

Meinrad and Theresia Hartmann Family: From Mercenary to Farmer to Established

By Cheryl Herrmann
October 2026

In the mid-1840s, a devastating water mold and potato blight swept through Germany, triggering skyrocketing food prices, widespread hunger, and economic ruin across Bavaria. This dark period, remembered as the "Hungry Forties," pushed the economically oppressed lower classes to the brink of desperation. By 1848, the tension exploded into democratic revolutions. Citizens erected barricades in the streets, demanding civil liberties, freedom of the press, a national militia, and a unified German parliament to end autocratic rule.

During the uprisings of 1848–1849, the role of the mercenary shifted as conservative states utilized these soldiers to violently suppress domestic rebellions. For the men caught in this service, family life was strictly regulated by the state, deeply impoverished, and hedged in by legal barriers. Ultimately, a Bavarian soldier in the 1840s faced a constant struggle against a government that viewed his wife and children as a financial liability and a legal nuisance.

In the small Bavarian town of Herrenstetten, a hardworking man named Meinrad Hartmann and his wife, Theresia, were raising their family against the backdrop of this geopolitical turmoil. Married in 1815, the couple had six children. On every single one of their birth records, Meinrad's occupation was listed as a *Söldner*—a mercenary.

Söldner
Söldner (mercenary)

Karolina	geb. 1834	Herrenstetten	1834
Joseph	geb. 1835	Herrenstetten	1835
Leo	geb. 1836	Herrenstetten	1836

For soldiers and military-aged men trapped in Bavaria, fleeing to America emerged as the ultimate path toward economic survival, personal freedom, and an escape from mandatory service. However, leaving was an incredibly high-stakes gamble; the state viewed these men as military property. To emigrate legally, a man had to fulfill his required military service, pay off all personal debts, and secure an official travel pass from local authorities.

Against all odds, that is exactly what Meinrad Hartmann achieved. According to his passport, obtained in Illertissen on September 3, 1853, Meinrad and his family were officially permitted "to their own will journey to Evansville in the State of Indiana in North America and settle there." The passport meticulously detailed the physical descriptions of his traveling companions: wife, Theresia (age 61), daughter Karolina (age 26), and sons Joseph (age 20) and Leo (age 17).

Register_____	Abt_____
Passport Number 151	
Description	The Royal Bavarian Landers Reich Illertissen in the district of Swabia and Nuremberg beseeches herewith under the banknote of foreign States to let pass through the (military) mercenary Meinrad Hartmann and his wife Theresia and his children Karolina, Joseph, and Leo born and living at Herrenstetten who according to their own will journey to Evansville in the State of Indiana in North America and settle there _____ uninhibited and _____ and also to grant them protection and assistance if needed. Present passport is valid for one year.
Age: 60 years	
Height: 6' 2"	
Hair: Medium grey	
Forehead: High	
Eyebrows:	
Eyes: Brown	
Nose: Curved	
Mouth: Arrogant	
Beard: Medium grey	
Face: Oval	
Facial color: Healthy	
Signature of the traveler	Illertissen the 3, Sept. 1853 Meinrad Hartmann
Seal	

(On reverse side)				
	DESCRIPTIONS			
	Theresia	Karolina	Joseph	Leo
Age:	61 Yrs.	26	20	17
Height:	medium	medium	5' 10"	5' 6"
Hair:		black	dark brown	black
Forehead:	high	high	high	broad
Eyebrows:	brown	black	black	black
Eyes:	grey	brown	brown	brown
Nose:	curved	curved	_____	_____
Mouth		small	small	
Chin:	pointed	oval	oval	long
Beard:			dark brown	_____
Face:	long	long	long	long
Facial color:	healthy	healthy	healthy	pale
_____	Signature	Signature	Signature	Signature
	Seal			

