

ANDREAS & CATHERINE BLEILE/BLILEY FAMILY EMIGRATION TO AMERICA 1834

by his son, Charles A. Bliley (Age 73)

Written to his grand daughter, Gertrude May Bonnell (Age 20)

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The letter below relates the reasons for the Bleile/Bliley family's emigration in 1834 and the path of their travels ever Westward. Charles was 12 years old at the time of the trip. Andrey Bleile and Catherine Eich were Charles' parents.

"Wesleyville March the 3 / 96

Dear Gerty at is with pleasure that I wil try to answer your inquiries of your German ancestry, to the best of my ability. My mind often runs back, of the past 73 years of my life, to the Country of my birth and the early existence of my Childhood. Many & many a time have I raised my thants up to Heaven, and thanked God, that he gave my Father and Mother courage, to undertake such a perilous, and long journey, under such unweiverable circumstansis, for the good of their children, of which, thank God we have received such abundend benifit.

By lookin at the Map, you will find the Country that your Gr Grand parentce lived in, was I think called, the grand Duchis of Baden in Germany, their home was in a Village by the nam of Krotzingen, that contained perhaps 8 or 9 hundred inhabitens, (the People in that country all live in Vilages) and those that ar not ocupied with som traid, make their living by tilling the soil, by this later ocupation, your Gr Grantparentcmade their humble but comvertable living.

Krotzingen is located som 9 miles from a beautiful City called Freiburg, of which I still have a good recolection, having ben ther a number of times with my Father. I

distingtly remember the beutifull Kathetrel, the large puplick buildings, the paved and neetly kept streets, the beautifull Parks &c, and an old Castel of ancient times, which was then in reuins, by the visitation of wars in oldin times, this Castel is located a mile or two outside of the City on a large hill,

Your Gr Grand Fathers name wa Andrey Bleile, and your Gr Grand Mothers name was Catherine (Eich) Bleile,

My Mother was born Nov the 25th 1794. my. Father birthday has been lost by the burning of our house. I think he was som 3 or 4 years the oldest, they had five Children, thre girls and two boys, my Father was a man of good education, likewise was my Mother, Father was wellposted on politicall maters of his Country, and red and heard a good deal of the new world of North America, of its free institution as a Repuplick, and of its great inducements for the laboring class of People. On the other hand he could see nothing but opression by the cround reulers, He could see that a laboring man could not improve nor better his condition in that country, to be born poor was to Die poor. So after long and due consiteration, having talked the matter over with Mother, and with her concent, he finely

made up his mind to make the change and take his Family to America, the Land of the free and the home of the brave

It was in the year of 1833 that he disited what to do. there were others in the Village that fell in with his opinion, and thre Families made up their minds to go with him, likewise two other Families in ajoining Vilages would go with the company, in the fall of 1833 they used to meet at our House to talk the matter over, my Father being rather the leader of the company, and well do I remember, when they all came to the conclution of seling out, and starting for the new country the next April, I went in our Childrens bed room, and cride as so my heart would brake. till Mother came up and paciified me, and dried up my tears, in my childish vews, I had a strong atachment, for my humble home, was contented and could see nothing better in the feuture. Well do I remember the Teacher that taut me the a.b.c and likewise The old Rev. Father Stum, an old gray heated Priest, for whom and his assistent, I had served as Altar boy for som two or three years, and who paid me nine Kreitser every Sunday morning in new coin, aparently rite from the G mint. I remember the old Church, centurys old where your forefathers met to worship and adore the true and living God. All this frequently comes to my mind, and causis a pleasent and I migt say a holy feeling in me to metitate on, but enough of this for it may not be of any interest to you.

In the Winter of 33 & 34 my Father sold out with the rest of the company, and were getting redy to start by the first of April, when my Father was takin sick with a strok of palsy (now called Parelised) his left Side was comparitively dead, which of cours, put a stop to emigration, when the rest of the company saw the condition of my Father they had no other joice then to proseed on their journey, and left Father behind. In som thre month time with good metical etention and the best care, he was able to leave his bed and hoble around on his crutches. Feeble and lame as he was he still persisted in going, His relations and Friends all tried to persuad him from undertaking such a long

journey, my Mother, (God bles her) talked to him with tears in her Eys, but all to no purpes, he would go, and did go, Mother saw the great undertaken of the jounry better then Father, with an invelet husben, five small Children, an aget Aunt of Father's, making a family of eight, the care of which she saw wold mostly fall on her, and it did.

