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THE RATEIKE FAMILY HISTORY

PART I -- AN OVERVIEW

Most of the Rateike families from the Chicago area are descendants of an August Rateike who was born in Germany on or about Nov. 5, 1813. He lived in a village named Garzigar, which was located in "Kreis" (county) Lauenburg, in the Province of Pomerania, which belonged to the Kingdom of Prussia. Prussia, in turn, was part of the German Empire. Most of Pomerania, including the area around Garzigar, was given to Poland after WWII. Garzigar is now called Garczegorze by the Polish and is located about 35 or 40 miles northwest of the Polish seaport of Gdansk (formerly called Danzig by the German people).

In 1873, August and Wilhelmine Rateike and their four sons -- Carl (sometimes known as Charles), Adolph, Julius, and Albert -- left Germany. By 1874 they were living in Chicago. Julius had been married to Henriette Jannusch in Germany, and they had a two-year-old son who was born there. Carl, Adolph, and Albert were still single. Carl was a half-brother to the other three sons, having been born by August's first wife, Justine.

By 1876, all except Carl had moved to a farm in Wheeling Township northwest of Chicago. Carl had married and stayed in Chicago where he remained the rest of his life. He had 13 children and died in 1923.

About 1878, Julius moved his family from Wheeling Township to another farm in adjacent Northfield Township and eventually moved back to Chicago in the late 1880's where he died in 1901. He had 15 children with two wives.

Albert stayed on various farms in Wheeling Township for about 40 years where he had 15 children. His father, mother, and bachelor brother Adolph all lived with him until they died. Albert later moved to Des Plaines with his second wife and finally to Chicago after she died. Albert died in 1930.

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PART II - GERMAN ROOTS

The earliest records documenting the Chicago Rateike Family roots are found in the "Evangelische Kirche Garzigar Kirchenbuch" (Evangelical Church of Garzigar Church Register) of an old church in the former German town of Garzigar.

This church served as the spiritual center for many of the little villages in the surrounding area, for its "Kirchenbuch" contains the records of births, baptisms, marriages, and funerals of the people who lived in these various villages. These records (at least the ones that are presently available) begin in the year 1728 and from them it is evident that some Rateike families lived in that area at least as early as 1737.

The name "Rateike" apparently was not a very common name in that area, at least at first. More than most other names in those records, its spelling varies considerably over the years, and it appears in the following forms:

Ratteicke	Ratheike	Rateicke	Rettaike
Rataicke	Rateike	Rateucke	Rettaicke
Ratheicke	Rataike	Retteicke	

As one proceeds through the records from earlier times to more recent times, one can see the spelling variations diminish to the point where the spellings "Rateike" and "Rateicke" predominate. This can be at least partially explained by the fact that in those days not everyone could read and write, and many people could not even spell their own names.

The various spellings probably resulted from a combination of the way a person pronounced it and the writing and spelling ability of the person who wrote it down.

As the years went by, the names of more and more Rateike family members began to appear in those records. They lived in the numerous small villages surrounding Garzigar.

They were common people, and the men held the various common occupations of the day: farmer, farm laborer, day laborer, shepherd, freemason, brewer, tailor, and dragoon (light cavalryman). Occasionally, a single girl or woman would be a servant girl.

Sometimes a Rateike family owned their own property, but this was the exception. Like most of the peasants of their day, they owned little or no property.

AUGUST RATEIKE. And so, living in Garzigar, among the many Rateike families scattered throughout the surrounding villages, was one August Rateike. Nothing is known about the early part of his life, neither where he was born nor who his parents were. Nor has anything yet been found to link him to the many other Rateike families living in the area. But it is reasonable to assume that there were links.

In November of 1843, at about 30 years of age, he married Justine Fick, the 31-year-old daughter of a deceased country landowner from Garzigar. It was the first marriage for each of them.

They continued to live in Garzigar where August worked as a day laborer. In August of 1844 their first child was born, a son they named Carl. Carl was followed by another son, Eduard, in December of 1845

An epidemic of scarlet fever passed through the Garzigar area in late 1846 and on into 1847. In the Garzigar church records alone, 26 people are recorded as having died from this disease between October 1846 and May 1847. All were children under 10, and most were under 5 years of age. August and Justine's 13 month old son Eduard was among those who died during this epidemic, in January 1847.

In February 1848, Justine gave birth to a stillborn girl. Three days later, Justine herself died of complications following the delivery.

With only his 3 1/2 year-old son Carl remaining of his family, August moved to the nearby village of Rosgars, which was located about 3 miles northwest of Garzigar. At least one Rateike family was living there at the time, and, while not at all a certainty, it may well have been that this family was closely related to August. With a young, motherless child to care for, August most likely sought out a close female relative to look after little Carl.

However, just 3 months after the death of his first wife, August, then about 34 years old, married Wilhelmine Riedel. Wilhelmine was the 23-year-old daughter of a carpenter from the village of Lischnitz, which was located about 5 or 6 miles southwest of Garzigar.

August reestablished his home in Garzigar where he and his new wife raised their family. A daughter named Adeline was born to them in March 1849, followed by twins Adolph and Julius in September 1851 and by their last child, Albert, in May 1854.

With their four sons and one daughter, August and Wilhelmine continued to live in Garzigar. In April 1861 their daughter, Adeline, died of consumption (tuberculosis) at the age of 12.

Little more is known about August's family during the period from 1861 to 1871, except that they were still living in Garzigar in 1863.

THE RATEIKE - JANNUSCH CONNECTION. In November of 1871, August's son Julius, then 20 years old, was married to 18-year-old Henriette Jannusch. Henriette had been born in the coastal town of Leba to a Johann and Karoline Jannusch. Leba was located about 12 miles northwest of Garzigar. However, the wedding took place in the church at Charbrow, a town between Leba and Garzigar, and about 8 miles from Garzigar. There is some fragmentary evidence to suggest that, at the time of the wedding, this Jannusch family may have been living in one of the numerous little villages near Charbrow.

It is not known where Julius and Henriette established their home, but their first child was born in July 1872 in the general area -- surrounding Garzigar, Charbrow, and Leba --called "Kreis" (county) Lauenburg. Their baby boy was named Herman. He was the first of August Rateike's 43 grandchildren and the only one of them to be born in Germany.

Another connection between the Jannusch and Rateike families had already taken place years before. In November of 1847 a Johann Jannusch was married to a Dorothea Rateike in the church at Garzigar. They established their home in Villkow, Johann's hometown. Villkow was just 1 1/2 miles east of Garzigar and 2 1/2 miles southwest of Dorothea's home in Reckow. During the years between 1847 and 1865, Johann and Dorothea lived in Villkow and raised a family of 8 children.

How this Johann Jannusch and the other Johann Jannusch, who was the father of Henriette, were related, is not known. Neither is it known how August Rateike and Dorothea Rateike were related.

IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA. Some time in 1873, August and Wilhelmine Rateike immigrated to America with their four sons, their daughter-in-law, and their only grandchild. It also appears that a part of one or both of the two previously mentioned Jannusch families immigrated at about the same time. The remainder of these Jannusch families immigrated a few at a time over the following 10 years or so until, by about 1882, most were living near or among the Rateike families in the Chicago area.