

William F. Vornkahl, Westport, Connecticut
a.k.a.

Ernst Adolph Friedrich Wilhelm Vornkahl, Gifhorn, Germany

William F. Vornkahl was born in Gifhorn, Germany, on 4 Apr 1877.^[2800,2965] His given names, as recorded in the St. Nicolai parish church book, were Ernst Adolph Friedrich Wilhelm.²⁸⁰⁰ A photo of the church is shown in Figure 37. As often was the case in those times, his names were derived from his baptismal sponsors, Ernst Prilop and Adolphine Hasemann, and from his father, Johann Heinrich Friedrich Vornkahl. His mother was Friederike Wilhelmine Dorothee Hasemann.²⁸⁰⁰ William had a younger brother, Christian Heinrich August Carl, who was born in Gifhorn on 27 Feb 1883²⁸⁰¹ and who died in the same town fifty years later on 19 Apr 1933.²⁷⁹² Friedrich, the father of the two brothers, descended from the main line of Vornkahls originating in the village of Berel. Friedrich's father was Heinrich Carl Vornkahl and his ancestors going back to the 1600s include Heinrich Georg (1683) and Michael (~1639) Vornkahl (see Chart 8A). Friedrich's profession in Gifhorn was that of Maler (painter).



Figure 37. St. Nicolai church, Gifhorn. Photograph by Uwe Gierz from the St. Nicolai website.

William Vornkahl emigrated from Germany to the United States in about 1900^[2966] and shortly thereafter married Augusta Grahn in New York City.^[2967] Augusta's date and location of birth have yet to be found but she was born in Germany, probably in the year 1877.^[2966,2968,2969] William and Augusta lived in New York City for a number of years during which their two sons, William F., Jr., and Henry Carl, were born. William, Jr., was born in 1902^[2966,2968,2969] and Henry was born on 8 Apr 1908.^[2970] William, Sr., was employed as a painter,^[2965,2966] presumably learning the trade before emigrating from Germany.

The family moved to Connecticut before 1918 since on his draft registration card, dated 12 Sep 1918, William, Sr., gave State St., Westport, Fairfield County, as his address.^[2965] Augusta died in New York City on 20 Nov 1937 at the age of sixty years.^[2971] William, Sr., remarried (Hilja) at some time between 1937 and 1941.^[2972] He died on 25 Nov 1949,^[2970] about two years after suffering a heart attack while working.^[2973] Hilja, a native of Finland, returned for a visit in the fall of 1951, traveling aboard the steamship *Gripsholm* between New York and Gothenburg Sweden with her final destination listed as Finland. She was sixty-three years of age at the time of her voyage, placing her year of birth as about 1887.^[2973a]

In the 1920s, William Vornkahl, Jr., was a baseball player for the local Westport team. His name appears on a number of occasions in newspaper stories of the team.^[2973] He played the game as a pitcher.^[2973] From the 5 Sep 1927 edition of the Bridgeport *Post*: “Mr. and Mrs. William Vornkahl, Jr., will spend the holidays in New York. Mr. Vornkahl, one of the best amateur baseball players in town, expects to witness the two double-headers today and Labor Day and the usual Sunday game in the big leagues.”^[2973] William, Jr., and Alice May Gerrish were married on 1 Sep 1923.^[2974] In later references to William, Jr., his occupation is given as painter. Alice was born 29 Dec 1904 and died 4 Dec 1963.^[2974] William, Jr., died on 17 Mar 1961.^[2970]

Henry was born 8 Apr 1908 in New York City, moved with his parents to Westport, Connecticut, and in 1929 married Alice Elvira Josefina Bard. The couple were married fifty-six years until Henry’s death on 11 Dec 1985 as recorded in the U.S. Social Security death index. A native of Sweden, Alice was born on 7 Dec 1905 in Norrköpings Matteus, Östergötland. She died 8 Jan 2008 at the age of 102.^[2975]

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