

Andrew Vornkahl, West Point, Illinois, U.S.A.

a.k.a.

Andreas Christian Vornkahl, Nettlingen, Niedersachsen, Germany

Photographs courtesy of Jeff Brunenn and Douglas Maag

Emigration and Census Data. Andreas Christian Vornkahl (shown in Figure 1) was born 18 Dec 1827 in the village of Nettlingen, Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony), Germany.^[2839,2840] He emigrated from Germany in 1865^[2839,2840] and settled on a farm in St. Albans township, Hancock County, Illinois, where he was known as Andrew Vornkahl. Accompanying him from Germany were his wife, Henriette, and two children, a son Charles



Four Vornkahl Generations

Maud Henrietta Vornkahl Brunenn
Andreas Christian Vornkahl, Charles Henry Vornkahl
Mavis Glendora Brunenn (Whitledge)

Figure 1. About 1912.

and a daughter, Doretta. Andrew’s great-granddaughter-in-law, Wilma Brunenn, has written, “the family landed in New York, then traveled to St. Louis, Missouri, and thence to Warsaw, Illinois, shortly thereafter. They moved to St. Albans township, section 18 (see Figure 2), on the farm now owned (in 1982) by Paul Newell.”^[2839] Their postal address in the U.S. was West Point, Illinois.