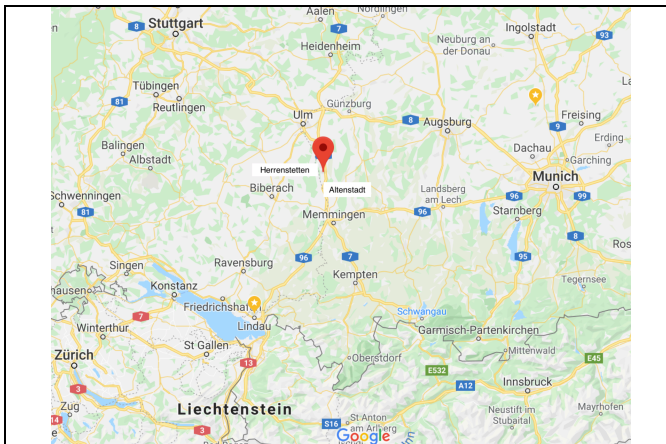
Passport information courtesy of Gerhart Finkbeiner and Wayne Gerteisen

Leaving their small community near Altenstadt—located about 18 miles south of Ulm—the Hartmann family journeyed over 400 miles north to the port of Bremen. (Today, their quiet, picturesque home village of Herrenstetten sits in the Swabian region of Bavaria, administered as a district of the market town of Altenstadt near the Iller River Valley and the A7 autobahn).



Map of Germany, showing the municipality of Altenstadt, Bavaria, of which Herrenstetten is a village

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altenstadt,_Swabia



Google Map of Herrenstetten, Bavaria, Germany (noted by red teardrop) and surrounding towns

Source: www.maps.google.com

On September 16, 1853, the family boarded the ship *Blucher* as passenger numbers 129 through 133, joining 316 other souls chasing the promise of a new life. After two grueling months at sea, they arrived in New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 30, 1853.

List off all the Passengers taken at the Port of Bremen the 16th Septemb. 1853 on Board the Bremen Bark Blücher bound to New Orleans

Names	Age	Sex	Occupation	Which Country she belong	Package
129 Hendrad Hartman	59	Husband	Farmer	Herrenstetten	
130 Therese	58	Wife			
131 Caroline	22	Daughter			
132 Joseph	21	Son			
133 Leo	12	Son			
5 Cabin Passengers					
304 Stevedores					
12 Infant					
321 altogether					

John H. Sampson

Passenger Ship list of Bark Blucher, bound for New Orleans

Source: The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving at New Orleans, Louisiana, 1820-1902; NAI Number: 2824927; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service; Record Group Number: 85



ST. PHILIP
CATHOLIC CHURCH
EST. 1847

SAINT PHILLIP, MARRS TOWNSHIP.

Is on the Louisville and Nashville Railway, 11 miles East of Mt. Vernon. It is well supplied with schools and churches, is in a rich agricultural section and has a population of 75. One of the finest church edifices in the County was erected at this place in 1870 at a cost of \$10,000. Elizabeth Deig is postmistress, a lady who is noted for her liberality and Christian spirit. When the church referred to was completed she purchased an organ at her own expense, costing \$2,000, and presented it to the congregation. The community is largely made up of German Catholics.

History and Directory of Posey County
by W.P. Leonard, Evansville,
A.C. Isaacs Book Printer and Binder

Page No. 18 } ☒ Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

SCHEDULE 1.—Inhabitants in Marrs Township, in the County of Posey, State of Indiana, enumerated by me on the 1st day of June, 1870.

Post Office: Black Hawk Mills Wiliam S. Harris, Ass't Marshal.

