

The Tenbarga Family: Origins in Gelderland and Settlement in Indiana

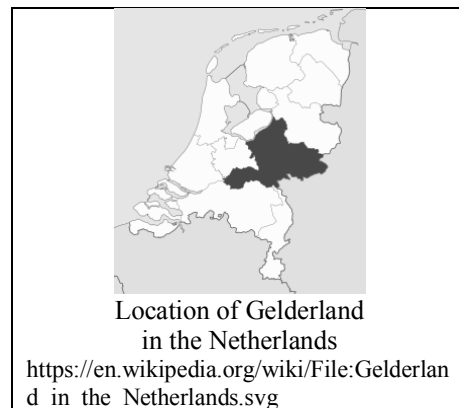
By Cheryl Herrmann
September 2026

The weathered monuments in two quiet Indiana cemeteries whisper across time, inviting a question that has lingered for generations: where, exactly, did the Tenbarga family begin? At St. James Cemetery in Gibson County, the names Herman, Herman Edward, Magdalena, Arnold and Johanna G are carved in stone. In nearby Vanderburgh County, another monument—marking the resting place of Johannes Theodor Tenbarga—offers a clue: “Lindveld.” Other records point to Gelderland. Family tradition simply says “Holland.” At first glance, the answers seem scattered—but like pieces of a quilt, when carefully arranged, they reveal a single, meaningful story.



To begin, “Holland” is often used broadly, but it refers specifically to a region within the country of the Netherlands. Because Holland includes major cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, outsiders came to use the name for the entire nation. The Tenbarga family’s true origins lie within Gelderland, a province in the central-eastern Netherlands.

A closer look at geography helps resolve the mystery. Gelderland encompasses the Achterhoek region, a rural landscape near the German border. Within this area lies Lintvelde (often spelled Lindveld or Lichtevelde in historical records), a small hamlet northeast of Groenlo, and just a few kilometers from the village of Beltrum. These shifting spellings—common in early records—help explain why different documents seem to point to different places, when in fact they describe the same homeland.



In the mid-to-late 1840s, this quiet farming region was anything but stable. Over 3,000 residents left Gelderland during this time, driven by hardship and hope. As historian Robert P. Swierenga explains in *Place Mattered: The Social Geography of Dutch-American Immigration in the Nineteenth Century*:

“The emigrants were not poor, as the cost of passage, expenses, and land purchase in America would have been substantial. They were not, however, affluent and many would have been risking most of their wealth on the chance of economic improvement.”

Dutch emigration began amid an agricultural crisis, as potato and rye crops failed due to disease. At the same time, religious Seceders faced government persecution. “The confluence of these factors triggered an emigration movement among rural folk who had long suffered from poverty, land hunger, and a pinched future.” Among those leaving, “60 percent were farmers, farm hands, and day laborers,” a strikingly high number compared to the national average.

Families rarely made this decision alone. “Immigrants from the same Old Country villages preferred to settle together in order to lessen the emotional shock of leaving the homeland and to ease the adjustment to a new environment.” Letters sent back home—often called “bacon letters” or America letters—described opportunity and encouraged others to follow and were legendary for their effectiveness in promoting chain migrations.

The large province of Gelderland had in total emigrants (12,400). Since moving to America was a risky and permanent venture, the migrants used the information chain of family, friends, and neighbors already there.

According to church records and other genealogy research, immigrant families from the province of Gelderland, Holland were *Bluemers, Busmann, Engbers, Frank, Gastenveld, Heerdink, Koster, Leemkamp, Rexink (Rexing), Wanning, Tebaak, Tenbarge, Tepole (Tepool), Tietink, and Zegging*. Many of them settled in Evansville, Indiana or nearby counties.

Married on April 4, 1818, in Gelderland, Arnold and Johanna Tenbarge built a family rooted in faith and resilience. Baptismal records show eight children born to them: Herman, Gerald John, Johannes Theodore, Rosena Angela, John Hendricus, John Henry, Mary Engele, and Henrika. Like many families of the time, they endured loss—three of their children (Gerald, Johannes, Henrika) died in infancy.