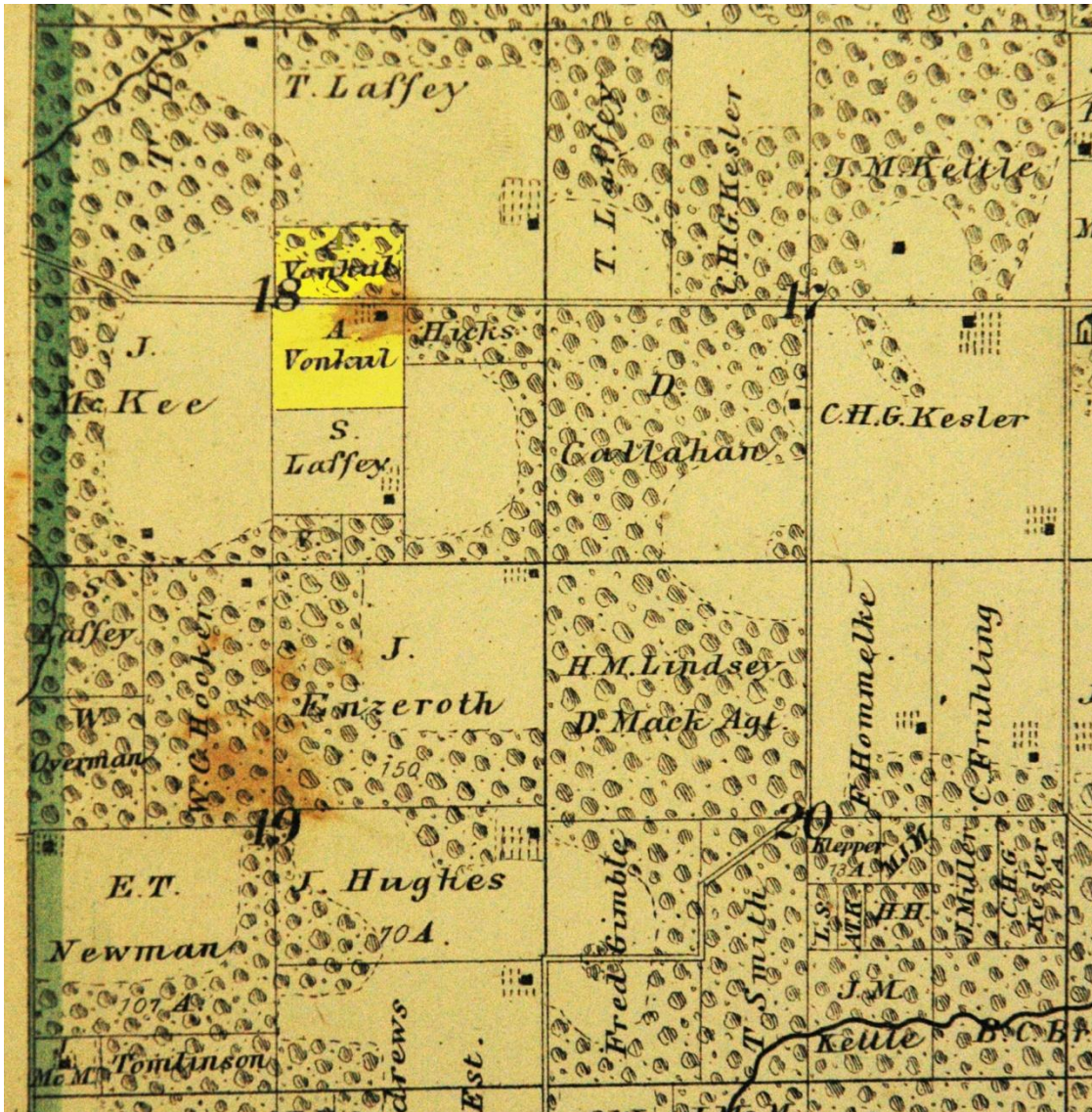


Figure 2. Detail from 1874 St. Albans township plat map showing site of Andrew Vornkahl's land (area in yellow) in Section 18. Vornkahl is misspelled as Vonkul.

The family's first appearance in a U.S. census occurred in 1870 under the name Andrew Vumhal.^[2841] It is clear that Andrew Vumhal is really Andrew Vornkahl when the information given for the entire family is compared. The four family members enumerated in the census are Andrew (age 42), Henriette (45), Charles (15), and Doretta (13); their ages are consistent with information available for the family from other sources.^[2839] On 20 Jun 1870, Andrew filed a declaration of intention in the Circuit Court of Hancock County to become a citizen of the United States, the first step towards gaining citizenship.^[2842] We have not come across a copy of his naturalization document.

The daughter, Doretta, died in 1878 at the age of nineteen or twenty years. The circumstances of her death were mentioned briefly by Wilma Brunenn: "According to Dr. V. B. Corey of West Point, who treated Doretta at the time of her illness, her spine was injured at birth, causing her to be underdeveloped."^[2839] The United States census of 1880 reported that Andrew (age 52) was living with just his wife Henriette (age, 55) and son Charles (25).^[2843] A record of Doretta's birth in Germany remains to be found. On 5 Dec 1888, Charles married Emma Weghenkel, the daughter of Henry and Catharine (Herman) Weghenkel^[2839] (Figure 3).

Andrew's wife, Henriette, died in 1895 at the age of 70 years, 8 months, and 6 days.^[2839] At the time of the 1900 census, Andrew was living in the household of his son and daughter-in-law, but was described as being the "landlord."^[2844] In the 1910 census, Andrew's status was given as "grandfather" residing in the household of John and Maud Brunenn, his granddaughter and her husband (see Figure 1).^[2845]

Andrew Vornkahl in Germany. Before continuing the account of Andrew Vornkahl in the United States, we will write about his background in Germany. Much of the story below was completed before we obtained the account written by Wilma Brunenn.^[2839] While the presence of Andrew Vornkahl's family in St. Albans township in the late 1800's was clearly established by the census records, his origins in Germany were still unknown to us. In the process of uncovering his identity, we encountered several interesting stories.

Discovered first was an emigrant story from "The Chronicles of Nettlingen," a history of Nettlingen written in 1967 by Dr. Fr. Spanuth. A brief account of this story was posted on the website for Berel,^[2846] a neighboring village of Nettlingen. This account is reproduced below:

"Vornkahl, Johann Andreas Friedrich *21.01.1817 Nettlingen, war Soldat 1838 bei der Infanterie. Ausgewandert 1845.

