

# The Bruckner Family History

The Bruckner family history starts with Pauline Bruckner. Pauline is the mother of Nellie Refheldt Dahl, the grandmother of Marie Dahl Bender, and the Great Grandmother of Sandy Bender.

Pauline Bruckner was born in Schwarzburg, in the Kingdom of Hanover on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June in the year 1849. She was the youngest living child of Louisa Rose and William Charles Bruckner. (Schwarzburg is presently located in the province of Thuringia, in what is now known as East Germany (or the Deutsches Democratic Republic). Schwarzburg is an ancient German city, having once been of major import as a major north-south trade route from Rome leading to northern Gaul. A one time large and bustling trade center, it is now merely a sleepy forgotten town, having nowhere near the relative population it experienced in the Middle Ages.

The Bruckner name originated in Austria and Schlesia and means “one who builds bridges”. This name was also given to those who built paved and wooden streets. In the east this name is spelled “Pruckner”. (The majority of German names originated from the town in which the person was born, but less frequently the name originated from the profession or occupation of that person, as in the case of the Bruckner family name.) The Bruckner family name first surfaced around 1300-1400 in Schlesien and Mahren and was assigned to persons who repaired bridges and paved the streets. Less frequently, the name Bruckner was assigned to those persons who came from the city of Bruckenau in Frankenland.

The Bruckner family had considerable musical and artistic talent in the 1800's. Pauline's cousin, Herman Bruckner, who came from a city called Quedlinberg, which is north of Erfurt and close to Schwarsburg, was an accomplished musician. He had learned his profession under the tutelage of his talented father in his native town of Quedlinberg. Both Herman and his father had performed in orchestras in the neighboring town of Ettersberg, north of Weimar. Herman and his father played many musical instruments, among which were the piano, organ, violin, guitar, and his favorite, the cello. Herman was music teacher for many years, having had a music studio on the Grand Blvd. Herman Bruckner's notable achievement in his lifetime was when he helped found the Detroit Philharmonic Quartet, a famous musical company before the turn of the century in Detroit. Herman was the cellist in the Detroit Philharmonic for years after he turned the direction of the Quartet over to the famous German composer, Carl Yost. Carl Yost once again returned the direction of the Detroit Philharmonic to Herman Bruckner in 1890. Herman then headed the Philharmonic again for about 10 more years before retiring. Herman Brueckner has been written about in the local history books due to his musical accomplishments in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In his later years Herman Bruckner played the piano in the movie theatre occasionally during the time of the silent movies, probably more as a source of entertainment than as a supplement to his retirement income.

Herman had only one son, who, unfortunately, preceded him in death. It appears as though the son died without having children, thus ending one of the most talented branches of the Bruckner family tree.

We could hope to establish a relationship to a most famous Bruckner, Anton, a most talented composer, who was born in Ansfelden, upper Austria on the 4<sup>th</sup> of September, 1824 and died in Vienna, Austria on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October, 1896. He was a monk in the Catholic Church and was famous for both his liturgical and lay compositions. However, our relationship to Anton would be very tenuous and distant, due to the geographical distances and the differences in religion (our Bruckner family were of the Evangelical Lutheran faith in Germany).

We also had a Bruckner relative in Detroit at the turn of the century who packed up all of her belongings in order to display her musical talents in California. She obviously never made it big in California, but our immediate family benefited in that our grandparents purchased her piano which gave our family years and years of enjoyment (that is, until Nellie's sons revolted over moving that piano every time that Nellie changed residences.)

We had one other talented young man in the family, Nellie's brother John Rehfeldt. John was an accomplished painter and painted a number of very large and very fine paintings. His most remembered by the family was "Coxie's army". John passed away in the prime of his youth, having died at 25 years of age from the side effects of a vaccination.

Pauline's oldest living brother was Edward Brueckner, who was born in Schwarzburg, Kingdom of Saxony, in 1840. Edward was a last maker by trade and spent most of his adult working years plying this trade. But Edward also had a few more colorful jobs in his lean years, the most interesting being as a "huckster" for the C.H. market in Detroit. He was also a gardener for one year, and a carpenter. It appears as though he built his own residence at the corner of Dequindre & Georgia (either that or he built this house as a carpenter).