26	130	121	Barbara Joseph	26	11	Yr	German	✓	2002	000	Barbara	1	1					1		21
27			Josephine	26	4	Yr	Irish German				Barbara	1	1							22
28			Joseph	12	16	Yr					Paulina	1	1		1					23
29			Josephine	11	05	Yr					Paulina	1	1		1					24
30			Henry	8	14	Yr					Paulina	1	1							31
31			August	6	14	Yr					Paulina	1	1							32
32			Leo	4	14	Yr					Paulina	1	1							33
33			John	2	14	Yr					Paulina	1	1							34
34			Caroline	12	4	Yr					Paulina	1	1							35

1870 U.S. Census – Indiana - Posey County – Marrs Township

However, tragedy struck Joseph at the age of 50 when he was mysteriously killed on the railroad tracks near Caborn's Station. The local newspapers captured the shock of the community:

A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT:

JOSEPH HARTMAN CUT TO PIECES ON THE L & N RR

Joseph Hartman, of St. Phillips, Posey County, brother-in-law of Phillip Spiegel and Joseph Siepen, of this city, was found yesterday morning by the section hands of the L & N Railroad, near Caborn's Station. He was literally cut to pieces, lying across the track. His hand was cut off; his breast torn to pieces. He leaves a wife and eight children, some of them grown up. He was in good circumstances, and leaves his family well provided for. He was over 50 years of age. He will be buried at St. Phillips today. —

The Evansville Courier, May 5, 1884

Days later, the narrative shifted from a horrific accident to a dark mystery, suggesting a sinister end for the successful farmer:

A SUPPOSED MURDER

Courier readers will remember the paragraph relating to Mr. Joseph Hartman, in which it was stated that he had been run over by a Louisville & Nashville train, near Caborn's Station. Rumors, apparently having a good foundation, have come to the ears of a *Courier* reporter which would lead to the belief that Mr. Hartman was murdered first, and his body afterwards placed on the railroad track to hide the evidence of the crime. It was known that Mr. Hartman had recently sold his wheat, about twelve hundred bushels, and that he was looking for the proceeds, about twelve hundred dollars. Instead of receiving the cash, he was sent a check, which he took to a neighbor for the purpose of having him draw the money for him. The night after the transaction, and the night that he met his death, he was on a visit to another neighbor, and left his house about 8 o'clock in the evening. Mr. Hartman was not in liquor at the time, nor had he had time to obtain any from the time that he left his neighbor's house until the train passed which ran over him. The supposition has taken a strong foothold that he has been waylaid by parties who knew that he was expecting the money, had him killed, and his body afterwards placed upon the track. His remains, when found, were so mangled that the coroner could not tell whether there had been previous violence, or that his death was the result of being run over by the cars. An investigation, however, is being quietly carried on, that will, in a few days, reveal the true facts in reference to the cause of his death. —

The Evansville Courier, May 7, 1884



Joseph was laid to rest in the St. Philip Catholic Church Cemetery, leaving behind a well-provided-for family and an enduring local mystery.

The youngest brother, **Leo**, married Francisca Siepen on December 8, 1859.

Though they had no children, Leo dedicated his early adulthood to his new country, serving bravely in the American Civil War.

Yet, violence followed him as well. At just 37 years old, Leo's life came to a tragic end on Monday night, April 8, 1872, after he was stabbed in the chest and abdomen during a dispute.

Civil War Record for Leo Hartman

Record Series: Military

Collection: Civil War

County: Details

Accession Number 1938001

Last Name Hartman

FirstName Leo

Middle Name

Age 25

Date Enrolled 1861/08/20

Where Enrolled Evansville, Indiana

Regiment 28

Company H

Discharge date 1864/09/12

Notes

Cavalry/ Battery Unit 1st Cavalry

Reference Number CIV081051

Source: <http://secure.in.gov>

Indiana Archives and Records Administration

LEO HARTMANN STABBING AFFAIR Brother of Joseph Hartmann

SEVERE STABBING AFFAIR.--About ten o'clock on Sunday evening Anton Bettag, a resident of Lamasco, stabbed and severely wounded Leo Hartman. Bettag's wife had called on the police to arrest him earlier in the evening, saying he was insane, but officer Charles Wunderlich, who went with her, found the man apparently perfectly sane and doing no ill, although he acknowledged to having been abusive in language toward his wife. As the officer saw nothing to warrant an arrest he did not attempt one. Hartman, who is an acquaintance of the Bettags, advised them both to go home, they being then at a saloon, and had proceeded a short distance with them when Bettag stabbed him twice, inflicting a severe wound in the left breast and another in the abdomen from which his entrails protruded and which it is feared has severed the entrails. Hartman was taken home, and Officer Wunderlich arrested Bettag and lodged him in the lock-up.

