purchased eighty acres of nearby farmland in Section 2. The family continued to acquire more land through 1888, eventually holding a total of 560 acres in Vanderburgh County. Meanwhile, Joseph purchased 160 acres and Matthew purchased 80 acres in neighboring Gibson County.

One of Frederick Dewig’s land ownership is listed as 38 3/4 acres in Section 4, Range 10 West Township 7 in Knight Township, Vanderburgh County, Indiana, 1881



Marriage records from 1848 to 1856 demonstrates the family putting down deep roots in southern Indiana.

Frederick Dewig married Margaret Freihaut in 1849 at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Vanderburgh County.

Anna Margaret Dewig married Andrew Laugel in May 1848 in Vanderburgh County.

Matthew Dewig married Catherine Heitzman in September 1855 in Gibson County.

Joseph Dewig married Theresia Hoffman in November 1856 in Gibson County.

The 1860 Federal Census for Gibson County reveals that Claudy and Margaret had moved from Vanderburgh County to Gibson County, where they lived next door to their son Matthew. Both men were listed as farmers. Frederick and his wife Margaret were farming in Knight Township, Vanderburgh County, with their five children. Anna Margaret and her husband Andrew Laugel, who worked as a master cooper, were living in Vincennes, Knox County, with their five children. Joseph and Theresia were also farming in Gibson County.

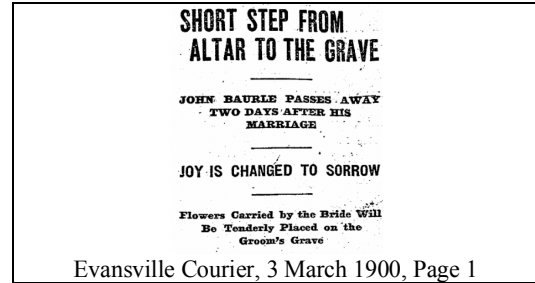
The family had spread across the region, but their bonds remained close. Many families maintained traditions such as, large Catholic feast-day celebrations, rosary devotion and home altars, parish picnics and church festivals, strong vocations to priesthood and religious life and multi-generational farming.

Their Catholic faith remained the center of their lives. Claudy and Margaret's devotion not only shaped their marriage, but generations of descendants. Remarkably, eleven members of the family entered religious life—nine nuns and two priests—a lasting tribute to the strength of their faith and devotion. Claudy and Margaret lived long enough to enjoy the company of their children and many grandchildren in many celebrations.

Newspaper articles from Indiana provide vivid glimpses into the close-knit Dewig family and their community life. In 1885, the *Evansville Journal* reported that two young boys accidentally shot and killed a cow while hunting game in Knight Township. The cow belonged to Frederick Dewig. The paper noted: "Mr. Dewig came to the city and issued warrants for their arrest, charging them with unlawful trespass on his property and killing his stock." The boys were fined five dollars each, along with court costs.

Not all news was joyful.

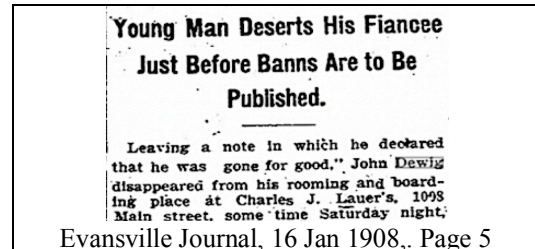
In 1900, Miss Veronica Dewig experienced great sorrow when her husband, John Baurle, died from kidney trouble only two days after their wedding, leaving her newly widowed and heartbroken.



Family celebrations were often recorded as well. In 1907, the *Evansville Courier* described a surprise gathering in Haubstadt honoring Matthew and Mary Dewig on their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, noting that “music and games were enjoyed.” The same paper later reported on the ninetieth birthday celebration of Mrs. Catherine Dewig, wife of Matthew. At her home near Haubstadt, she was surprised by children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and friends. “The birthday cake, lighted with ninety candles, decorated the table where a basket dinner was served.”