Provincie Gelderland
 Arrondissement Zutphen
 Op de Registers der Huwelijks Actes over het Jaar 1818.
 Jaar 1818.
 Op de Namen des Mannen

Nr.	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken
Nr.	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken	Namen der gehuwde elken
1.	Boome	Wilhelmina	Wilhelmina	Wilhelmina	Wilhelmina
2.	Barge	Arnoldus	Arnoldus	Arnoldus	Arnoldus
3.	Bonenkamp	Johannes Theodorus	Johannes Theodorus	Johannes Theodorus	Johannes Theodorus

Alphabetized table for marriages in 1818 in the local government of Beltrum, province of Gelderland, Netherlands.

On July 23, 1846, Arnold and Johanna made a life-changing decision. They formally withdrew from the population register of Eibergen and prepared to leave their homeland. With five children—Herman, Johannes Theodore, Rosena, John Henry, and Mary Engele—they set out for America. Dutch archives carefully record their names, birthplaces (noted as Beltrum), and their departure, preserving the moment their lives changed forever.

Naam	Geboorte	Overlijden	Plaats	Jaar	Plaats	Jaar
Arnoldus Barge	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846
Johanna Theodorus	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846
Herman	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846
Johannes Theodore	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846
Rosena	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846
John Henry	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846
Mary Engele	Beltrum	Beltrum	Beltrum	1818	Beltrum	1846

Netherlands Archives - Nederland, Indexen van de Archieven

Dutch surnames were based on locations usually include prefixes like *de* (the), *van* (from), *van de*, *van der*, *van den* (from the), or *te*, *ter*, *ten* (on). It was often the case that when a Dutch immigrant came to the United States, or other non-Dutch speaking countries, these prefixes would become lumped into the surname. The surname of Barge evolved into ten Barge, TenBarge and Tenbarge.

According to the 1850 federal census records, the family had settled in Robinson Township, Posey County, Indiana. Arnold resumed his work as a farmer with his sons, building a new life from the soil, just as he had in Gelderland. Their daughters, Rosena and Mary, had already married, beginning the next chapter of the family story.

SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in <i>Robinson Township</i> in the County of <i>Posey</i> 628						
of <i>Indiana</i> enumerated by me, on the <i>19th</i> day of <i>Sept.</i> 1850. <i>St. Schme</i> State 348 Ass't Marshal						
	<i>Traler</i>	"	62	<i>F</i>	<i>Germany</i>	
882	<i>Andas Debaria</i>	59	<i>M</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>360</i>	
	<i>Anna</i>	"	54	<i>F</i>	"	
	<i>Harman</i>	"	32	<i>M</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	
	<i>John</i>	"	28	<i>M</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	
	<i>Henry</i>	"	21	<i>M</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	

854 872	<i>Anthony Raben</i>	24	<i>M</i>	<i>Cooper</i>	<i>Germany</i>	
	<i>Mary</i>	"	20	<i>F</i>	"	
	<i>John Scarmore</i>	20	<i>M</i>	<i>Cooper</i>	"	

1850 US Census – Indiana – Posey County, Robinson Township

Citizenship in their new country became a defining milestone. On October 20, 1856, Herman Tenborge and his brothers-in-law, Henry Niehaus and Anthony Raben, stood together in Vanderburgh County Court and took the final oath of citizenship, renouncing forever their allegiance “to the King of Holland” and pledging themselves to the United States Constitution. It was a powerful moment—one that symbolized both an ending and a beginning.

Now here comes Henry Niehaus, a native of Prussia, and makes application to become a citizen of the United States of America, and the Court being satisfied that he has fully complied with the acts of Congress in such cases made and provided, the said Henry Niehaus is now here admitted to become a citizen of the United States and now here takes the final oath to support the Constitution of the United States and otherwise demean himself as a good and peaceable citizen thereof and that he now renounces and abjures forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign Prince, Potentate, State or Sovereignty whatever, and more particularly to the King of Prussia of whom he was heretofore a subject.

Now here comes Anthony Raben, a native of Holland, and makes application to become a citizen of the United States of America, and the Court being satisfied that he has fully complied with the acts of Congress in such cases made and provided, the said Anthony Raben is now here admitted to become a citizen of the United States and now here takes the final oath to support the Constitution of the United States and otherwise demean himself as a good and peaceable citizen thereof, and that he now renounces and abjures forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty whatever, and more particularly to the King of Holland of whom he was heretofore a subject.