Bettag charges his wife with shameful conduct, and told the officers that he had not only one but a dozen rivals for her affections. He did not explicitly charge Hartman with improper conduct, but it was plain that jealousy was the cause of the attack. He denies that he had a knife, and none was found. He also claims that Hartman struck him first, but whether that can be proved or disproved depends somewhat on the results of Hartman's wounds. The Grand Jury will probably attend to the case to-day.

Late last evening, it was said that Dr. Harvey pronounced Hartman's wounds probably fatal.

THE DAILY JOURNAL, EVANSVILLE , Tuesday April 9, 1872

DIED OF HIS WOUNDS.

Leo Hartman, who was so severely stabbed by Anton Bettag, on Sunday night, died about twelve o'clock on Monday night, in great agony. The wound in the abdomen had severed one of the smaller intestines, and caused his death.

Dr. Harvey made a post mortem examination of the body, which disclosed the above state of facts. The wound on the breast was a mere flesh wound, and its results would not have been serious.

Hartman was a tanner, and had a wife, but no children. He was a man of about thirty-five years old, and had served faithfully in the First Indiana Cavalry throughout the war. He was highly esteemed by his friends as a peaceable and worthy man.

Bettag is a laborer, and has worked on the streets during the past year. He is generally accounted a peaceable and industrious man. He owns his home, which he has accumulated by industry and economy. For several months past some of his friends have thought him insane, and it is said that his wife once tried to have him taken in charge by the authorities. He claims to have been beaten by Hartman, but denies all knowledge of the killing. He remains in jail.

THE DAILY JOURNAL EVANSVILLE , Wednesday April 10, 1872

COURT NOTES.

THE BETTAG-HARTMAN CASE -- BETTAG SENTENCED TO THE PENITENTIARY FOR FIVE YEARS FOR MANSLAUGHTER

The trial of Anton Bettag for the murder of Leo Hartman, was resumed yesterday morning, and occupied the whole day.

About seven o'clock yesterday evening, the jury returned a verdict of manslaughter, and fixed the penalty at imprisonment for five years.

To such persons as did not hear the evidence, this may seem a very light and inadequate penalty, but by most people it is deemed sufficient. The plea of insanity, if not clearly sustained, was at least so far sustained as to create doubts in people's minds as to his entire soundness of mind. Many acts and speeches of Bettag's were proven, that scarce any sane man would be guilty of.

Several months ago, his wife tried to have him taken into custody as a lunatic, but for some reason it was not done. The behavior of his wife toward him is also said to have been such as to aggravate an already morbidly jealous disposition, and the influence of his frequent and deep potations were not at all soothing. It was also shown that Hartman had said he deserved a thrashing.

There was no direct evidence that the blow had been given with premeditated malice; on the contrary, one witness said Bettag did NOT CUT Hartman, and another said if he did, it was in self-defense.

Bettag is a man about fifty years old, while his wife is much younger, which circumstance of disparity of age may have had a great deal to do with his jealousy.

BETTAG'S CASE --

A motion for a new trial in the case of Anton Bettag, convicted of manslaughter, for killing Leo Hartman was overruled by Judge Butterfield.

THE DAILY JOURNAL, Monday, May 13, 1872

Leo's killer was convicted of manslaughter, but the true testament to Leo's character lived on in the public heartbreak of the men he fought alongside:

LEO HARTMAN - A TRIBUTE TO HIS MEMORY BY HIS COMRADES

The following appeared in the UNION of last evening:

Night before last, our friend, and brother-at-arms, Leo Hartman, departed this life, in consequence of a stab. Hartman was one of the first at the outbreak of the war, to hasten to arms, and as one of the last he turned homeward. In seventeen battles he manifested his heroism as a brave, unflinching soldier, by facing death, and escaped, happily, all their dangers.