There were no Rail road at that time, we put our goods on a wagon, to the River Rine, crosed over, then had a teem ingaged to take us across the continent of France, to the sea coast, at Haverdegras, we went through severall larg Cities

Likewise through the City of Paris, where we staid for twenty four hours and took a walk through it

On ariving at the seaport of Haverdegras, we remained there a week, then wend on board a ship called the Charleymain, with some 115 steerage passengers, and there were likewise som twenty Cabin pasengers on board, we had som heavy Storms, all got sick. and I have often heard Mother say that I was the only one not sick, and had to wait on the rest of the Family, severel times during the storm that the pasengers would be scared, hang on to something they could cling to. get on their Knees and say their prayers, thinkin the ship would go to the botom, when acording to my subsiquent experiants as a sayler, I made up my mind there never was any danger, or cause for alarm, we were thirty-eight days on the Ocean and finely arived at New York, we staid in N.Y. thre days, and finely tok a Steam boat for Albeny, intending to go to state of Ohio, at Albeny we came on a canal boat to Buffalo where we tok a steam boat intending to go to Cleveland, but ariving in Erie. part of the company that left us in Germany were their, and they prevailed on Father to remain in Erie. We stayed in Erie som thre weeks, when Father bought forty acres of Land, in the wilds of the South western part of Harborcreek Township, eight miles from the then Town of Erie. there was about eight acres of

newly cleared land on the place with a new and convertible log cabin, which consisted all the improvements

very kind to us, and helped us to get wood, and done us many a kind act.

Father engaged an Ox team, and in the month of November 1834 started with his Family for our new home, the weather was cold, the mud and snow was deep, the roads were full of stumps and trees, that it took us nearly two days to come to our place of destination, when we finally arrived there, and Mother took in the situation surrounding her, with a sickly husband, five small Children, among strangers, could not speak a word of English, and I presume nearly out of money, she gave vent to her feelings and cried as tho her heart would break,

After settling here in November. the following February he had another shock of Palsy on the right side and two after Died, I think in his forty ninth year of age.

in order to be in time for the mail I must bring this to a close, althow I could have a good deal more to write, about myself and Family

we got along as best we could, Father not being able to do any manual labor, the neighbors what few we had, were

Your grand Father Charles was born in Krotzingen, Baden the 23 of July 1822

from your Grand Father Chas Bliley"

ABOUT THIS LETTER

The letter was passed from Gertrude to her son, Elliott McConnell Bonnell, and then to his son, Elliott McConnell Bonnell, Junior. The photographic scans of the original letter were generously provided in January, 2004 by Elliott Bonnell, Jr., to me, Charles A. Bliley, another great-great grandson of the author.

This letter was written to Charles A. Bliley, aged 73, to his 20-year-old granddaughter Gertrude May Bonnell just nine months before his death. (Gertrude later married Elliott M. Bonnell.) It was written on both sides of five sheets of paper with light blue rules and an embossed stamping in the upper right-hand corner that appears to be of the U.S. capitol building.

Charles never returned to Germany and was the age of 12 at the time of the family's emigration to America 71 years earlier. He had practically no schooling by any account, and none after coming to America. His lack of formal education did not deter him from spending time as a young man in the merchant marine service on the Great Lakes and later becoming a very successful farmer in his adopted community of Harborcreek Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania. In spite of the lengthy period since the trip, it is evident that his mind was still working very well.

His simple words describe very well, the personal struggle my ancestors undertook to come to America; a story that is typical of many emigrants of the Nineteenth Century. As common as the story line may be, the words have moved me

to tears on more than one occasion. It is a story of a man with a dream to improve the conditions under which his family lived and provide them with greater opportunities. He achieved that goal by risking his life and in the end died a year after arriving in America. The greatest surprise is the appreciation his son, Charles, felt for what some would have considered an act of pure foolishness at the time of their emigration.

In 2004, I was blessed by the gift of photographic scans of the original from a distant cousin, Elliott McConnell, Gerty's grandson. I connected with him in 1999 through an genealogy Web site focused on genealogy interests in Erie, Pennsylvania. What a blessing that accidental meeting has been to me.

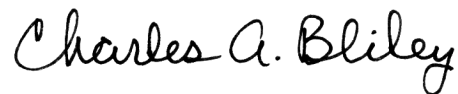
The letter was first transcribed by Elliott Bonnell, Senior (1846-1917). Over the years, his and two other transcriptions of this letter were generated; all have some small variations in punctuation, spelling and breaks for paragraphs. The 2004 transcription, as found here, is a faithful transcription based on the photographic images of the hand-written letter. I deliberately chose not to change misspellings or grammar; the story is sufficiently clear and too powerful to be influenced by such subtleties seemingly demanded by modern language.

One point of note: there is no mention of Charles' uncle, Sebastian, and aunt, Magdalena, who were also passengers on the same ship, the Charlemagne, which carried Andreas and his family in September of 1834.

Charles Bliley's father was Andrey Bleile. All of his children went by "Bliley", the Anglicized version of the family name. One unexplainable exception was Andrew William, Junior who used "Blila".

If you care to view the original letter, you will find them on my Web site, www.Bliley.net. Look in the family history section for The Chronicle the Bleile/Bliley Family Emigration to America in 1834.

I never expected to have the answers to my many questions about our family history, but a surprising number of them have come through the generosity of distant family members and strangers. This letter is one of them.



Charles A. Bliley
Rochester, NY
October 7, 2004