Some stories carried a touch of mystery.

In 1908, the *Evansville Journal* told the curious story of John Dewig, who disappeared from his boarding house, leaving behind a note declaring that “he was gone for good.” His fiancée was distraught, as their wedding plans had already been made. John, it turned out, had fled all the way to California.



In 1917, the *Evansville Courier* reported that Josephine and Olga Dewig had returned from Camp Taylor after spending the weekend visiting their brother at the military training camp.

The Dewig family also appeared frequently in business advertisements. Lawrence Dewig, of Dewig & Lutz, operated the Ever-Ready Garage on New Harmony and Cynthia Road, where Monroe automobiles were sold.



Another well-known family enterprise was Dewig Meats in Haubstadt, Indiana. Founded in 1916 by three Dewig brothers (Anton, Joseph and John), the business became a lasting family institution. Today, Dewig Brothers Meat Packing remains family-owned and operated by the third generation of Dewig meat processors. Their retail store includes a 12,000-square-foot meat market, custom-cut orders, butchering, and processing services. Their long-standing motto reflects their commitment to service: “The customer is always right.”

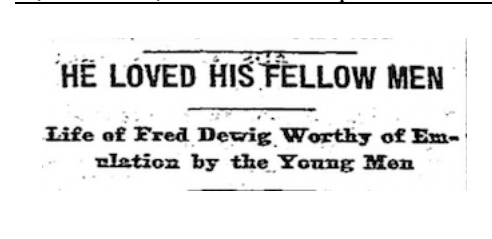


Together Claudy and Margaret had raised not only nine children, but the foundation of a lasting family legacy. Claudy died on 14 September 1865 in Haubstadt, Gibson County, Indiana, at the age of 74. He was buried two days later, on 16 September 1865, in St. James Cemetery in Haubstadt. Margaret passed away three years later, in 1868, also in Gibson County, and she too was laid to rest at St. James Cemetery.

Their descendants became respected farmers, business owners, craftsman, religious leaders – all successful and respected members of their communities, as reflected in newspaper stories and their obituaries.

Frederick and Margaret Dewig raised a large family of nine children: Dorothy, Francis Xavier, Margaret Dorothy, Mary Magdalena, George, Elizabeth Anna, Dorothy Rose, Matthew, and John Philip.

Frederick's obituary in the Evansville Courier described him as "one of the oldest and best known men in the city and hundreds mourned his death. His life was worthy of emulation and not a spot can be found upon his record. His religion was charity and he believed that the golden rule should be obeyed." Another newspaper noted that "his death was a result of a stroke of paralysis which he suffered while sitting in his home reading a newspaper. He never regained consciousness from this time until death claimed him."



Anna Margaret and Andrew Laugel of Vincennes had seven children: Joseph, Margaret, Giles Anthony, Louise, Katherine, Charles, and Matthew. Their descendants later spread throughout Indiana and across the United States—to Florida, Colorado, Michigan, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, and South Dakota—continuing the immigrant tradition of seeking opportunity in new places.

Matthew and Catherine Dewig had seven children. Their daughters Catherine, Josephine, and Henrietta married and continued the family legacy forward, though not the Dewig surname. Catherine married Peter Henry Reising; Josephine married Lawrence Samuel Ziliak; and Henrietta married William John Tenberge.

Joseph and Theresia Dewig also raised seven children: Matthew, Mary Anne, Joseph Henry, Adam, Margaret, Frank William, and George John. Many descendants of this branch remain deeply rooted in Gibson County today.

The journey began in the small villages of Germany, crossed the Atlantic on a crowded immigrant ship, and took root in Indiana farmland. Through faith, hard work, and love, the Dewig family built a legacy that still endures.

As you can see, often, researching one surname—like Mesker—leads directly another fascinating story of allied families through marriage, sponsorships, and neighboring farms, exactly as happened with the Dewig family.

