

The son in America

By Jana Budek

Tucked away in the trees at the historic cemetery on the Aapark are tomb monuments from the 19th century. The burials belong to the biographical landscape of Herford and the surroundings of bygone times. Many gravestones are lavishly designed and indicate prosperity of the families. Among them is a neo-classical grave pier with Eckakroterien. The inscription reads on the front:

THE SOUVENIR OF THE GOOD MOTHER

WILHELMINE HOFFMANN

BORN BULLHEAD

THE CHILD LIBERTY

THE SON IN AMERICA.

YOU SHOULD YOUR FATHER

AND YOUR MOTHER HONOR

and on the back:

THE LORD UNIFIES THE ONE

THE HIS IN THE ETERNAL HOME

This inscription made me curious and stimulated by an indication of Almuth Petersen-Roil, a descendant of the family Groppe, I went together with the genealogist Thomas Kriete on the search for family relationships and the son in America.

Margarethe Wilhelmine Groppe was born on January 9, 1796 in Halle / Westphalia. In 1819 she married the two-year-older bookbinder Friedrich Wilhelm Hoffmann from Bramsche. Together, they moved to Herford one year later and applied for citizenship. There the eldest son Gottlob Friedrich Theodor was born on 08 June 1820. At this time the family lived at the Old Market 14. The second son Franz Arnold Wilhelm saw on June 3, 1822 in the Lübberstraße 25 the light of day.

By 1832 the couple had five more children, a total of four boys and three girls. Since 1825 the family lived in a house on Gehrenberg 20, Wilhelm Hoffmann acquired for 750 Taler. Wilhelmine died of consumption at the end of the thirties on April 12, 1833 and was buried in the Old Cemetery in the 18th row. It can be assumed that she received a simple gravestone. Wilhelm married again one year later. With his second wife, Anna Luise Arnoline Rittershausen, he got two more children, so that the children had now grown to nine.

Theodor, the eldest son of Wilhelmine and Wilhelm, studied medicine after completing his high school diploma at the Universities of Münster and Berlin. After his studies he served as deputy staff surgeon in the Prussian army. He stayed in this position for four years. In 1848 he left Prussia and emigrated to the later United States. He first settled in Schaumburg, Cook County, where he remained for a year, and then moved to Niles, Cook County, Illinois, where he practiced as a doctorate. In 1850 he married Engel Hintze from Kassel. They get three sons - Julius, Emil and Otto. In 1868 the family moved to Chicago. Three years later, the entire property was burned in a fire; the doctor's office and four houses. He then returned to Niles with his wife and children. His first wife died in 1873, he married Christina Fowler from Canada. They gave birth to another son, Charles Arthur. Theodor Hoffmann not only received eulogies from several renowned German universities, but also had an honorary doctorate from the Rush Medical College in Chicago. The doctor died on November 1, 1905 in his adopted home Niles.

According to a descendant of the Groppe family, Almuth Petersen-Roil, he is the founder of the gravestone of his mother Wilhelmine. Her great-grandfather Wilhelm Groppe was in contact with him until about 1898. Not known is the time of setting up the gravestone.

Theodor, however, was not the only one who moved to North America. His two years younger brother Franz Arnold Wilhelm (1822-1903) emigrated already in 1841 in the British colonies. He rose there to a political and economic size, was friends with Abraham Lincoln and a staunch opponent of slavery. In 1875 he retired from all offices and businesses and bought with his wife Cynthia, b. Gilbert (1825-1908), a farm in Jefferson Wisconsin. From now on they called themselves Grete and Hans Buschbauer. He ran a farm business, wrote numerous essays for an agricultural journal and advised coming immigrants from Germany.

His father Wilhelm, his second wife Anna Luise and the youngest three children were also in the later United States since 1852. The bookbindery, the house on the Gehrenberg and the family grave site were given by Wilhelm Hoffmann to his nephew G. F. Wilhelm Hoffmann. Whether Theodor Hoffmann ever visited his hometown is unknown. Franz Arnold, however, probably came several times with his wife Cynthia as a guest to Herford. He also maintained a lively correspondence with his great-nephew Hermann Hackmann in Herford. So wrote in one of these letters:

*Often I think of the old Herford with its gable roofs and the rickety Neustädter tower, which has already shattered me in the dream more than once. God bless them, the Herford, their homes and their quiet happiness that rarely drives them over the moat.*

What Theodor, the eldest son may have felt and thought about his birthplace Herford from afar, is not known. The very personally formulated inscription on the grave stone of his mother Wilhelmine Hoffmann, who died at an early age, shows a deep attachment to her, even long after her death.

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