In 1880 Edward (Eduard in German) and his wife Carolina answered the U.S. census questionnaire in the following manner:

Edward stated that he was born in Germany in 1840. He stated that he was a white male and was living at 180 Benton St. in Detroit. He stated that his wife Carolina was born in 1846 and that she was born in Michigan.

He stated that he had the following children:

- A son Charles (named after his brother Charles), born in 1864 in Michigan,
- A daughter Emma, born in 1866 in Michigan,
- A daughter Carolina, born in 1867 in Michigan,
- A daughter Clara, born in 1870 in Michigan,
- A daughter Gusta, born in 1873 in Michigan,

A daughter Tilly, born in 1875 in Michigan.

Edward would later have another addition to his family, a son William born on the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1884.

This census information can be found in the 1880 U.S. census, volume 30, E.D. 308, sheet 36, line 3.

The 1870 census also had some interesting information concerning Edward Bruckner. It stated that Edward was 30 years old, was a carpenter by trade, that he was born in Prussia, that his real estate value was \$800.00 and that his personal property was worth \$200.00. It stated that his wife Carolina was a housewife, born in Michigan, and could not read or write English. The Edward Bruckner family was residing in Ward 6 in Detroit at the time that this census was taken.

Edward and Carolina had their share of heartaches too. On the 20<sup>th</sup> of August, 1879 their little daughter, Marie Bruckner passed away. She was only 7 months, 9 days old. She died on 180 Benton St, Detroit. Then 2 short years later they lost another little daughter, Augustine Wilhelmine Brueckner, aged 9 months, 4 days.

The Works Project administration, a FDR invention during the depression era, notes one happy occasion in the Brueckner family household. In their records it is noted that a daughter Clara Bruckner was born on 205 Whitney St. Detroit on July 3, 1869. She is the daughter of Eduard Bruckner, a last maker by trade, and who was born in Saxonia and Caroline ?, born in Saxonia. The family residence in Detroit.

Edward appears in the Polk Detroit City Directory from the year 1871 until 1892. In the earlier years of the Directory, from 1871 until 1879, Edward lived right next door to his younger brother Charles John Bruckner. Edward mostly spelled his name Brueckner through the years, while his brother Charles mostly spelled his name Bruckner. The confusion came due to the umlaut that appeared over the "u" in the German spelling of the Bruckner name (**Bruckner**) in German. There is no umlaut in English, so the family had to either just drop the umlaut or to place the "e" in the name after the "u" as the umlaut in German is just a shorthand for the "e" after another consonant. Charles dropped the umlaut, while Edward added the "e". But they were never consistent with their spelling as both brothers spelled their last name with and without the "e" throughout their lifetimes, depending on their mood.

Edward and Charles sister Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt moved in just down the street on Alfred right after she married Charles John Rehfeldt and all of their children played together in those early years of their childhood until 1879 when Edward moved to 180 Benton St. (IN the early years Edward lived at 205 Alfred St. and Charles lived at 206 Alfred. Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt, their sister lived at 200 Alfred.)

Edward and Charles were close in those early years and they named their sons after each other, Edward naming his son Charles, and Charles naming his son Edward. Edward

named his second son William after their father, William Charles. Pauline also named her sons Charles and Edward, Edward, unfortunately passed away in infancy, while Charles lived on into his 70's. Pauline's son Charles got a job at the MCRR, no doubt due to the influence of one or both of his uncles.

Edward Brueckner was proud of his position as a volunteer fireman for the Detroit City Fire Department. One day Edward answered an alarm in the wee hours of the morning, bravely fought the fire, and when the fire was out he went directly to his job at the MCRR in his wet clothes. Edward's devotion to duty was his downfall as he had caught a chill from working in wet clothes, contracted pneumonia, a dreaded disease in those days before the advent of antibiotics, and on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1892 passed away at the young age of 52 years. Poor Caroline must have been distraught with 8 children to care for and no husband! Caroline shows up in the Polk Directory as living on 501 Willis for years after Edward died, but she shows no occupation. The first child to show as working was Lillie her daughter, shows up as a cigar packer in 1898. In 1900 Emma is listed as a clerk, and William L. shows up as a driver. William was with Caroline his mother, until 1907 when he moved into his own place at 370 Brewster. Caroline moved to 938 Oaklan ave somewhere around the year 1914. Caroline passed away sometime after 1922.