Dewig Family – First Three Generations in Indiana

Claudius Dewig (1791 - 1865) & Anna Margaret Schmidt (1789 - 1868)
| **Johann Dewig** (1815 -)
| **Anna Maria Dewig** (1817 -)
| **Elizabeth Dewig*** (1820 - 1872) & Henry Muller
| **Elizabeth Dewig*** (1820 - 1872) & John Bernds
| **Elizabeth Dewig*** (1820 - 1872) & Henry Helmich
| **Frederick Dewig*** (1822 - 1899) & Margaret Freihaut (1832 - 1888)
| | **Dorothy Dewig** (1850 - 1851)
| | **Francis Xavier Dewig** (1852 - 1929) & Elizabeth Bergwitz (1862 - 1946)
| | **Margaret Dorothy Dewig** (1854 - 1932) & Henry John Helmich (1832 - 1911)
| | **Mary Magdalena Dewig** (1855 - 1932) & Peter Haag (1847 - 1927)
| | **George Dewig** (1857 - 1913) & Anna Ruettinger (1861 - 1928)
| | **Elizabeth Anna Dewig*** (1859 - 1928) & Peter Aloysius Wolf (1850 - 1883)
| | **Elizabeth Anna Dewig*** (1859 - 1928) & Leonard William Mayer (1862 - 1946)
| | **Dorothy Rose Dewig*** (1860 - 1930) & Philip John Bergwitz (1852 - 1901)
| | **Dorothy Rose Dewig*** (1860 - 1930) & Nickolas Litzelmann (1851 - 1924)
| | **Matthew Dewig** (1862 - 1875)
| | **John Philip Dewig** (1865 - 1942) & Aurelia Moutoux (1865 - 1960)
| **Frederick Dewig*** (1822 - 1899) & Franziska Effinger (1831 - 1908)
| **Anna Margaret Dewig** (1825 - 1868) & Andrew Laugel (1820 - 1901)
| | **Joseph Laugel** (1851 - 1881) & Matilda Klemm (~1853 - 1883)
| | **Margaret Laugel** (1853 - 1920)
| | **Giles Anthony Laugel** (1855 - 1935)
| | **Louise Laugel** (1857 - 1911)
| | **Katherine M Laugel** (1860 - 1930) & John P Ziliak (1859 - 1897)
| | **Charles Laugel*** (1862 - 1927) & Emma Beckman (1863 - 1886)
| | **Charles Laugel*** (1862 - 1927) & Anna Froelke (1864 - 1926)
| | **Matthew Laugel** (1864 - 1895) & Mary Catherine Thuis (1865 - 1941)
| **Johann Dewig** (1827 - 1837)
| **Matthew Dewig** (1829 - 1898) & Catherine Heitzmann (1839 - 1929)
| | **Mary Dewig** (~1860 -)
| | **Barbara H Dewig** (1862 - 1934)
| | **John Dewig** (~1865 -)
| | **Catherine M Dewig** (1867 - 1952) & Peter Henry Reising (1860 - 1930)
| | **Josephine Dewig** (1870 - 1934) & Lawrence Samuel Ziliak (1862 - 1926)
| | **Anna Dewig** (~1876 -)
| | **Henrietta Rose Dewig** (1880 - 1971) & William John Tenbarga (1882 - 1945)
| **Joseph Dewig** (1832 - 1920) & Theresia Hoffman (1834 - 1924)
| | **Matthew Dewig** (1857 - 1935) & Mary K Westhoefer (1864 - 1935)
| | **Mary Dewig** (1863 -)
| | **Joseph Henry Dewig** (1864 - 1894) & Anna M Weis (1867 - 1927)
| | **Adam G Dewig** (1866 - 1926)
| | **Margaret Dewig** (1868 - 1943) & John Becker (1860 - 1903)
| | **Frank William Joseph Dewig** (1876 - 1910) & Louisa Mary Farney (1880 -)
| | **George John Dewig** (1878 - 1971) & Sophia Kissel (1881 - 1954)
| **Johann Dewig** (1835 -)

The End