

Franz and Maria Niemeier
From Anröchte to America: A Sister's Courage, A Brother's Journey"

By Loretta Niemeier and Cheryl Herrmann
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Sometimes, you just get lucky.

The diary of Franz Niemeier (from Anröchte, born 13th October 1840), about his trip to America with his sister, Maria, remains in the hands of the family. Franz was a carpenter and Maria was a maid. The two young adults left their parents, Meinolph and Bernardina (Muensterman) Niggermeyer (the surname changed to Niemeyer and to Niemeier), and journeyed across the ocean with Evansville, Indiana, as their final destination.



Franz and Maria Niemeier

This remarkable diary, originally written in German and later translated to English, offers a deeply personal window into the journey of young emigrants in 1861. It captures both the uncertainty and determination that defined the immigrant experience. Beginning in the quiet German countryside and unfolding across railways, bustling port cities, and the vast Atlantic Ocean, the narrative reveals the courage required to navigate strict passport controls, the kindness of strangers, and the constant fear of being turned back. As the voyage continues, Franz records moments of wonder alongside tragedy — deaths at sea, violent storms, and glimpses of distant lands — culminating in the long-awaited sight of America.

Here is Franz' diary:

“On May 12 1861, at 3 a.m. we drove with Franz Rinsche from Anröchte. Joseph Killing came along and drove with us to Lippstadt. From Lippstadt to Rheda we were all alone and arrived at 9:45 a.m. in Rheda. Once we got to the train station our cases were unloaded and weighed and Maria had to show her passport immediately. She showed he passport and she pleaded this person to help her to take me along for one more station and the train conductor helped us as much as he could to get a ticket to Minden. But when we got to Minden, we had the greatest fear that they would send me back.

However, here everything went better than expected, too. Maria had her ticket to Bremen and so didn't need another one. When we got off the train, I stayed among all the people in the train station while Maria bought her a ticket to Wunsort and gave it to me. We did the same thing again in Wunsort. My sister bought a ticket to Bremen and gave it to me.

When we arrived in Bremen it was 10 p.m. I called Heinrich Meier once and then the publican was standing next to me. He brought me to his house where no one asked for passports anymore.

On the 14th at 3 p.m., the publican showed us the city with all its beautiful streets and buildings, which were up to 9 to 10 stories high, the city pond with 4 wild geese (which weren't wild anymore), 6 swans and 3 windmills, right in the middle of town which were erected high up on like the highest ... [one line missing in the copy)]... He came with us to our ship agent, Pokrantz.

At first he wanted to scare us, too, and asked for my passport as well. However, we told him he had known it for long. Franz Schulte had written that to him already, and he had sent us 2 ship contracts. He agreed that that was right, he had sent us 2 ship contracts, but there had to be 2 passports as well. Then we read in Pokrantz' notebook the letters which Schulte had written to him. There it was written publicly that I was in the same position as Carl Schulte. But not as bad as him, as I was only 18 years old.

"Well," he said, "then, but you are already older than 18, sure enough you are at the draft age."

I said, "no, I am 18 years of age."

"Right," he said, "then you will be back in time."

"Of course, I will be back," I said. That made him smile and handed us both our proper ship contract, as we had already paid our money and told Meier he should bring us back to him on Thursday.

When we had finished, Meier took us down to the river Weser where you could see at least 200 of those small steam boats, which transported all the cases and the luggage. One was just leaving and the bell rang, and the flag was hoisted on the boat. In the evening we went to a home and got dishes and cups and glasses, paillasse and pillows, all for 3 dollars.

Wednesday the 15th, we went to the big memorial Schulte had told us so much about and saw the king of Sweden, who was standing right in the middle of the market.

On the 17th at 5 a.m. we went on a small boat which lead to the port in Bremen with the steam boat. Instead of taking a few days as usual, our cases were loaded from the small boat onto a big one, almost straight away.

On the 18th at 4 a.m. another steam boat was tied to the front of our ship and pulled us some miles into the open sea up to the lighthouse which is built onto a rock surrounded by sea. In this lighthouse there lives a family and also 6 soldiers. These soldiers have to return those from the ships who have no passport, if the police telegraphs them so. On our ship there were certainly 58 men, at draft age who didn't have a passport, and were secretly brought onto our ship by a small boat on the 4th day. During the whole trip, no one asked me for my passport except our ship agent.

However, the agent just wanted to scare us. He was easily satisfied when I told him I would be back before I was 21. The steam boat left us at the light house and as we had no wind, our ship lay still until the 23rd of May, but by then we couldn't write any more letters. We didn't know anything about sea sickness at the point, but time was very long.