Pauline's younger brother was Charles John Bruckner. Charles was born in Schwarzburg, Germany on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October, 1842, the second oldest surviving child of Louisa Rose and William Charles Bruckner. He came to America with his parents and siblings in 1853. He attended the Detroit public schools as a child, and became a patternmaker prior to his service to his country in the Civil War.

While Pauline still lived at home with her parents, her brother Charles John Bruckner, born Karl Johann Bruckner, went off to fight in the Civil War. Charles was mustered into service on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, 1861, the date that would be his niece Nellie Rehfeldt's wedding day some 45 years later. The family had no doubt suffered a loss of income when Charles joined the service as he had been a patternmaker by trade prior to enlisting. Like so many other families in wartime, our family had to learn to tighten their belt a bit to make it through what turned out to be a 4 year long war. (How much more interesting would the battle of Gettysburg have been to me had I known that I had a great uncle Charles Bruckner and a Great Greatgrandfather John Becker in that battle!) Charles fought long and hard throughout the entire war, having served from 1861 right through to after the end of the war in 1865. He had the honor of being present when the Confederate army was beaten back to the Appomatox Courthouse! Charles Bruckner had only one leave of absence from the war, when he returned to Detroit in January, 1864, when he took the opportunity of the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, 1864 to marry Catherine Hilsendagen, aged 20. They were married in Detroit by Joseph Kuhn, Justice of the Peace. The witnesses to their marriage were John Maertz and Frank Sedenbier, both of whom also resided in Detroit. Immediately after his marriage Charles reenlisted in the Army as a veteran, and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, Company 1, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, 1864. Charles Bruckner was finally mustered out of service at Jeffersonville, Indiana on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, 1865. The rest of life was anticlimactic for Charles after all the excitement of the

Civil War. After being Second Lieutenant, fighting one exciting battle after another, being looked up to by his men, being a virtual hero in a very popular war, his life after 1865 was one of quiet desperation. The only battles left to wage were petty personal ones, having to do with not enough money and petty domestic upsets. I'm sure Charles spent many an hour reminiscing over the much more colorful periods in his life when every day was a new challenge, and every battle brought a fresh chance for glory.

Charles Bruckner was in a very patriotic mood after the end of the Civil War, so he filed for his citizenship papers on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1865, just 24 days after he was mustered out of service. No man was more deserving of his citizenship in our family than Charles Bruckner, who had fought so long and so hard for his homeland. On the 29<sup>th</sup> day of July, 1865, Charles Bruckner said the following words proudly under oath: "I, Charles Bruckner, do swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States, and that I do absolutely and entirely renounce and adjure forever all allegiance to any foreign prince, potentate, state of sovereignty whatsoever, and particularly do absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to the King Of Hanover, country for four years before putting his loyalty into words. Charles had no real pangs about renouncing his loyalty to the King of Hanover as he had been only 7 years old when leaving Germany, so he had no first hand knowledge of the King of Hanover. However, I am sure that there were other men present that day who had a very heavy heart about renouncing their sovereign.

By August, 1865 Charles Bruckner was back home in Detroit with his new bride, safe and settled into a job as a baggage man for the Michigan Central Railroad (MCRR). Charles evidently was satisfied with his job with the MCRR as that was the only employer he had after the war, and he was employed by the railroad for about 50 years.

Charles had three children by Catherine Hilsendagen Bruckner, Rosa, born in 1862, and who died relatively early, a son Edward born in 1871, and who Charles was so proud of, especially his war record as a veteran of the Spanish-American War, and Henrietta, born in 1888, whose married name was Ingabrand. Charles Bruckner was especially proud of the fact that he himself had fought through the entire Civil War, his son Edward had served in the Spanish American War, and his grandson Lieutenant Charles Russell Bruckner, served in the 120<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, thus making three generations who had so proudly served their country in its time of need.