"Von ihm berichtete der Gewaehrsman von Dr. Fr. Spanuth: Der Ausgewanderte wurde in Nettlingen zur Unterscheidung von den anderen Vornkahls "Snoir Andreis" (Schneider Andreas) genannt. Ende der neunziger Jahre tauchte er, von Amerika kommend, in Nettlingen auf, für die Nettlinger Jugend eine Sensation. Er wollte hier seinen Lebensabend verbringen und in der Heimerde begraben werden. Er ist aber noch zweimal nach Amerika zurückgefahren und wurde schließlich auf dem Nettlinger Friedhof beerdigt. Vor etlichen Jahren waren zu Pastor Kortmanns Zeit Nachkommen von ihm in Nettlingen, um sein Grab zu besuchen, konnten es aber, da kein Grabstein vorhanden war, nicht mit Sicherheit finden ---"

An approximate translation of the story is as follows:

"Johann Andreas Friedrich Vornkahl, born in Nettlingen on 21 Jan 1817, was a soldier in the infantry in 1838. (He) emigrated in 1845.

"From the account by Dr. F. Spanuth: The emigrant was called "Snoir Andreis" (Schneider Andreas = Tailor Andreas) in Nettlingen to distinguish him from the other Vornkahls. Near the end of the 19th century, he came from America to visit Nettlingen, causing a sensation among the youth of Nettlingen. He was here in the evening of his life and wished to be buried in his homeland. However, he returned to America several more times and finally was buried in the Nettlingen cemetery. In recent years during Pastor Kortmanns time, visitors came looking for his grave site, but there is no gravestone and the grave site could not be found."^[2847]

Another story came to light when the Ellis Island Passenger Records, 1892-1924, for the port of New York became available via the Internet (www.ellislandrecords.org). A search for the name Vornkahl revealed that a person named Andreas Vornkahl made four trips to Germany in the period of 1906-1912, returning through Ellis Island. Information from the ships' manifests is tabulated below:

<u>Date of arrival</u>	<u>Vessel</u>	<u>Age of Passenger</u>	<u>Returning to</u>
10 Oct 1906	"Friedrich der Grosse"	78	West Point, Ill.
24 Aug 1909	"Grosser Kurfürst"	81	West Point, Ill.
13 Jul 1911	"Rhein"	83	West Point, Ill.
24 Dec 1912*	"George Washington"	85	West Point, Ill.

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*The ship's manifest for his 1912 return journey aboard the "George Washington" gives additional information: Mr. Vornkahl first came to the United States in 1865 and had last left the country in 1912. He had visited "sister-i.-l., Wd. Hch. Vornkahl in Ettlingen, Hannover." The later information is not clear but may mean that he visited his sister-in-law, the widow of Heinrich Vornkahl in Nettlingen (assuming that the pronunciation of the name Nettlingen was not heard correctly and was recorded as Ettlingen).



Charles Henry and Emma Weghenkel Vornkahl

Figure 3.

This record of travel by Andrew Vornkahl between West Point, Illinois, and Germany was tantalizingly similar to the account written by Fr. Spanuth for Johann Andreas Friedrich Vornkahl of Nettlingen but there also were serious discrepancies that required resolution. A key question was: Is the Andreas Vornkahl described in the Spaneth account the man who immigrated to the United States?

Which Andreas? The last piece of the puzzle fell into place after the complete records of the Nettlingen parish church were in hand after our photography expedition in 2007. Now we could search for the Johann Andreas Friedrich Vornkahl who presumably had immigrated to the United States.

There were, in fact, two Johann Andreas Friedrich Vornkahls in Nettlingen within the time frame of the Spanuth story but neither of them emigrated from Germany to the U.S. The first, born 21 Jan 1817,^[954] exactly the date given in the story, was married to Christine Wilhelmine Hantelmann^[1563] and they had at least nine children between 1851 and 1872 whose births are recorded in Nettlingen. Clearly, he did not leave Nettlingen.

The second Johann Andreas Friedrich Vornkahl, born 7 Oct 1821,^[1000] married Johanne Sophie Marie Elisabeth Warnebold in 1847;^[1562] they had three children before he died in Nettlingen in 1852^[1931] - therefore he also did not emigrate from Nettlingen.

An Andreas Heinrich Vornkahl, born 30 Dec 1825 (unehelich = illegitimate),^[1035] to Heinrich Vornkahl and Johanne Sophie Ballüer is a candidate but he died at age six in 1831,^[1895] so he also is eliminated as the Andreas who emigrated.