On the 23rd, the wind was strong and our ship moved in just a few hours, may miles into the sea. At that point, many got very sea sick, and had to throw up a lot, but I didn't feel anything except a slight headache all day.

Wednesday the 24th the ship lay still all day.

On May 26th, a child died on our ship because of diphtheria. The captain did whatever he could, gave the child medicine, but in vain. It died at 9 in the morning and was buried in the sea. Shortly after, there was a horrible storm and we thought we were doomed. The captain and seamen were tying up the sails when the winds changed and the weather eased off. In the afternoon, we could see land again for the first time. It was Scotland and a huge lighthouse in the sea called Rittri. High mountains near the coast of England could be seen, too, but were out of sight again shortly after.

On the first of June at 2 a.m., a baby was born, but died at 4 a.m.

On the 15th of June again a boy, aged 7, died.

On 18th June at 3 a.m. again a boy, aged 5, died.

On June 20th we came near Greenland. It was still, very cold, and we saw 4 huge icebergs standing in the middle of the ocean, which don't melt all year long. We came very close to one. It was as big as the whole of Anröchte and surely 80 feet high. The captain said that it was twice as big under water. In addition, you could see many big fish, and the captain threw his lance twice towards one near the ship, but missed each time.

On 5th July, a seaman, aged 20, died because of black fever.

On the 10th July, the youngest seaman wanted to get his dead colleague's dried clothes from the front of the ship, but he slipped and fell into the sea. Quickly they threw him a rope, which he could grip, and they had pulled him half way up when the strong waves in front of the ship pushed him back into the sea. He screamed for help, and the captain threw him his life-saver, a round ring made of cork. He was just one foot away from it when another wave stopped him from reaching it. Swiftly, they lowered a small boat, and 4 seamen jumped into it. At the same moment, he disappeared from our view. If he was too weak to swim or a shark got him, we don't know. Everyone cried for the nice young man. He was the son of a wine merchant from Bremen.

On the morning of the 18th July at 4 a.m., we could see something yellow. The steersman climbed up the mast and yelled, "Land!" Screams of joy followed. All the sick and lazy, who were still in bed, came up to the front deck wishing to see their new homeland. At 1 p.m., we could see many ships and steam boats in the harbor, and the captain flew a flag to signal that a pilot should come to inform us about the war in Baltimore. The same moment, they flew a flag on the other ship as well, and the pilot came to tell us that first the steamboat had to come to us, because the warship was in Baltimore and had to give us permission. At 9 p.m., the steam boat came to bring us the news that we could now get into Baltimore again, and that the railway was fixed up again as well. However, the war wasn't completely over yet.

On the 19th, at 2 p.m., another warship, which was from Veuger, came to us. The captains talked to each other, then the ship left again; and ours was still anchored because of poor winds.

On the 22nd July, we went ashore.

On the 23rd, we went to the rail agent to buy a ticket to Evansville. However, the best and cheapest train going directly to Evansville was broken, and so we could only get tickets to Cincinnati for \$7. The train left at 9 p.m. It went through mountains and valleys, and often uphill in the mountains. It was scary to look from the mountains down into the valleys. From time to time, you could see a house, also cities, and horses, cows, and pigs, just like home."

Through vivid detail and honest reflection, this diary preserves not only a physical journey, but an emotional passage toward hope, survival, and a new beginning.

A new beginning, just like the other families from Anröchte, Lippstadt or Soest areas:

Altstadt, Brugger, Brune, Frielinghausen, Funke, Goebel, Goedde, Kirchhoff, Koester, Muenstermann, Relleke, Schenk, Schulte, Schriek, Seipen, Sommer, Spieker and more who settled in southern Indiana.

Anröchte, now a municipality in the district of Soest, in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, is situated approximately 13 km (8 miles) south of Lippstadt and 15 km (9 miles) east of Soest. Neighboring municipalities are Bad Sassendorf, Erwitte, Rütthe, and Warstein.

 Location of Anröchte in Westphalia, Germany Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anröchte	In 1861, Anröchte was a quiet, deeply Catholic, and largely agrarian village in the Prussian Province of Westphalia. Situated in the Soest district on the edge of the Sauerland region, daily life was tied to traditional farming, localized trades, and the historic quarrying of the regional "Anröchter Stein" (greensand limestone). The village was defined by traditional timber-framed houses and anchored by the medieval Catholic St. Pankratius Church.	 St. Pankratius Church in Anröchte https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Stpankratius-anroechte.jpg
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During the 1860's German emigration to the United States was very high – in the thousands. The region around Anröchte, (in Westphalia, then part of Prussia) experienced a steady outmigration due to economic hardship, limited land for younger generations, political instability after the 1848 revolutions and the military conscription pressures (which Franz' diary clearly reflects).