Now here comes Hermann Ten Borge, a native of Holland, and makes application to become a citizen of the United States of America, and the Court being satisfied that he has fully complied with the acts of Congress in such cases made and provided, the said Hermann Ten Borge is now here admitted to become a citizen of the United States and now here takes the final oath to support the Constitution of the United States and otherwise demean himself as a good and peaceable citizen thereof, and that he now renounces and abjures forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign Prince, Potentate, State and Sovereignty whatever, and more particularly to the King of Holland of whom he was heretofore a subject.

Indiana, Vanderburgh County Court, October 20, 1856, Volume J, Page 312

The family quickly took root and flourished. By 1861, all five children were married. Arnold and Johanna, once young immigrants navigating uncertainty, now experienced the joy of grandchildren. Their children established families across Vanderburgh, Posey, and Gibson counties:

- Rosena married Johann Heinrich (Henry) Niehaus in 1849,
- Mary married Anthony Raben in 1850,
- Herman married Magdalena Flory in 1853,
- Johannes Theodore married Johanna Bernardine Heerdink in 1853,
- John Henry married Joanna Wanning in 1861.

The 1860 federal census shows Arnold and Johanna living with their son Herman in Gibson County. Herman, now a merchant, had accumulated property and stability—a testament to the opportunities they had crossed an ocean to find. A decade later, census records reveal a thriving, established family, with 32 grandchildren carrying forward the Tenbarger name.

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SCHEDULE 1—Free Inhabitants in Johnson Township **in the County of** Gibson **State** Ind.

of Ind. enumerated by me, on the one day of August 1860. John H. Smith Ass't Marshal

Post Office _____

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Real Estate	Personal Estate	Place of Birth
8	Arnold Tenbarger	70	M	Merchant	\$800	1000	Holland
9	Mary Tenbarger	67	F				Holland
10	John Tenbarger	5	M				Ind.
11	Edna Tenbarger	70	M			500	Holland
12	Johanna Tenbarger	66	F				"
13	John Tenbarger	24	M	Farmer		100	Holland

1860 US Census – Indiana – Gibson County, Johnson Township

Arnold (age 70) and Johanna (age 66) are living with their son Herman and his wife, Mary, and son, John, in Johnson Township, Gibson County. Herman is a merchant. The value of his real estate is \$800 and his personal estate is \$1,000. Arnold has a personal estate of \$500.

By 1917, the legacy of Arnold and Johanna’s decision was unmistakable. Local newspapers proudly announced the grand reunion.

“TENBARGE FAMILY TO HOLD GRAND REUNION

A grand reunion of the famous Tenbarger family, which is scattered all over Vanderburgh, Posey and Gibson counties, will be held on May 22, 1917, at the old Herman Tenbarger homestead, a quarter of a mile south of Lamey's grove. The event will be on the seventieth anniversary of the emigration from Holland, of John, Herman, Henry, Rosina and Mary Tenbarger. Hundred descendants of the family are expected to be present, the youngest member, being little three year old Wilhelm Tenbarger, son of Herman Tenbarger and the oldest, being Benjamin Tenbarger of Poseyville, who is 72 years of age.”

The Evansville Journal, 7 May 1917, Page 10

TENBARGE FAMILY TO HOLD REUNION MAY 22

The Tenbarger family, which is scattered over Vanderburgh, Posey and Gibson counties and southern Illinois, will hold a reunion May 22 at the old Herman Tenbarger homestead, a quarter of a mile south of Lamey's grove. The event will be on the seventieth anniversary of the emigration from Holland of John, Herman, Henry, Rosina and Mary Tenbarger.

Two hundred of 300 descendants of these immigrants are expected to eat, drink and be merry on May 22. K. K. Knecht, cartoonist of The Courier, will give an entertainment.

The old Herman Tenbarger homestead is now the home of Mrs. John Tenbarger. Her son, William J. Tenbarger, postmaster of Poseyville, is managing the affair. Probably the oldest member of the family is Benjamin Tenbarger of Poseyville, who is 72 years old.