The best candidate for the person emigrating from Nettlingen in 1865 was Andreas Christian Vornkahl, born 18 Dec 1827.^[1047] He, too, was the son of Berend Heinrich Vornkahl and Johanne Sophie Ballüer. He married Henriette Caroline Dorothee Vasterling (from Nordassel) in 1858.^[1577] They had three children whose births were recorded in Nettlingen in the period 1859-1864. All three died as very young children explaining why the U.S. census records do not list any of the three as children of Andrew and Henrietta Vornkahl in Illinois. There is an addendum to the Nettlingen birth record for Andreas Christian noting that he died in 1916. We conclude that this was the Andreas Christian Vornkahl who emigrated from Germany in 1865 and took up residence as the farmer, Andrew Vornkahl, in St. Albans township, Hancock County Illinois. This conclusion is independently confirmed by Wilma Brunenn in her history of St. Albans township.^[2839]

As noted above, Andreas Christian's parents were Behrend Heinrich Vornkahl and Johanne Sophie Ballüer. They were the parents of a son born in 1825 who lived only to the age of six as mentioned in a previous paragraph. The couple married in January of 1827.^[1539] After Andreas Christian's birth in 1827, the couple had three more children, Dorothea Henriette (1829-1831),^[1063] Johann Heinrich Friedrich (1834-1891),^[1095] and Carl Heinrich (1837-1887).^[1123] A birth record for the father, Behrend Heinrich, was not found in the records of the Nettlingen parish but in the entry for his marriage to Ms. Ballüer,^[1539] the name of his father was included and is Heinrich Vornkahl of Nettlingen. The name Heinrich is so common in Nettlingen that it is not possible to tell which may have been the father of Behrend Heinrich. The mother, Johanne Sophie Ballüer, was born on 16 Jun 1804, the daughter of Johann Behrend Ballüer and Marie Magdalene Bartels.^[845]

On 4 Apr 1858, Andreas Christian Vornkahl married Henriette Caroline Dorothee Vasterling from the nearby village of Nordassel.^[1577] According to the marriage record, Henriette was born 22 Jul 1824 and was the daughter of Johann Andreas Vasterling and Dorothee Brandes.^[1577] Andreas and Henriette had three children whose births are recorded in the Nettlingen parish record books. All three died in infancy: Heinrich Friedrich (1859-1860),^[1249] Theodor Friedrich (1861-1863),^[1258] and Johann Heinrich Wilhelm (1864-1865).^[1271] In September,^[2840] after the death of Johann Heinrich Wilhelm on 30 Jul 1865, the couple departed for the United States. There are no records in the Nettlingen parish books for the births of either Charles in 1855 or Dorette in 1857-8.

Andrew Vornkahl's death in Germany. On 14 Aug 1895, Andrew Vornkahl applied for a U.S. passport.^[2840] The information given on the application adds to the confirmation of his identity. He "solemnly swore" that he was born in Nettlingen, Germany, on the 18th day of December 1827 and that he emigrated to the United States, sailing aboard the *New York* from Bremen on or about the 9th day of September, 1865. He had been a resident for thirty years, 1865-1895, at West Point, Illinois, occupied as a farmer. He had been naturalized as a citizen of the United States before the circuit court of Hancock County in Carthage, Illinois. He was described as being 68 years of age; 5 feet, 4 inches of height; with medium high forehead, blue eyes, straight nose, ordinary mouth, oval chin, grayish hair, light complexion, and oval face. His signature, reproduced below, was written in the German script of the early 19th century. Four of his returns through the port of New York are tabulated in the section above.



Figure 4.

To this can be added an excerpt from Wilma Brunenn's entry for Andrew Vornkahl in her account of St. Albans township: "During his lifetime he crossed the ocean fourteen times, making seven trips back to Germany. In 1914, shortly before the outbreak of World War I, he left for Germany and was unable to return to the United

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States because of the war. On February 25, 1916, in Hanover, Germany, he was found dead in an outhouse. The few possessions he had were given to the townspeople. They paid for his funeral and burial. He is buried in the Lutheran Church Cemetery near his parents."^[2839]

Charles Henry Vornkahl and Family. Andrew and Henriette Vornkahl's only surviving son, Charles, was born in Germany on January 4, 1855, and was brought to this country by his parents in 1865.^[2839] A record of his birthplace in Germany has yet to be found. After working away from home for two years in Walla Walla, Washington, Charles returned to West Point and in 1888, married Emma Weghenkel (Figure 3). After their marriage, Charles and Emma lived first on his father's farm and later bought a part of the farm that had been settled in 1840 by Tobias Buhler.^[2839] (See Appendix 1, below, for copy of offer to sell eighty acres.)