Just like Franz and Maria Niemeier, many emigrants from this region traveled through Bremen. Often they traveled in family clusters or chain migrations — neighbors following earlier migrations. Franz identified Evansville as their destination, which indicates they were joining relatives or friends already there. Their parents were deceased; their father died in 1853, and their mother died in 1849. Some of the siblings remained in Germany. However, their younger brother, Anton, joined his siblings in America, by being a stowaway on a ship from Hamburg.

As this diary shows, some emigrants left without proper papers. Young men leaving at draft age, using efforts to avoid passport enforcement, or using networks (Schulte, Meier, agents) to navigate the system. Franz was part of a broader, semi-organized migration flow—not an isolated case.

Most immigrant journeys, from places like Anröchte, were never recorded in such clear, first hand detail. Most stories about the fears, dangers and sacrifices their immigrant ancestors had encountered were lost in time, told only in fragments – or not at all. That kind of connection is something most families never get to experience.

The family that still holds this diary isn't just "lucky"—they are the caretakers of something truly rare and irreplaceable.

A heartfelt thank you to Loretta Niemeier and the Niemeier family for generously sharing this diary and photos.

THOMAS M. NORRIS.
PREPARER OF CUSTOM HOUSE PAPERS.

District of Baltimore.

I, J. Bullerdiek Master of the *Ship Ferdinand*
of *Bremen* do solemnly, sincerely and truly swear that the
annexed List, subscribed with my name, contains, to the best of my knowledge and belief,
a just and true account or report of all the passengers who have been taken on board the
said *Ship* at *Bremen* or any other
foreign Port, or at sea, and brought in the said vessel into any District of the United States since
her departure from the said Port of *Bremen*.
Sworn to, this *22*
day of *July* 1861
Before me,
Wm. H. Hagan, Sec

Alien passengers landed at the Port of *Baltimore* from the *Bremen Ship Ferdinand* of which
J. Bullerdiek is Master, on the *20* day of *June* 1861, from *Bremen*

No.	NAME OF PASSENGER	AGE	COUNTRY OF BIRTH	LAST LEGAL RESIDENCE	COUNTRY CLAIMING ALLEGIANCE	OCCUPATION AND REMARKS
1	<i>first Cabin</i> <i>Honor Schner</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Perlach</i>	<i>Perlach</i>	<i>Perla</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
2	<i>Theresia</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>wife</i>
3	<i>Frank</i>	<i>1 1/2</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>son</i>
4	<i>Jacob Tager</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>Brachhausen</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Farmer</i>

	NAME OF PASSENGER	AGE	COUNTRY OF BIRTH	LAST LEGAL RESIDENCE	COUNTRY CLAIMING ALLEGIANCE	OCCUPATION AND REMARKS
243	<i>Ludo Alexander</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>Moringen</i>	<i>Walle</i>	<i>Baltimore</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
244	<i>Maria Hoffner</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>Washington</i>	<i>Lady</i>
245	<i>Carl Hoch</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>Mosbach</i>	<i>Mosbach</i>	<i>Baltimore</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
246	<i>Sophia</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>wife</i>
247	<i>Georg</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>son</i>
248	<i>Sybie</i>	<i>7 1/4</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>daughter</i>
249	<i>Franz Niemeyer</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>Arveth</i>	<i>Arveth</i>	<i>Evansville</i>	<i>Carpenter</i>
250	<i>Maria</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>maid</i>
251	<i>Paul Weber</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Schlitz</i>	<i>Schlitz</i>	<i>Baltimore</i>	<i>Farmer</i>
252	<i>Eva Heidenreich</i>	<i>50</i>	<i>Erblack</i>	<i>Erblack</i>	<i>remark</i>	<i>Lady</i>
253	<i>Anna</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>"</i>	<i>daughter</i>
	<i>Christina Smith</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>Prussia</i>	<i>Prussia</i>	<i>Philadelphia</i>	<i>Lady</i>

Franz and Maria Niemeyer are recorded as passengers 249 and 250.

Departing on 20 June 1861, from Bremen on Ship Ferdinand
and arriving in the Port of Baltimore on 22 Jul 1861, with Master Bullerdiek.