Evansville Courier, 7 May 1917, Page 3

HOLLAND RECALLED ATTEN BARGE REUNION

Dances and Songs of the Father- land Feature Gathering of Prominent Family

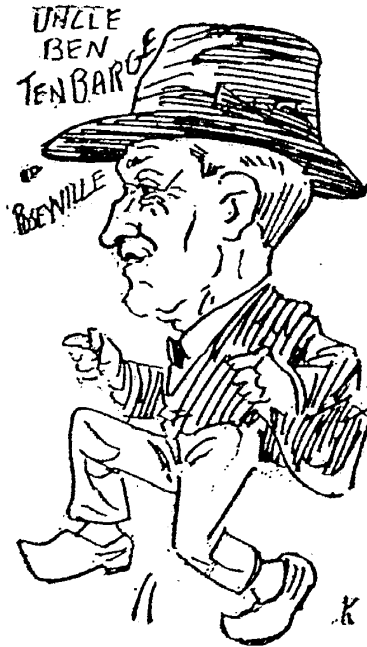
Seventy years ago this month three young men and two sisters named TenBarge arrived from Holland and located in Robinson township, Posey county near St. Wendel. Yesterday more than 250 descendants of these Hollanders celebrated the event with a big reunion at Lamey's grove on the Princeton traction line. Despite the threatening weather yesterday close to 300 persons in all assembled in the grove and made merry.

Herman, John, Henry, Mary and Rosina TenBarge were the five Hollanders whose descendants are now numbered in the hundreds.



Mary TenBarge married Anton Raben and Rosina was married to Henry Niehaus, so the TenBarges, the Rabens and the Niehauses, who are located in goodly numbers in southern Indiana, southern Illinois were all represented yesterday at the annual reunion. Uncle Ben TenBarge, aged 63, of Poseyville was the oldest member present while the youngest were ably represented by the several babes in arms. Uncle Ben put on a pair of real Holland wooden shoes and in fancy steps showed the younger generation how easy they were to walk and dance in.

Dancing by all, young and old, to the good old Holland tunes, singing, games in the pavilion and other numbers provided plenty of entertainment. Joe L. Schafer of Poseyville entertained with juggling, recitations and other stunts. K. K. Knecht, The Courier's cartoonist, gave one of his amusing chalk talks, during which he drew large funny pictures and sketches appropriate to the occasion.



At noon a big dinner was featured. William J. TenBarge, the genial postmaster of Poseyville, was the busy man of the affair for he is the secretary of the reunion and he saw to it that every one had a good time. Mrs. Henry Tiemeyer of Hamilton, Ohio; Miss Mary Ebner of Vincennes; Joe Raben and his four sons and their wives from Ridgway, Ill were present from a distance.

A number of Evansville folks connected with the various families represented also attended. The others came from all parts of this district. The sudden change in the weather prevented the outdoor sports that were contemplated and kept some from attending. It had been planned to run the program and dancing well into the night, but the cold weather brought the affair to a close around the supper hour.

The legacy of Gibson County's 19th-century pioneers lives on today through the Tenbarga families, whose deep roots continue to shape the agriculture, business, and community of southwest Indiana. In 2026, data from Yelp and Facebook highlights the family's enduring footprint across Posey, Vanderburgh, and Gibson counties.

Descendants remain heavily involved in local farming, specialized crop production, and agricultural services. These multi-generational enterprises are exemplified by operations like Tenbarga Seed & Turfgrass Supplies, which has served the Haubstadt area since 1940, and Tenbarga Farm Meats, a family-operated venture providing locally raised, natural products. Beyond business, family members are active participants in regional Catholic parishes, such as St. Joseph, St. Boniface and St. Wendel. They also support the southwestern Indiana tri-county area through local foundations, scholarship funds, and regional memorials.

What began as a question—Lindveld, Gelderland, or Holland—becomes, in the end, a story of courage, sacrifice, and connection. The Tenbarga family did not simply leave a place; they carried it with them—in their language, their faith, their work, and their devotion to one another. From a small hamlet in Gelderland to the fields and towns of southern Indiana, their journey reflects the enduring power of family and the hope that drives people to seek a better future.

Today, those cemetery monuments are no longer mysteries. They are markers of a journey completed, a legacy established, and a family that continues to grow—rooted in both the old world and the new, forever connected across time and place.

3.