Charles and Emma were the parents of five daughters^[2839,2844,2848] (Figures 4 and 5): Maud (born 27 Sep 1889; Figure 6), Lulu (1 Oct 1891; Figure 7), Anna (4 Apr 1894; Figure 9), Clara (11 Jan 1898; Figure 8), and May (19



Vornkahl family and others
Back: Maud, Anna, unknown, Lulu, unknown, Emma
Front: Clara, Charles, May

Figure 5.



Maud Vornkahl, c. 1907
Figure 6. Maud Vornkahl.



Lulu Vornkahl
Figure 7. Lulu Vornkahl.



Figure 8. Clara and May Vornkahl.



Figure 9. Daniel and Anna (Vornkahl) Mensendick.



May Vornkahl

Figure 10. May Vornkahl.



Figure 11. John and Maud (Vornkahl) Brunenn, 1910.



Figure 12. Earl, Leo, and Mavis Brunenn, 1924.

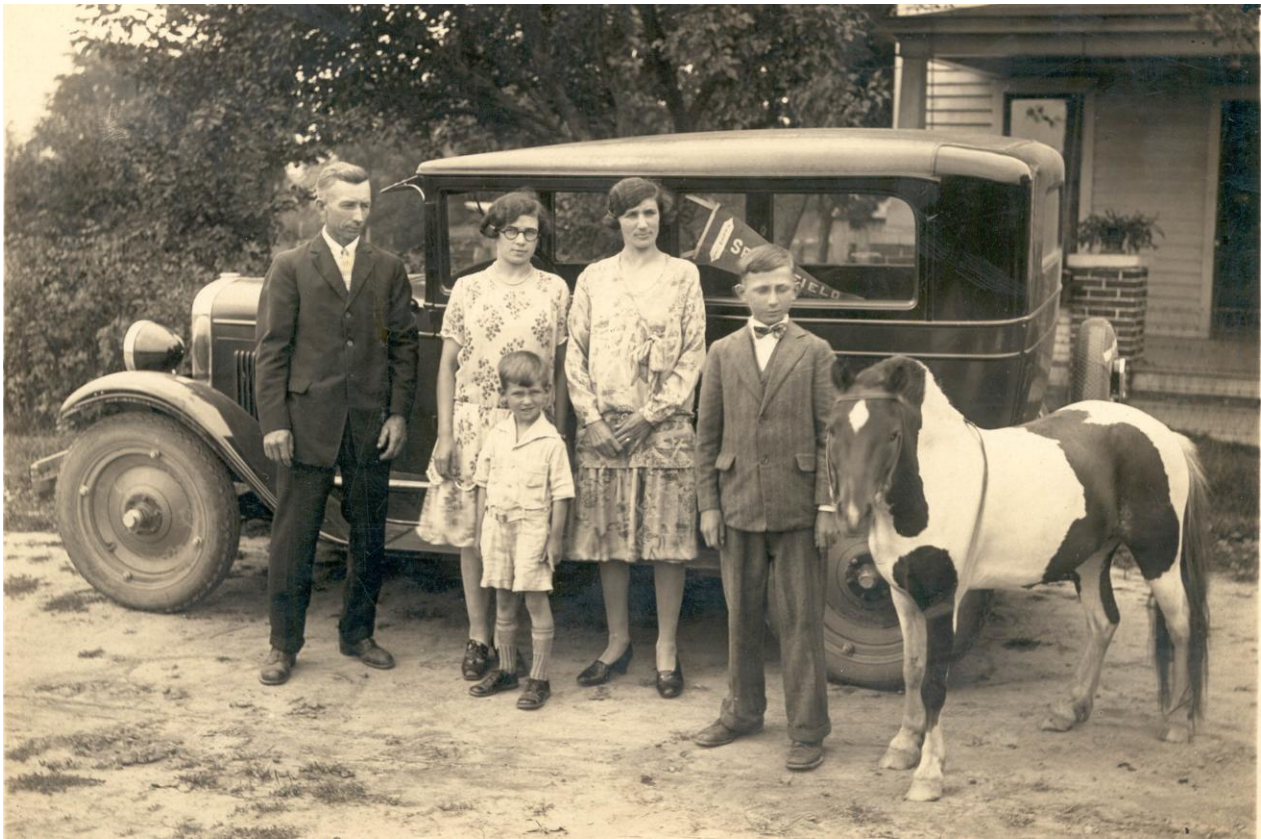


Figure 13. L. to r., John, Mavis, Leo, Maud, and Earl Brunenn.

May 1902; Figures 8 and 10). The Vornkahl's retired from the farm and moved to West Point in 1911.^[2839,2849] Charles died on 8 Apr 1925^[2850] and Emma died in 1938 on her 73rd birthday.^[2839] Both are buried in West Point Cemetery, St. Albans township, Hancock County, Illinois^[2839] (photo of grave marker shown in Appendix 2).

Maud Vornkahl married John Brunenn on 26 Jan 1910^[2851,2852] (Figure 11). The couple farmed in St. Albans township, taking over the farm of Maud's father, Charles Vornkahl. On a plat map of St. Albans township from the 1920s, J.G. Brunenn (he also is listed as John G. Brunenn in later census records) is shown as owner of the NW $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 18.

The Brunenns were the parents of three children, Mavis (b. 13 Dec 1910),^[2851] Earl (24 Jan 1914), and Leo (17 Feb 1923)^[2851,2853,2854] (Figures 12 and 13). John Brunenn died on 25 Oct 1958.