In camp as well as in the line of battle, he was an excellent soldier, a true brother-in-arms. Therefore, the more deeply do his friends deplore the untimely death of their friend and comrade. And it was not only as a brave soldier that the deceased was loved and valued by us, but also as a good citizen whom Evansville loses, a faithful husband lost to his grief-stricken widow.

While we thus express our sincere grief, we request of the press to give publicity thereto.

AUGUST GRUNDMAN, CHARLES SCHAUFFLER, JOSEPH ESSINGER, THOMAS EASINGER.

THE DAILY JOURNAL, Thursday, April 11, 1872

Though Karolina, Joseph, and Leo all met untimely ends, the heavy sacrifices made by Meinrad and Theresia Hartmann were not in vain. The family roots they planted in the rich soil of southern Indiana took hold, yielding ten resilient grandchildren.

Today, the Hartmann legacy flourishes through more than 1,200 descendants, many of whom have lived long, peaceful lives well into their eighties and nineties. The vast majority of the family still calls Posey County and its surrounding areas home. From the war-torn borders of Bavaria to the quiet fields of St. Philip, the Hartmann story is one of profound perseverance.

Through revolution, migration, heartbreaking loss, and wartime sacrifice, the family transcended the transient life of mercenaries to become a deeply rooted, well-established American legacy that continues to thrive today.

Four Generations in America

Meinrad Hartmann (1793 - 1855) & Theresia Strohmeyer (1792 - 1854)

Walburga Hartmann (1816 -)

Meinrad Hartmann (1824 - 1824)

Karolina Hartmann (1826 - 1869) & Andreas Sammet (1819 - 1881)

John Sammet* (1855 - 1935) & Mary Katrina Petri (1860 - <1901)

Mary Anna Sammet (1885 - 1937) & Nicholas John Berendes (1881 - 1971)

John Sammet (1886 - 1909)

John Sammet (1887 - 1887)

Joseph A Sammet (1888 - 1981) & Julia M Schenk (1892 - 1984)

Josephine Sammet (1892 - 1974)

John Sammet* (1855 - 1935) & Barbara F Ritzert (1859 - 1942)

Crescenz Sammet (~1861 - ~1887) & John P Wolf (1852 - 1925)

Carolina Wolf (1884 - 1884)

Mary Wolf (1886 - 1966)

Maria Josephina Hartmann (1832 - 1832)

Joseph Hartmann (1833 - 1884) & Josephina Wildemann (1833 - 1902)

Joseph L Hartmann (1858 - 1910) & Helena F Westholfer (1865 - 1934)

Clemens Joseph Hartmann* (1892 - 1974) & Olivia Catherine Nurrenbern (1894 - 1940)

Clemens Joseph Hartmann* (1892 - 1974) & Ruth Baker (1902 - 1986)

Raymond August Hartmann (1898 - 1990) & Antoinette Logel (1897 - 1985)

Victoria Marie Hartmann (1900 - 1976) & Charles Louis Logel (1899 - 1986)

Rose Marie Hartmann (1903 - 1942)

Josephine Hartmann (1859 - 1945) & Henry P Wolf (1851 - 1935)

Josephine Wolf (1882 - 1925) & Peter Corressell (1872 - 1942)

Julia Wolf (1884 - 1925) & Joseph Aloysius Koressel (1880 - 1956)

Joseph Wolf (1887 - 1967) & Olivia Gertrude Koressel (1893 - 1976)

Henry J Wolf (1889 - 1952) & Catherine Magdalena Kirchoff (1889 - 1990)

Celia Katherine Wolf (1893 - 1965) & John Joseph Schenk (1882 - 1954)