Heden den *verentwintste* der maand *April* een duizend acht hon-
 derd en achtien, zijn voor ons *Van Hageveen*
 Schout en *Landvoogd*, Ambtenaar van den Burgerlijken Staat
 der Gemeente Beltrum, Provincie Gelderland, in het Gemeentehuis verschenen,

Barge *Arnoldus Barge*
 oud *achtien* jaren, *Landbouwer* geboren
 en woonachtig te *Beltrum* *Meester* jarige zoon
 van *Comdus Barge* en *Gebina Radonax*, mede in *Bel-*
trum woonachtig, alhier bekendstaande, en hünne *so-*
hemming tot het voorgaande *huwelijk* geveende
 ter cenre; — en
Johanna Gertrudis Baak op *Mersche*
 oud *drie en twintig* jaren, *Sonder beroep* geboren
 en woonachtig te *Beltrum*
Meester jarige dochter van *Willem Hermanus Baak* op *Mers-*
che en *wijlen* *Angela Standsdore*.

dewelke in tegenwoordigheid van *Gerret van Borthuis* *Landbouwer*
Oud negen en twintig jaren, *Jan Haanen*, *Handelman*
Landbouwer *Oud veertig* jaren, *beide in de Gemeente woon-*
achtig, en *Frans Lodewijk Lindner*, *Belkuisdier* *Oud veertig*
Landbouwer, *woonende te Gaante* en *Gerret van Borthuis* *Landbouwer*
woonende te Gaante, *Landbouwer* in *Beltrum* woonachtig
 door partijen als getuigen-hier toe opzettelijk mede gebragt, ons hebben verzocht, het
 door hun voorgenomen huwelijk te willen voltrekken; zoo hebben wij, daar ons geene
 wettige verhindering tegens deze verbinten is voorgekomen, aan hun verzoek willende
 voldoen, hun alle de bij de wet tot dit huwelijk gevorderde stukken voorgelezen, als:

1. De acten van huwelijks afkondigingen op de bij de wet bepaalde tijd en
 plaats binnen deze Gemeente gedaan.
2. de doop en doop attesten, door de bevoegde contractanten,
 geproduceerd, tot het voltrekken van het huwelijk. *Verzocht*
Verzocht, hebben de de getuigen, *men* *een* *gevolg* *van* *het*
te *weeten*, *dat* *de* *geest* *oordeel* *van* *de* *beide* *over* *leden* *is*
Er *al* *de* *des* *Arnoldus* *Barge* *en* *Fransche* *Duinst* *is*
we *te* *by* *den* *het* *besluit* *van* *20* *december* *1818*, *is* *de* *de*
Van *alle* *productie* *van* *een* *certificaat* *ontkeuring*, *het* *besluit*
Van *den* *Heer* *Gouverneur* *van* *de* *Provincie* *van* *Gelderland*
te *dat* *14* *januarij* *1818*, *te* *de* *provincie* *aan* *de* *Van* *de* *W.*
Voort *het* *des* *de* *soort* *met* *het* *Burgerlijk* *Wet-*
boek *over* *de* *wederkerige* *rechten* *en* *pligten* *der* *lede*
gen *ooten*, *waer* *na* *zij* *aan* *Verdragen* *en* *Verdragen* *he-*

ten afgevraagd, of zij aldaar toe lot man en
 vrouwe verstandig, tenemmen waan op, door elk afzonderlijk,
 en toe stemmend antwoord gegeven, is, te belien. *Wij*
 Ambtenaar van den Burgerlijken Staat voornemens, en raaden,
 het verklaard, dat Arnoldus Barge en Johanna Gertrudis
 Baak door het huwelijk zijn vereenigt, van al het huwelijk wijde,
 de opgeveende en in twee daan toe bestemde regeltel vengescheide,
 hebben, zijn de deelde, na overleding, door ons overdenkt, als
 mede door de eerste contractanten, deselvi vader, en de
 laatste genoemde getuigen, verklaard, de deelde Comprouent
 deselvi moeder en de eerste genoemde getuigen, niet te ken-
 nen, schrijvers, en al de daan in de afgevee regel door ons gevee
 gekende — *J. L. Lindner* *of* *Van der Schuur* *Notaris*
J. B. Borge *Keene Longe* *J. J. B. Borge* *Notaris*

Record of marriage of Arnoldus Barge and Johanna Gertrudis Baak

Source citation: Gelders Archive in Arnhem (Netherlands), Civil registration marriages

Burgerlijke stand Gelderland, dubbelen 1811-1902, Beltrum, archive 0207, inventory number 6321.23, 24-04-1818,