Pauline had a sister Louisa Bruckner who was born on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 1844 in Schwarzburg, Germany. Louisa was named after her mother, Louisa. Louisa came to America when she was 8 years old, and when she was about 21 years old she married Henry Schoenau around the year 1865. Henry Schoenau died on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, 1885 at the young age of 43, leaving Louise a widow for the next 17 years. Unfortunately, Louisa and her first husband had no children. Mr. Schoenau had been successful and had left Louise comfortably set. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of April, 1901, Louisa married Dr. Frederick Herbertz, and moved into his home at 2001 Antietam in Detroit. Dr. Herbertz had made a good deal of money in his lifetime, and he afforded Louisaa very comfortable life. Again, Louisa and Dr. Herbertz had no children, so when Dr.

Herbertz died he left Louisa a considerable sum of money. Louisa used her inheritance to make her family more comfortable. Louisa and Paulina were close to one another all of their lives, and when Louisa died she left an estate of over \$33, 000 which her brothers and sisters shared. Louisa evidently left her house to her brother Charles as he lived there after her death. Louisa lived to be over 76 years old. Louisa had in her possession over 6 cemetery lots in Mt. Elliott cemetery which were of no use to her as she wasn't Catholic, so when she passed away she left them to her sister Pauline whose daughter Nellie had married a Catholic man. When Pauline died she deeded the graves to Nellie. Nellie never used any of these graves as her husband's family owned a family plot in Mt. Olivet cemetery and that is where Nellie and her daughter Dorothy were buried.

When Louisa and William Charles Bruckner decided to set sail to America their passage out of the country was easier than it was for most German families. In Germany when one traveled overland to get to a port, one had to pay a duty at every border crossing. For many Germans this would involve 4 or 5 tariffs as one passed through dukedoms, Kingdoms, Duchies, etc. Fortunately for the Bruckner family in Schwarzburg was located in the Kingdom of Hanover which had its own port, Hamburg within its borders. So the family had to pay overland passage but no tariffs, which could be rather costly. The Bruckner family probably traveled to Hamburg by train as a train line was first set into operation in the Schwarzburg-Hamburg line around the year 1845. In 1853 William Charles Bruckner, his wife Louisa Rose Bruckner and their 6 children packed their few precious possessions, then set out to the port of Hamburg in northern Germany. They had to travel northwest about 70 miles. The Bruckners traveled to America in a large sailboat. While on board ship in the middle of the ocean, one of Louisa and William's daughters, who was probably born between the years 1845 and 1848, fell ill and within a few days succumbed to her illness. Her little body was thrown overboard after a brief religious service, and she now rests at the bottom of the ocean.

Wilhelm Karl Bruckner settled with his wife and 5 remaining children in Detroit in 1854. However we have no record of Wilhelm working in the Detroit area per the Polk Detroit City Directory so I wonder if possibly he may have settled first in a neighboring community, such as Monroe as there is a William Bruckner listed in Monroe in 1860, but it does not appear to be our William. Quite possibly William may have died relatively early as there are no records of him in Detroit. The first person to show up in the records are his sons Edward and Charles in 1867. Most probably his wife Louisa lived longer than he as the grandchildren speak of conversations that their parents had with Louise. One conversation that Louisa Bruckner Schenau Herbertz and Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt had with their mother Louisa and which they repeated frequently to their children concerned one of Louisa's grandchildren. Louisa's son Charles had named his only daughter by his second marriage Louisa after his mother and this had so pleased Louisa to have a grandchild named after her!

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 1867, Pauline Bruckner married John Charles (Johann Karl) Rehfeldt. Pauline was then 19 years old and her Charles was 19 years. Charles was a painter by trade and he had stated on his marriage license that he was born in France. Pauline and Charles Rehfeldt were married by Joseph Kuhn, Justice of the Peace. Charles Bruckner,

whom Pauline was quite close to, was a witness to her marriage. The second witness was Matthias Schied.

