A Family's Story Preserved: Sister Ildephonse's 1941 Letter to Her Nephew

Submitted by Cheryl Herrmann
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The original letter written by Sister M. Ildephonse on August 1, 1941, and photos came into my possession in 2017 from Carole Hinders through Ancestry.com. I am grateful that the items survived. Their preservation allows us to hear Sister Ildephonse, in her own words, tell the stories and memories she wished to pass along.

Sister M. Ildephonse, born *Ann Barbara Born* on November 3,1865, wrote to her nephew George Wolf and his family in response to his request for their family history. From her memories, she recounted the journey of her grandparents, Peter and Margaret Born, from Germany to America, their settlement in southwestern Indiana, and the humble beginnings of a Catholic parish where her grandmother offered the family's front room for the celebration of Mass.

She also shared a touching story about her sister, Mary Ann Wolf, later known as Sister Calista, who was comforted by a bishop as a frightened five-year-old child. Most importantly, Sister Ildephonse recorded the names, birth dates, death dates, and approximate ages of the thirteen children of Margaret and Adam Wolf, including George's father. Although she regretted not remembering the years of many family events, her letter preserved personal recollections that might otherwise have been lost.

For genealogists and future generations of the Born and Wolf families, Sister Ildephonse's 1941 letter is a remarkable piece of family history. It provides more than names and dates; it offers a glimpse into the hardships of immigration, the challenges of pioneer life, the development of the Catholic community in southwestern Indiana, and the deep family and religious ties that shaped the lives of earlier generations.

Her recollections of thirteen siblings, including those who died young, help restore individual lives to the family tree. Her stories connect family history to the broader history of the community. Even where dates are missing or memories are incomplete, the letter offers valuable clues for further research and a personal account that official records alone cannot provide.

Preserved for more than eight decades, Sister Ildephonse's words remain a precious link between the past and the present. It allows descendants to hear the voice of an ancestor who lovingly shared what she remembered so that her family would not forget.

How valuable this letter was then to her nephew and is now to the future relatives.

Sisters of St. Francis
1708 Queen City Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio

August 1, 1941.

Dear George and all:

You asked me to tell you something of the history of our family, so I will try to give you all I can possibly recall.

Many years ago groups of peoples migrated from the different countries of Europe to America, and on one occasion came a group up from Germany who settled in Pittsburg. Among these were my grandparents - your great grandparents, Peter and Margaret Born. They had three children, Kate, Margaret and John. While crpssing the Atlantic, John, who was about three years old, died and was buried in the sea.

After some time in Pittsburg, they moved to Indiana to settle on a piece of woodland, about eighty acres in all. This is now known as St. Joseph, Venburg County, Indiana. Here they cleared the land and built their own home - a log house of four rooms. As time went on more Catholic settlers came to this place, so a missionary priest was appointed to have Mass every four weeks. The question much in dispute was: "Where can the priest say Mass?" Well, grandma offered her front room. The best linen she had for the alter (a home-made affair) was a white sheet, but folded over it gave the triple thickness required for the celebration of Mass, and answered the purpose.

That was the beginning of the parish, and grandmother's home served as a church for some time, until a group of the settlers decided to build a church. They made the bricks, and everyone helped to complete it. This was about the year 1852. This church was burned down shortly after I entered the convent and I entered in 1885. Not a record of anything had been saved.

Father Peppersack and Father Weinsapfl changed about in taking care of the spiritual needs of the people.

At the consecration of this church some children marched in procession, and among them was Mary Ann Wolf (Sister Calista). She was only five years, and not being accustomed to seeing so many people she cried. The Bishop tried to console her and said, "Never mind, little girl, some day you will be one of my sisters." This was Bishop

Sisters of St. Francis
789 Queen City Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio

De Palais, who had the investiture ceremony when Sister Calista received the white veil.

Now to go back to the family, Margaret married Adam Wolf. (These are your grandparents). The marriage ceremony was performed, I was told, by Father Weinzapfl at St. Wendel's. Margaret and Adam Wolf had thirteen children. I remember the days of their births and deaths, but not the years.