^[2851] Maud is remembered by her grandson, Jeff Brunenn: "My grandmother was a woman the likes of which may never be seen again. She was widowed in 1958 at age 69, so during my life, I remember her only living alone. She raised chickens and sold eggs up until she was about 90. As well, she always kept a cow to milk until she was well in her 80's. With all of this, she also kept a garden of a size that most would not take on. She was always working and could keep up with most men - all while she was wearing a dress and heels. I have participated in many chicken butchering days where she and my aunt would take on 50+ chickens on a single Saturday."^[2855] Maud (Vornkahl) Brunenn died on 7 Aug 1986 at the age of 97 years.^[2856] Of John and Maud Brunenn's three children, Mavis married Ernest Whitledge; Earl married Virginia Gabel, and Leo married Wilma Burton.^[2851]

Lulu Vornkahl married Willis Lawrence,^[2857] Anna Vornkahl married Daniel Mensendick^[2858] (Figure 9), and May Vornkahl married Bryon Blivens.^[2839]

Only Clara of the five daughters of Charles and Emma Vornkahl remained single throughout her life. She, too, is remembered by her grand nephew, Jeff Brunenn: "The only other of the girls that I really knew well was Clara as she lived in the small town where I grew up. Clara lived with her parents until they passed away and then finished out her days on her own. Clara was left a bit of money from her parents, but other than that she

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made a few dollars here and there as a seamstress. She never had much, but never seemed to want and her house was always neat as a pin. I remember as a child being fascinated by the fact that she still had no running water in her house. All her water came from a pitcher pump at the kitchen counter. She did break down and put in a bathroom about the time she turned 90. I believe that is about the time she gave up the ol' Lawnboy mower and the mowing of her own yard."^[2855] Clara Vornkahl died 15 Jun 1995 at the age of 97 years.^[2859]

Appendix 1. Copy of 1881 offer to sell eighty acres of farmland to C.H. Vornkahl (courtesy of Jeff Brunenn).

