

PLASSMEYER FAMILY REUNION 2007

The Westphalia community of the past and present showed itself to good advantage in September as the focal point of the Plassmeyer Reunion 2007, a celebration of 150 years in America by the descendents of Martin and Anna Heislen Plassmeyer.

Martin S. Plassmeyer, a third generation American, was a son of civil war veteran Joseph Plassmeyer who came to Westphalia from Prussia at age 17 with his parents, Henry and Elizabeth Plassmeyer in 1857. Martin began his working career as a merchant and postmaster at Wardsville, and then later returned to the home place in Osage County where he continued as a farmer and banker.

The house on the home place, now owned and occupied by Anne and Paul Stratman and their sixth generation sons Paul and Michael, was established by Joseph and Margaret Bode Plassmeyer in 1868, and it received a return visit during the reunion from cousins representing four generations who have lived and played around the old house.

Agnes Bajema, in her 86th year, the youngest and only surviving child of Martin and Anna Plassmeyer made the trip to Westphalia from her home on the Columbia River at Washougal, Washington where she resides with her husband Don. Agnes married Gene Patton in 1947 and they left for Washington and spent an eventful life raising three sons and taking care of numerous others along the way. It was a pleasure to have her back at Westphalia for the reunion and an extended visit afterward.

The other children of Martin and Anna Plassmeyer were sons William, Vincent, and Paul, and daughters Margaret Brandt and Mary Louise Loehner. By travel from Washington, California, Montana, Colorado, Kansas, Illinois, North Carolina, and other parts of Missouri they were all represented at the reunion dinner at the Knights of Columbus Hall, an event made even more memorable by Frances Boessen and her volunteer staff.

A tour by school bus, courtesy of Roger Temmen, of the historic home place and the former residence of Col. Joseph Plassmeyer, now owned and occupied by Mary and Wally Corey (and daughters Monica and Abby) proved to be a highlight of the reunion.

St. Joseph Church, The Westphalia Historical Society Museum, the cemeteries, the Towne Club, Westphalia Inn, Westphalia Winery, and Joe's Market showed themselves to good advantage during excursions by some of the Plassmeyer Cousins. The reunion event also spurred production of a family roster, collection and (some) organization of family documents and pictures, renewal and strengthening of acquaintances among the family, and even the speeches of some of the elder cousins failed to dampen the fun.

The frugality of the Plassmeyer ancestors remains strong through five generations as the cousins gathered around a bonfire after dinner at the home of Norb and Eileen Plassmeyer to finish off the beer keg before returning it empty to Joe's Market. On Sunday, September 23, Eileen and Norb Plassmeyer hosted a lunch and opportunity for extended farewells for the travelers departing for their destinations across the country. Aunt Agnes and her cousin and classmate Emil Schwartz were the honored guests at that event.

Our uncle of the third generation, the first Plassmeyer (of this family) born in America, Father Theodosius Plassmeyer, O.F.M. wrote a sketch of his father and the other German pioneers who settled in the Westphalia community. It seems fitting to close with a concluding quote from that memorable piece:

“It is evident that these sturdy pioneers had an ample share in clearing away the primeval

forests, and in opening up the agricultural and commercial resources of Central Missouri. Moreover, they bequeathed a fund of cultural, civic, moral and spiritual values to their descendants for the formation of their civic and religious character, that defies appraisal. They have finished this eventful career and have finished it well. May they rest in peace. I, for one, consider myself indeed fortunate for the privilege of having grown up among them. I gratefully dedicate this little marker to their memory. We, the children, have reason to be justly proud of our ancestors. Let us preserve their memory for the inspiration and guidance of future generations.”

I am satisfied that our Plassmeyer Reunion 2007 has enhanced our lives and will contribute to the memory of future generations. A hearty thank you to Janet Asel and Ron Plassmeyer, cousins on the local scene, and everyone from near and far who participated.

Norb Plassmeyer
October 2007