Charles Rehfeldt never took out citizenship papers, and Wilhelm Charles Bruckner, Pauline's father, was never naturalized, and in those times a woman could not by herself become a citizen of the United States, so Pauline and her husband remained aliens, and died as German citizens. (Both of Pauline's brothers, Edward and Charles did become citizens of the United States).

In 1921, Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt's sister, Louisa Bruckner Schoenau Herbertz, died, leaving no children. Louisa left all her money, over \$33,000 to her sister Pauline and her brother Charles. On the 5<sup>th</sup> day of June, 1921, Louise was old and very tired, and knew she was not much longer for this earth, so she went to Elmwood cemetery, walked into the office, and declared that she was the rightful owner of the East ½ of lot 81, section 3, but was no longer in possession of the papers to this lot as she had lost her papers in a house fire some years back. She stated that she wanted to be buried next to her first husband, Henry Schoenau, and that her sister Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt was to be buried at her side. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of December, 1921, on what would have been her grandniece's Dorothy Dahl's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday, at the age of 77 years, 5 months and 20 days, Louisa Bruckner slipped away, her old and tired heart seeking its final rest. At her instructions, the ashes of her second husband, Dr. Fred Herbertz, which she had preserved for years in a fruit jar, was buried with her. Louisa left all her earthly possessions, including \$33,000 to her two siblings, Charles Bruckner and Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt. Pauline inherited Louisa's house on Antietam that Pauline and her family had been living in for years, and Charles inherited the house that belonged to Dr. Herbertz and was left to Louise upon the death of Dr. Herbertz. All of Louise's possessions were put into a large barn behind Pauline's house, and Pauline told all her children and grandchildren to come and take whatever they so desired out of the barn. Louisa had many pieces of china, and knickknacks that were claimed by her many nieces and grandnieces. The \$33,000 was split equally between Pauline and Charles. Charles died on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November, 1923, and left his inheritance to his children, Edward Bruckner, Henrietta Bruckner Ingabrand, and his daughter by his second marriage, whom he had named after his mother and his sister, Louisa Bruckner.

On the 12<sup>th</sup> day of November, 1926, Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt, now 77 years, 4 months and 21 days old, quietly passed away when her kidneys stopped functioning, having failed more as a result of old age than inherent disease.

Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt was healthy most of her life and was robust in her old age. Her family used to come over to her home for Sunday dinner and she would cook three kinds of meat and many side dishes for her family. She was an excellent cook, and loved to cook foods which pleased her family members the most. Ruth Forkel Everett remembers that whenever she went to her grandmother Rehfeldt's house, her grandmother would always fix her favorite dish, vanilla pudding with crushed strawberries.

Thus ended the life of a beautiful, loving, kindly, gentle soul who had been born in Heidelberg, Germany, came to America on a boat from the port of Hamburg and settled in America. In her lifetime she had seen the invention of the automobile, the phonograph, the silent movies, electricity, indoor plumbing, as well as the airplane. Pauline was a warm, loving grandmother who went out of her way to please her family and to make them feel more than welcome when they came into her home. Her grandchildren's friends were always welcome when they came into her home. Pauline had a very happy, pleasing disposition. She proved her love and concern for her family by going out to work after her beloved Charles had died, and by so generously sharing her inheritance from Louisa with her children when they were still young enough to enormously profit from this money. Pauline's kindness lived on in the hearts of her daughters, and we are all richer for having been the children and grandchildren of such beautiful women like Hattie, Tillie, and Nellie. Pauline is gone from out midst now, having joined her beloved Charles, and her son John, and grandchildren Hattie and Dorothy. But as we all well know, our beloved Pauline will not be forgotten by those who knew and loved her so well.

For more on Pauline Bruckner and her marriage and subsequent children with John A. Rehfeldt, see the Rehfeldt Family History document or the Pauline Bruckner Rehfeldt biography.

For more on Charles Bruckner and his Civil War years, see the Charles Bruckner Civil War Years document.