Peter, the oldest, was born June 7 and died on December 3, aged about 35. He was married and had three children. Then follows Kate, (Sisters Olympia and Vincentine's mother) who was born on May 8, and died on December 28, aged about 58. Mary Theresa was born on November 6, and died on November 12, aged about 60. She lived out with one family from the time she was 17 years old until her death. Mary Ann, who was Sister Calista in religion, was born on May 26 and died on October 21, aged about 67. Joseph was born on March 19th, and died when he was eleven years old. Maggie (Margaret) was born November 6, and died on January 25th when she was about 25 years old. Eva Elizabeth was born on August 9th and died on December 14, aged about 33. Magdalen was born on May 11th, and died October 16th at the age of 17. William was born on February 18th and died on February 17th, at the age of 35. Ann Barbara (that's myself) was born November 3d, 1865. Mathilda Catherine, was born March 23d and died February 24, aged about 72. John Joseph, (your father) was born January 5th. George Adam was born on December 1st, and died December 20th, when he was six years old.

I am sorry I don't know the years. Perhaps you can figure out something by looking at my birth year. They are all listed according to age.

I hope this little record will be of some interest to you, but another visit from you would be deeply appreciated, and then maybe I could tell you more.

Did I tell you that I have been coming to Cincinnati to take treatments for a swelling on my forehead, just above the eye. On my last visit to the Doctor he was very much pleased with my condition, and I'm just about normal again, although the heat is hard on me. I am returning to Oldenburg this afternoon.

God bless you.

