A town Brillion area in Calumet county, Wisconsin, approximately four miles northwest of the present Brillion and three miles northeast of the present Forest Junction, is the ancestral home of the Joachim Persohn family in America.

Some of the descendants by that name, some with other names through marriage, still live in that neighborhood. Others of the seven-odd hundred descendants now living have spread to 14 states of the Union and into Canada. One of them, the former Alpha Zick, now the wife of Clement Heydenburk, is engaged in foreign missionary activity under the Iran Interior Mission and is stationed in Iran.

Progenitors of the family in America were Joachim Persohn and his wife Karoline. He was born in Neuendorf in the province of Pomerania, Germany on Nov. 23, 1812. His occupation was that of shepherd for a wealthy landlord. Accompanied by a good watchdog, who would keep the sheep in their proper places, the shepherd would while away the hours by knitting stockings. A small stool was strapped to his body enabling him to sit down at convenience.

His wife, born Aug. 1, 1814, in Steffanhausen in the neighboring province of Mecklenburg, was the only child of a Lutheran minister named Lange. They were married in 1836 and eight children were born during the years from 1837 to 1854, before the parents emigrated to America in 1857. Of one of the children, a boy, who died in early childhood in Germany, there is no further record. The remaining seven children, however, accompanied their parents to the New World. The voyage was made in a sailboat. Waukesha in Wisconsin was the destination.

Their stay in Waukesha was relatively brief—long enough however, for the second oldest of the children, 18-year old Wilhelmina, to become enarmed of Johann Heinrich Timm, who was apparently of another group of German immigrants at Waukesha. The two were married the same year of the arrival of the Persohns.

The adventurous spirit of the son-in-law led him to take his bride, possibly on their honeymoon, far to the north of Waukesha into Calumet county. In the town of Brillion, which had been established only a year before by being detached from Woodville, they settled in the primitive forest on what is now the Alvin Greve farm in the North West Quarter of Section 10. Though Wilhelmina was ill with asthma the greater part of her life, land was laboriously cleared and a primitive home erected. They had ten children, four of whom are known to have died of the black pox.

In 1858, the Joachim Persohns with their other children followed to the town Brillion home of the Timms to live with them on the same tract of land. Land patents issued by the State of Wisconsin to these early settlers do not disclose the price at which the land was obtained, merely stating that the buyers had fulfilled the required conditions. On a three-acre plot in the northeast corner of the farm, a home was built for the family, on which the parents stayed for the remainder of their lives.

Deeply religious from their native Germany, they sought church relationship and attended the services of a pioneer church of the Evangelical Association in the neighboring town of Maple Grove in Manitowoc county, which had been started by circuit riding preachers from Two Rivers and Cooperstown.
areas. A very short time later, when a minister of the Methodist denomination is said to have lost his way with the resultant establishment of the present Brillion Methodist church, they became members of this nearer congregation which grew larger as the children married, each establishing a family of its own.

Henrietta was the next of the children to marry—to Johann Peters in 1859. They made their home on what was later the Frank C. Tamm farm.

Oldest child in the family, son Carl, desired to see more of America than what Calumet county afforded. With two friends, and belongings carried on packs upon their backs, they started out for the southwest, traveling as far as Kansas. But, obviously not favorably impressed, they decided to return to their Wisconsin home in town Brillion. On Jan. 7, 1866, Carl married Augusta Degner. A new home was started on what is now the Lawrence Persohn farm in the North West Quarter of Section 11. Carl is remembered as a sturdy outdoor man who disdained to button his jacket against the elements even in the coldest weather. When alone, he had the peculiarity of thinking aloud to himself. With his boys, much cord wood was cut and delivered to the lime kilns in Brillion.

Most singular of the children was son Wilhelm, fourth oldest, born on Feb. 17, 1844. He lived an unmarried life. Stricken with disease in childhood which crippled his legs, he was obliged to live on crutches into his old age. Of him his brother Carl would jokingly say: “I carried Wilhelm over from Germany on my back.” To earn a livelihood, Wilhelm provided himself with a cobbler’s equipment and established himself in the business of making shoes in an addition to the house in which the family lived.