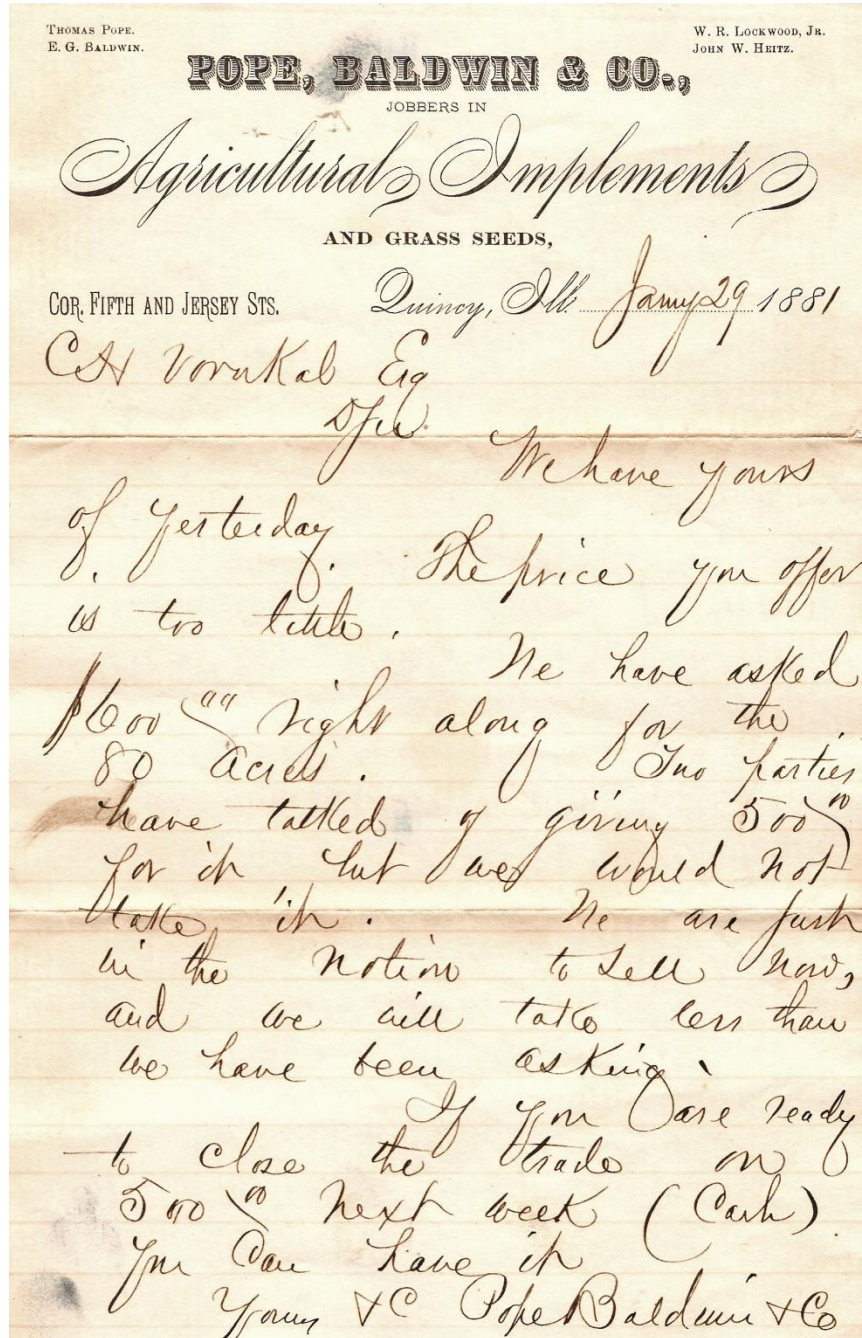


Figure 14. Copy of 1881 offer of land for sale to C.H. Vornkal.

The text reads: “We have yours of yesterday. The price you offer is too little. We have asked \$600.00 right along for the 80 acres. Two parties have talked of giving 500.00 for it but we would not take it. We are just in the notion to sell now, and we will take less than we have been asking. If you are ready to close the trade on 500.00 next week (Cash) you can have it.”

Appendix 2. Photograph of grave marker for Charles and Emma (Weghenkel) Vornkahl.



Figure 15. Grave marker for Charles and Emma (Weghenkel) Vornkahl.

References and Notes are found in the Sources section of this book.