Source: The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Records of the US Customs Service, RG36; NAI Number: 2655153; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004; Record Group Number: 85; National Archives serial M255 Roll No 13 List 38.

Franz and Maria both married and their family line continues. That's another story!

The Niemeier Family

Meinolph Niggemeyer (1799 - 1853) & **Bernardina Muensterman** (1807 - 1849)
| **Josephina Henrietta Niggemeier** (1828 -)
| **Heinrich Joseph Niggemeier** (1830 - 1835)
| **Gertrud Elisabeth Niggemeier** (1833 - 1846)
| **Maria Francisca Niemeier** (1835 -)
| **Maria Christina Niemeier** (1838 - 1869) & **Franz Kirchoff** (1836 - 1870)
| | **Frank Kirchoff** (1866 - 1919) & **Elisabeth Rebstock** (1867 - 1916)
| | **Frances Bernardine Kirchoff** (1867 - 1957) & **Francis C Rusting** (1849 - 1957)
| **Franz Niemeier** (1840 - 1919) & **Maria Anna Brugger** (1849 - 1909)
| | **Heinrich Niemeier** (1869 - 1869)
| | **Anton F Niemeier** (1870 - 1926) & **Theresia Inghausen** (1864 - 1962)
| | **Maria Niemeier** (1872 - 1873)
| | **Frank Henry Niemeier** (1874 - 1958) & **Margaret Koressel** (1877 - 1965)
| | **Clemens P Niemeier*** (1878 - 1963) & **Wilhelmina M Waterman** (1878 - 1920)
| | **Clemens P Niemeier*** (1878 - 1963) & **Mathilda Stratman** (1887 - 1968)
| | **Henry Frank Niemeier** (1881 - 1963) & **Josephine Catharine Kercher** (1891 - 1974)
| | **Mary Katherine Niemeier** (1883 - 1962) & **Barthel Kercher** (1881 - 1958)
| | **George Sylvester Niemeier*** (1885 - 1972) & **Mara Magdalena Rexing** (1889 - 1934)
| | **George Sylvester Niemeier*** (1885 - 1972) & **Magdalena Koressel** (1883 - 1968)
| | **Anna Frances Niemeier** (1888 - 1973) & **George Henry Kruse** (1883 - 1978)
| | **Elizabeth B Niemeier** (1892 - 1977) & **Theodore Rexing** (1887 - 1971)
| **Maria Sophia Niggemeier** (1842 -)
| **Anton Niemeier*** (1847 - 1897) & **Maria Goebel** (1853 - 1878)
| | **Henry Niemeier** (1874 - 1946) & **Caroline C Hartmann** (1869 - 1923)
| **Anton Niemeier*** (1847 - 1897) & **Anna Katherine Wolf** (1851 - 1915)
| | **Peter John Niemeier** (1880 - 1880)
| | **Anton Peter Niemeier** (1881 - 1948) & **Walburga Rickert** (1882 - 1976)
| | **Bernard Frank Niemeier** (1882 - 1955) & **Margaretha Busckill** (1885 - 1932)
| | **Anna Katherine Niemeier** (1884 - 1959) & **Edward Lewis** (1879 - 1953)
| | **John Henry Niemeier*** (1886 - 1964) & **Lue Etta Benner** (1884 - 1914)
| | **John Henry Niemeier*** (1886 - 1964) & **Margaret Hattie Deig** (1893 - 1982)
| | **Margaret Niemeier** (1888 - 1963) & **Clement Kueber** (1885 - 1945)
| | **Helena Mary Niemeier** (1890 - 1975) & **Roscoe E Ruminer** (1890 - 1983)
| | **Philip Jacob Niemeier** (1893 - 1953) & **Elizabeth C Konrad** (1893 - 1990)
| | **Mary Anna Niemeier** (1894 - 1975) & **Herman G Muehlenbein** (1894 - 1936)
| **Friedrich Wilhelm Niggemeier** (1849 - 1916) & **Elisabeth Flock** (1865 - >1930)
| | **Teresia Niggemeier*** (1894 - 1981) & **Wilhelm Tepper** (1874 - 1918)
| | **Teresia Niggemeier*** (1894 - 1981) & **Otto Rauch** (1891 - 1961)
| | **Teresia Niggemeier*** (1894 - 1981) & **Gabriel Kocsan** (1889 - 1974)

* denotes more than one marriage

Note: Church records has the surname recorded as Niggermeyer, Niggemeier, Niemeyer and Niemeier.

The End