Love to all,

Sister M. Aldephonse



Photo of Anna Barbara Wolf as a child

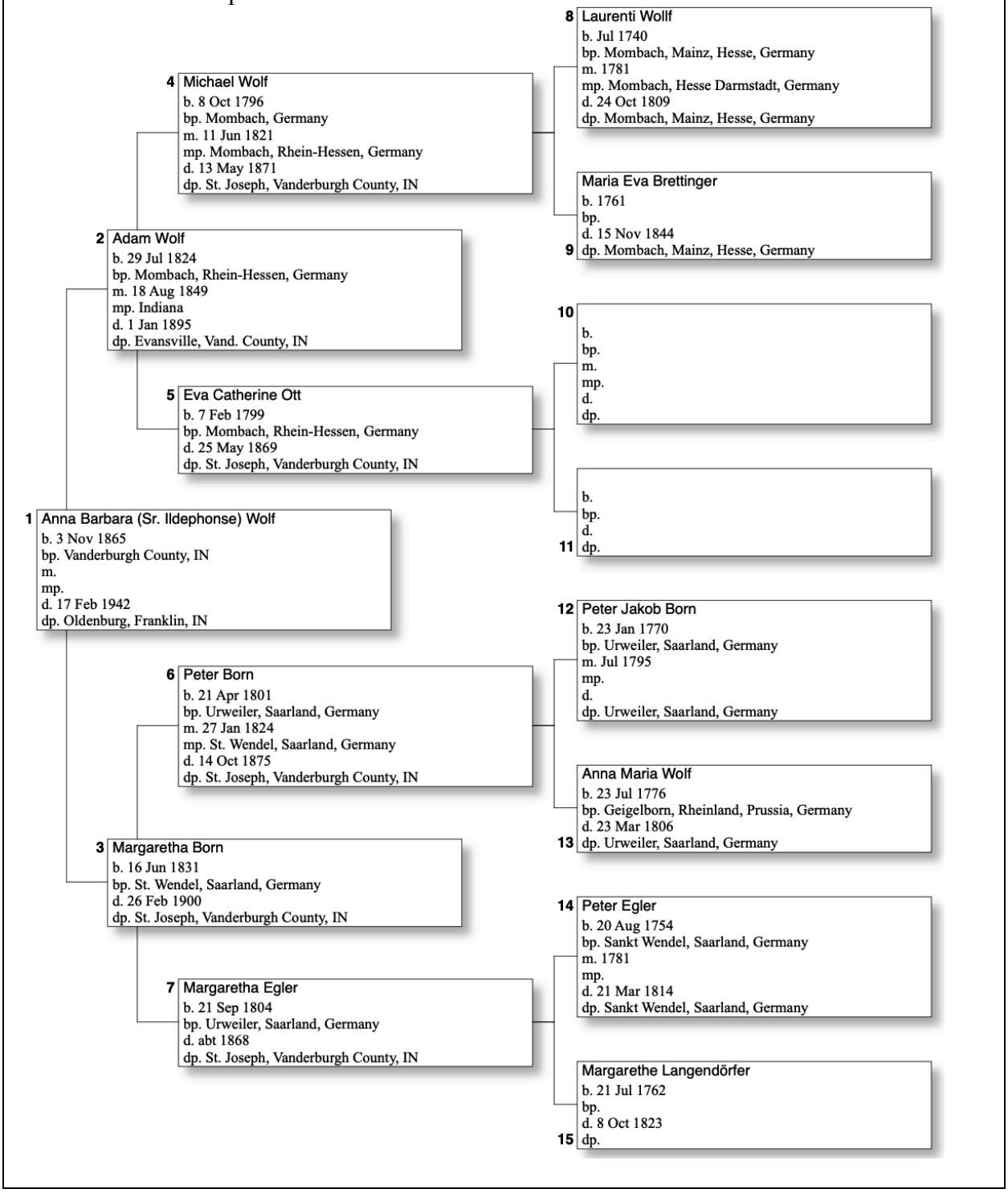


Gravestone of Ann Wolf – Sister M. Ildephonse
Oldenburg, Indiana

Children and Grandchildren of Adam Wolf and Margaretha Born

Adam Wolf (1824 - 1895) & **Margaretha Born** (1831 - 1900)
- **Peter Aloysius Wolf** (1850 - 1883) & Elizabeth Anna Dewig (1859 - 1928)
  - **Maria Margaret Wolf** (1879 - 1925) & Andrew Thomas (1860 - 1924)
  - **Anna Barbara Wolf** (1882 - 1954) & George James Mayer (1882 - 1932)
  - **Mary Theresa Wolf** (1884 - 1975) & Frank Anton Effinger (1879 - 1939)
- **Katherine Frances Wolf** (1852 - 1910) & Frederick Joseph Hoefling (1841 - 1899)
  - **Friedrich Peter Hoefling** (1872 - 1873)
  - **John Adam Hoefling** (1874 - 1924)
  - **Mary Theresa (Sr. Olympia) Hoefling** (1875 - 1950)
  - **Matilda Barbara (Sr. Vincentina) Hoefling** (1877 - 1958)
  - **Joseph G Hoefling** (1879 - 1935)
  - **Harry John Hoefling** (1882 - 1943)
  - **William Frederick Hoefling** (1885 - 1925) & Sudie Bell Mattingly (1884 - 1941)
  - **Leopold John Hoefling** (1888 - 1950) & Margaret Helen Burleigh (1890 - 1973)
  - **Francis Maria Hoefling** (1893 - 1893)
  - **Louis John Hoefling** (1893 - 1894)
- **Mary Therese Wolf** (1853 - 1913)
- **Mary Ann (Sr. Calista) Wolf** (1855 - 1922)
- **Joseph Wolf** (1857 - 1868)
- **Margaretha Wolf** (1858 - 1884)
- **Eva Elizabeth Wolf** (1860 - 1892)
- **Magdalena Wolf** (1862 - 1879)
- **William Wolf** (1864 - 1898) & Christine Groeninger (1866 - 1928)
  - **Eva Elizabeth Wolf** (1894 - 1986) & Carl Louis Bruck (1891 - 1965)
  - **Mary Elizabeth Wolf** (1895 - 1940)
  - **Margaret Wolf** (1898 - 1957)
- **Anna Barbara (Sr. Ildephonse) Wolf** (1865 - 1942)
- **Catherine Mathilda Wolf** (1869 - 1940) & Henry George Koewler (1867 - 1937)
  - **Anthony Joseph Koewler** (1906 - 1945) & Mildred Elizabeth Theiss (1906 - 1982)
  - **Joseph A Koewler** (1908 - 1967) & Elizabeth Neal (1908 - 1996)
  - **Marian Anna Koewler** (1909 - 1997) & Romuald L McBride (1907 - 1990)
- **John Joseph Wolf** (1871 - 1936) & Mary Louise Weinmann (1876 - 1938)
  - **Dominick Francis Wolf** (1904 - 1904)
  - **John Henry Wolf** (1905 - 1972) & Colette Mary Wahl (1908 - 1991)
  - **William Wolf** (1907 - 1907)
  - **Lawrence Adam Wolf*** (1908 - 1977) & Mary Agnes Ronaldson (1915 - 1995)
  - **Lawrence Adam Wolf*** (1908 - 1977) & Estelle D Moffett (1906 - 1959)
  - **Mary Agnes Wolf** (1910 - 1969) & Robert A Deger (1905 - 1997)
  - **George Ferdinand Wolf** (1912 - 1996) & Martha E Dwyer (1906 - 1982)
  - **John Joseph Wolf Jr.** (1914 - 2005) & Madge Louise Sutton (1920 - 1993)
  - **Carl Jerome Wolf** (1917 - 1972) & Frances Helen Timmer (1918 - 1990)
- **George Adam Wolf** (1872 - 1878)

Ancestors of Sr. Ildephonse Wolf



The End