

## The American Baetcke family (Translated parts of the Baetcke family book)

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The parents of Gustav's wife immigrated with their children in 1829 to North America. In the beginning, they settled in Albany, N.Y. In the spring of 1830, they moved to Mayfield, Montgomery County, N.Y., where they lived until 1836. In May 1836, they came to Detroit, Michigan, and settled down in the spring of the next year - just as Gustav himself - as German pioneers in the district Genoa, Livingstone County, Michigan. Gustav's parents-in-law were also his neighbors.

On February 19, 1840, they celebrated Gustav's marriage (...) and two and a half years later his wife Catharina gave birth to their son Gustav Julius.

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(...short summary of the historical facts about the American Civil War..)

During the course of the war, Gustav Julius, Gustav's oldest son, felt more and more belligerent and so he joined, against the wishes of his parents, the Twenty-second Michigan Volunteer Infantry on January 5, 1864. He was sent to the fortified camp in Chattanooga.

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The following passage is a letter from Gustav Baetcke to his brother Julius in Hamburg, Germany.

Brighton, August 7, 1865

Dear Julius:

(...) My Gustav was at that time (1864) in Chattanooga; from there he went with General Sherman to Atlanta. He stayed there for a while, and then he went back with General Tomas to Chattanooga, where he stayed a longer time. Recently he came home during the holidays for 30 days. You can't imagine how happy we were. Now he's in Nashville, Tennessee. We hope that he gets his discharge soon.

Last year we had a lot of work to do, especially my Catharina. We had 3 carpenters, 3 bricklayers and a few helpers here. Catharina had to cook and bake for them. She managed all this by herself. Our new house is 32 feet wide and deep, the wall is 2 1/2 floors high. My brother-in-law gave me the bricks. I needed 48,000 pieces and had to transport the lime over 55 miles and the boards 30 miles. Early last winter we moved to the new house. Franz did the painting (...)

On your birthday I harvested hay the whole day. My wheat crop was good this year, but it rained a bit while we harvested it, so I hope now that this won't reduce the quality. I didn't thresh it yet.

Our 80 sheep gave us 370 pounds; I was able to sell them for 56 cents per pound. Last year I had 450 pounds from 105 sheep and got 100 cents per pound. My oats and potatoes grew better than ever. Last year my direct taxes were \$52.00. The farmers here had a very good time. All we cultivated had a good price and we were far away from the theater of war.

(...) End of the letter

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The cultivation of cereals wasn't expanded from Gustav since 1853. He harvested as much wheat in 1865. But his livestock grew more and more and just as much as his prosperity grows, his taxes rose from \$9.00 in 1853 to \$32.00 in 1865. But we have to consider that the tax rates may be higher during the war.

When the war was over in 1865, the army corps were no longer needed and so they were disbanded. Gustav Julius got his honorable discharge on September 26, 1865 and came back to his parents' farm.(...)

The reason why Gustav was such a successful farmer was that his wife and his sons were so full of zeal and a good help. When the father grew old, the oldest son Gustav Julius managed the farm more and more, while the father took more care of the big fruit, vegetable, and flower garden that surrounded the house. Gustav Julius, who grew up on the farm, was a very keen farmer. In addition to his experience, he was diligent, circumspect, full of energy and a good entrepreneur. He was the first farmer in that area who cultivated hop. The prices were good and so he made in the middle of the 70s an extra earning of 1200-1600 M (\$300-400) per year. It was such a success that a lot of other farmers copied it and a few years later they cultivated so much hop in Michigan that the price fell to \$4.50 for the English Pound in 1884.

(... the next is a passage is about the prices for the cultivated goods...)

All cultivated products at the Baetcke farm were sold in Brighton, a small town in that area. When we look at the prices, we know that it wasn't easy to become rich, but the Baetcke farm was unencumbered and so the hard work of the father and his sons gave them every year a small profit and so the Baetcke family was respected as free and prospering farmers.

Certainly, Gustav's characteristics made a contribution to this. His high education wasn't unusual in that area at that time, because in the area of Genoa and Hamburg a lot of Germans settled down, many of them were highly educated people from Hamburg, Germany. If we look at the names of Gustav's neighbors, we find a lot of famous names from Hamburg, like Crasemann, Suhr, Wiechers, Bode, Buek, Beurmann and so on. This first generation of German pioneers in the wild northwest of the United States stuck together and shared their joys and sorrows.

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What we had feared for so long, the leaving of our beloved father, draw near. And then, January 11, 1888, he died. At the farm in Genoa, surrounded by his family, he passed away. He reached a nice age of 84 years and, except for his sister who was 8 years younger, he outlived all his brothers and sisters for many years. His old age was embellished by the love of his wife, his sons and his grandchildren. It was his proud and pleasure whenever the weather allowed him to work in the garden.

In his younger days, he did his gardening in the early morning, thus robbing time from his sleep. He often could be seen in his garden at 4 a.m. before breakfast. He often overstrained, which sometimes led to insomnia at night. In the end, he was able look back satisfied with long and labour-intensive but successful life. Not a single bad act blurred his memories and he was ever full of honour.

With his own power and tenacity in a life full of privations, he built a prosperous farm out of the wilderness. With his own hand, he built a nice and roomy house. He gave his sons a practical and solid education. He saw that they were well esteemed in secure positions where it was easy for them to get on, because of the high repute of their name. He saw that they were happy husbands and fathers, maybe because of the German sense of family he transmitted and taught them.

All his life he was a bit too generous to save money. He would rather give his workers higher than lower wages, and he was ever lenient towards them. So many of them were very thankful and he himself enjoyed it most when he was able to help the poor.

These characteristics were the reason for the deep respect all the neighbours in the whole area had for him; with his sociability he gained their friendship. Cheerfulness and life he brought to the people with his irrepressible sense of humour. And this humour was the reason why he got over all the hard times so well.

May the American part of our family founded by Gustav prosper with his strength and may they ever remember in proud and respect their German founder.