Beltrum, Huwelijksregister, record number 4

Permalink <https://permalink.geldersarchief.nl/D2724D2F37464B009722CBF802717A86>

Three Generations in USA

Arnold Tenbarge (1790 - 1863) & Johanna Gertrudis Tebaak (1794 - 1873)
 Herman Tenbarge* (1819 - 1886) & Magdalena Flory (1821 - 1877)
 John Chrystomus Tenbarge (1855 - 1896) & Margareta Maria Wolf (1857 - 1940)
 Herman Tenbarge* (1819 - 1886) & Magdalena Caroline Disser (1832 - 1907)
 Gerald John Tenbarge (1821 - 1822)
 Johannes Theodor Tenbarge* (1823 - 1898) & Johanna Bernadine Heerdink (1830 - 1863)
 Bernard John Tenbarge (1853 - 1928) & Catherine Maurer (1860 - 1941)
 Bernardina Tenbarge (1857 - 1906) & Ferdinand Sauer (1852 - 1941)
 Angelina R Tenbarge (1859 - 1927)
 Maria Magdalena Tenbarge (1861 - 1923) & John Vincent Scheller (1858 - 1925)
 Anna Johanna Tenbarge (1863 - 1863)
 Johannes Theodor Tenbarge* (1823 - 1898) & Mary Theresa Breuger (1843 - 1870)
 Peter Theodore Tenbarge (1864 - 1952) & Elizabeth Seib (1868 - 1945)
 Anton Theodore Tenbarge (1867 - 1952) & Katharina Hillenbrand (1869 - 1924)
 Anna Fredericka Tenbarge (1870 - 1870)
 Johannes Theodor Tenbarge* (1823 - 1898) & Elisabeth Sauer (1826 - 1894)
 Rosena Angela Tenbarge (1825 - 1911) & Johann Heinrich Niehaus (1818 - 1872)
 John Niehaus (~1851 -)
 Roman Niehaus (1853 - 1931) & Henrietta Dwyer (1853 - 1914)
 Johanna Niehaus (1855 - 1883) & William Schiff (1848 - 1926)
 Mary A Niehaus (1857 - 1939) & Anthony J Klein (1855 - 1903)
 Elisabeth Marie Niehaus (1860 - 1899) & John Will (1859 - 1948)
 Henry Niehaus* (1862 - 1928) & Maria Helfrich (1860 - 1883)
 Henry Niehaus* (1862 - 1928) & Elisabeth Herbert (1862 - 1931)
 Mary Magdalena Niehaus (1864 - 1926) & George Andrew Meny (1856 - 1925)
 Johannes Bernard Niehaus (1867 - 1951) & Maria Hillenbrand (1867 - 1942)
 Johannes Hendricus Tenbarge (1827 - 1827)
 John Henry Tenbarge* (1828 - 1897) & Joanna Wanning (1836 - 1873)
 Anton Michael Tenbarge (1864 - 1940) & Margaret Hillenbrand (1871 - 1949)
 Theresa Marie Tenbarge (1868 - 1946) & Henry Reine (1855 - 1928)
 John Henry Tenbarge* (1828 - 1897) & Margaretha Kissel (1843 - 1902)
 Katherina A Tenbarge (1874 - 1905) & August Wilhelm Seib (1870 - 1949)
 Joseph Tenbarge* (1878 - 1959) & Rose Witt (1883 - 1923)
 Joseph Tenbarge* (1878 - 1959) & Etta Mae (1886 - 1980)
 Mary Engele Tenbarge (1830 - 1867) & Anton Raben (1826 - 1904)
 Johanna Bernadine Raben (1851 - 1927) & Ferdinand K Brokamp (1846 - 1920)
 Maria Bernardina Raben (1852 -)
 Anna Bernardina Raben (1853 - 1891) & William Heyns (1847 - 1930)
 John Rupert Raben (1855 - 1917) & Catherine Spahn (1855 - 1934)
 Herman Joseph Raben (1857 - 1857)
 Joseph Herman Raben (1858 - 1931) & Catherine "Kate" Seib (1860 - 1942)
 Theodore Henry Raben (1860 - 1924) & Rosa A Fuelling (1859 - 1939)
 Mary Johanna Raben (1862 - 1922) & Frank A Thuis (1859 - 1935)
 Catherine Suzanne Raben (1864 - 1893) & Joseph L Ebner (1863 - 1914)
 Theresa Raben (1866 - 1868)
 William Raben (1866 -)
 Henrika Tenbarge (1833 - 1834)

Note: * indicates more than one marriage

The End