Magdalena Matilda Wolf (1895 - 1980) & John George Schenk (1892 - 1967)

Mary Wolf (1898 - 1898)

Catherine Carolina (Sr. Mary Lauretta) Wolf (1899 - 1995)

Henry Hartmann (1861 - 1948) & Eva Marie Kuhn (1873 - 1961)

Lillian Elnora Gertrude Hartmann (1901 - 1955) & Theodore Bernard Sasse (1889 - 1983)

Leo Jerome Linus Hartmann (1904 - 1986) & Gertrude Rose Berfanger (1904 - 1995)

Arthur Joseph Hartmann (1906 - 1977) & Cecelia Elizabeth Rollett (1907 - 1998)

Margareth Carolina Hartmann (1908 - 1999) & Kenneth W Hamel (1908 - 1997)

Anna Blandina Hartmann (1911 - 1997) & Frederick William Ellerbusch (1909 - 1979)

Aloysius Henry Francis Hartmann (1913 - 1984) & Rosella M Harney (1913 - 1978)

	August John Hartmann (1864 - 1919) & Mary Magdalena Rollett (1874 - 1963) Joseph Francis Hartmann (1904 - 1988) & Margaret R Nurrenbern (1907 - 1973) Julia Josephine Hartmann (1908 - 2000) & Raymond Koressel (1905 - 1984) Andrew Leo Hartmann* (1910 - 1978) & Eloise R Muensterman (1916 - 1965) Andrew Leo Hartmann* (1910 - 1978) & Florence Crystal Atherton (1912 - 1992) Anna Marie Hartmann (1915 - 1919) Cecelia Julia Hartmann (1915 - 1937) Leo Antone Hartmann (1866 - 1950) & Theresa E Miller (1868 - 1950) Veronica Helen Hartmann (1896 - 1975) & Frank William Mueller (1890 - 1930) Adolph George Hartman (1897 - 1960) & Eleanor Agnes Wolf (1900 - 1980) Emily Marie Hartmann* (1900 - 1996) & Paul Frank Kiesel Jr. (1898 - 1945) Emily Marie Hartmann* (1900 - 1996) & Andrew James Brenner (1897 - 1966) Emily Marie Hartmann* (1900 - 1996) & Earl Heart Emily Marie Hartmann* (1900 - 1996) & E. Stinson Isabell Dorothy Hartmann (1903 - 1990) & Edwin Aloysius Angermeier (1893 - 1971) Scholastica Agnes Hartmann (1905 - 1910) John Henry Hartman Sr (1868 - 1950) & Mary Anna Steinkamp (1875 - 1936) Mary Bernadine Hartmann (1897 - 1969) & John Eberhardt Wolf (1892 - 1975) Alphonse Bernard Hartman (1899 - 1966) & Margaret Elizabeth Hetzel (1902 - 1952) John Henry Hartmann Jr. (1901 - 1980) & Loretta Elizabeth Sitzman (1903 - 1981) William Joseph Hartmann (1904 - 1988) & Anna Catherine Folz (1904 - 1987) Theodore Clarence Hartmann (1907 - 1995) Walter Henry Hartman (1910 - 2000) & Lorena Ann Luigs (1909 - 2001) Leonard Henry Hartman (1915 - 2005) & Noma Ruth Bryant (1916 - 2005) Caroline C Hartmann (1869 - 1923) & Henry Niemeier (1874 - 1946) Clara C Niemeier (1905 - 1988) Charles C Hartman (1871 - 1964) & Anna Gertrude Mariam Kuhn (1884 - 1966) Elsie Hartmann (1905 - 1966) & Henry J Fredebiel (1890 - 1970) Antonette E. Hartmann (1907 - 1907) Charles A Hartmann (1908 - 1919) Leo Hartmann (1835 - 1872) & Francisca Siepen (1840 - 1909)
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Note: * denotes additional marriage

The End