When he was about 30 years old, his earnings enabled him to purchase the 80 acres of land diagonally across the road. Besides enjoying reading and accumulating a collection of German-English books, he was very fond of playing the organ and singing, and became player in the Methodist church the family attended.

His father, a nervous person, objected to the music, so Wilhelm erected a small building on his own land across the corner where he could sing and play to his heart’s content. After his father’s death on Oct. 1, 1890, the organ was moved back to the old home. When the mother died on Oct. 3, 1906, the home was used by the tenant on Wilhelm’s farm. It was during this tenancy that the original home burned down and another was built in its place. Wilhelm thereafter made his home with relatives. Visiting a sister in Nebraska a number of times, he purchased considerable property in that state which he leased to his nephews. After living also for a time at a Deaconess Home in Ohio, he died Oct. 3, 1915 at the home of his sister Albertina.

Hannah, fifth in line of the Persohn children, was married first to a Richards, whose first name has been lost sight of. He left to fight in the Civil War and did not return. No further information on him is available at this time. There was a daughter by this marriage. The mother and child made their home with her parents, until two years after the close of the war, in May, 1867, when Mrs. Richards married Lewis Timm. They settled on land now owned by Vance Bastian in the North Half of Section 14 in town Brillion. The buildings were across the road from the present Fred Buboltz buildings. Yielding to an urge to move farther westward, they sold their farm in 1873 and moved to the state of Nebraska. It is recalled that their last evening before leaving was spent at the Carl Persohn home.

The Johann Timms, who had been living on the homestead, sold the place in the course of a few years in order to try a new occupation at a new location a mile north of the home place. The site is now owned by Hilmer Kuchenbecker. A creek flowed through the land, on the banks of which a saw mill and a grist mill were erected. A dam across the creek furnished the water power until the dam broke out, after which steam power in the mill was substituted. Timm’s brother-in-law, Johann Peters, husband of Henrietta, who was employed at the mill, and accidentally lost his life by drowning in the mill pond. Date of the unfortunate occurrence was April 15, 1867.
Two years later, the widow married Friedrich Hintzmann. Residence was continued on the farm which had been her home since the time of her first marriage. Later they disposed of the farm to their son-in-law and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Frank C. Tamm, and moved to a location a quarter mile north of the present Brillion city limits. Following the husband’s death on June 7, 1919, the twice-bereft widow lived at the homes of daughters until her death on May 2, 1931.

Caroline, second youngest daughter of the Joachim Persohns, born July 30, 1851, was married to Friedrich Bastian in 1868 and a home was established on the present Philip Bastian farm a quarter mile north of the old homestead. Twelve children were born. Two weeks after the last son was born, an early death overtook the mother on April 4, 1894 at the age of 42 years. Her youngest sister, Albertina, took over the care of the young child. It was about this time that a son-in-law, John Wolfmeyer, began the operation of a cheese factory at the location still referred to as “Wolfmeyer’s Corner” two and one-half miles east of Forest Junction. The factory is now owned and operated by Harold Zick, a great grandson of Joachim Persohn.

Albertina worked at Appleton for a time, making the acquaintance there of Louisa Dikelman, later Mrs. Carl Witthuhn, and of Wilhelmina Westphal, later Mrs. Aug. Tamm. The acquaintances grew into lasting friendships. On Apr. 3, 1874, she married Carl Zick and a home was started on an 80-acre farm a mile south of the homestead. A small log house and a log barn were the beginning. Some of their furniture was made by hand.

In the course of time, their son Benjamin took over the farm. The parents continued to live there in separate quarters. Albertina enjoyed crocheting and knitting, producing many rugs, mittens and stockings. Good health enabled her to engage in gardening until only a few years before her death on Oct. 25, 1941 at the age of 87 years, as the last survivor of the large pioneer family.
Mrs. Joachim Persohn and granddaughter,
Sarah Zick (Mrs. Walter Huebner) at the original homestead.