

The Pagel Family Times

Volume 23

June 2022

CHILDHOOD DAYS —WILDWOOD DAYS REVISITED

In 1974 Helen Pagel Zumwalt wrote and self-published, *Childhood Days—Wildwood Days*, the charming paperback book about growing up on the family farm north of Hallettsville in the early 1900s. Helen was a granddaughter of Carl Friedrich “Charles” and Johanna (Kuehne) Pagel and her topics included wash days, hog killing, cow milking, food, neighbors and relatives, education, and recreation, among others.

If you haven’t read its eighty-nine pages, we encourage you to do so. In her first chapter, “The Early Pagels,” Helen relied on what she remembered being told about the Pagels’ early years in Lavaca County. She made a few misstatements that we will try to clear up. Helen is quoted directly, with present day notes at the end:

“The Pagel Family has had roots in Lavaca County for many years. I believe I could trace some blood relationship to about a half of the county’s population!”

“Papa’s father, Charles Frederick Pagel, started it all.¹ He left Germany as a young man in the late 19th century because of that country’s compulsory military service. (And it is somewhat ironic that the day came in his adopted country when his grandsons had to answer their country’s call to military service.)

“Charles and his brother Ernest settled south of Hallettsville in what became known as Pagel Settlement. Some of Ernest’s family remained there for many years; a number of them are buried in the Settlement Cemetery about six miles south of Hallettsville.² However, the good black farming land north of the town lured my grandfather away from the Settlement. He and his wife, Johannah Kuehne Pagel, bought a farm about five miles north of Hallettsville and had an impressive 2½ story home constructed there. (As was customary in those days, the kitchen and dining room were in a separate build-

2022 PAGEL FAMILY REUNION

Saturday, July 9th from 1 to 5 p.m.
at the Fayette Public Library, Museum & Archives Meeting Room
855 South Jefferson Street, La Grange, TX 78945

Come join us for coffee, snacks and dessert in the library’s meeting room. Our family history info will be displayed upstairs in the museum space, which is accessible by an elevator. There will be a G-rated video game upstairs for the kids, too.

The library will be closing at 1 p.m., so use the after-hours entrance to the meeting room on the southeast corner of the building. The closest parking spaces are on Vail and Franklin Streets.

This will be the first family reunion since 2019—a lesser version of our past reunions, but it’s the best we can do until we can reorganize. Be thinking about who is able to help with next year’s reunion and we may get back on track to the full catered meal, etc. to which everyone had become accustomed.

If you have questions, please email Rox Ann at roxannjohnson@me.com or call 512-925-4804. It would also be nice to hear about recent births, deaths, and marriages.

ing because of the danger of fire from the wood stove.)

“My grandfather must have been a remarkable man. He must have had a vision of what he wanted to do, and he certainly had the drive to keep himself working toward his goal. He built up a small empire for himself, and being a German, I’m sure he ruled over it imperiously. By the time of his death, he had increased his land holdings quite substantially by the gradual acquisition of additional farms of approximately one hundred acres each. Those farms which he did not work for himself were leased to tenant farmers.

“My great-grandfather Kuehne made his home with my grandparents. I assume that he had more education than most of the people in that community, for he conducted a school in one of the upstairs rooms. His pupils were children in the neighborhood plus his grandchildren—which were numerous enough for a whole school! Grandpa Kuehne had many books on the shelves in this room, and they say he sat there reading most of the time. The rawhide bottomed chair in which he always sat while reading, stroking his long beard, is now one of my brother Marcus’ prized possessions. The upper rung of this chair is worn almost in two where his feet

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IN REMEMBRANCE

This issue of *The Pagel Family Times* is dedicated to the memory of those who have passed away since the last newsletter, which was sent in 2018.

Annette Nolte Baynard
Charlotte Ammons Darden
Rev. Sally Curtis Fahrenthold
Joe Edward Harris
Esther Machinsky Heinsohn
Iris Campbell Kemp
Nora Meyer Kersten
Gene Ernest Maeckel
Robert Meitzen
Douglas Raymond Pagel
Elva Huskey Pagel
Gregory Scott Pagel
Henry Ellis Pagel
James “Ronnie” Pagel
Kenneth Wayne Pagel
Mary Ann Clement Pagel
Thomas James Pagel
Lyndi Patteson
Marilyn Pagel Petru
Charlie R. Ploug
Lynn Pagel Way

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rested.

"I thought it rather unusual that my grandparents, Johannah and Charles, named all of their girls Johannah and all of their boys Charles! But they also gave them a second name by which they were known...

"Grandpa was a slave driver when it came to working his children, especially the older ones. The girls were not even allowed to wear gloves when working in the fields because he thought they could work better without them! However, apparently he was fair and just with them in most ways. When a son or daughter married, he or she was given a new wardrobe, a team of horses, farming tools, and the right to live on one of the tenant farms. When he divided his land among his children. (I was three years old at that time) each had his choice of farm, in descending order of birth. I thought this fair to the older ones, because they were the ones who had worked the hardest. My father, Charles Godfrey, who was the fourth-born, chose the more desirable black land as his share. Several farms still remained in Grandpa's estate after the division. Several years after Grandpa's death, Grandma bought a house in Hallettsville and moved there with her three unmarried children.

"This house in town was a unique one, its unusual feature being a front porch that ended in a circular porch at the corner of the house. The roof of this porch was cone-shaped and covered with fancifully cut shingles. It looked like a bit of the Orient misplaced on a typical American house. The front door had a lovely glass section through which you could see a hanging lamp with crystal pendants suspended over the dining room table. (I have a lamp like this in every room of my house now.) We thought this lamp was the most elegant thing we had ever seen; and really and truly, I suppose it was the most elegant thing we'd ever seen up to that time! The old house stood until a few years ago when it was razed to make way for a new Baptist church.³

This issue of The Pagel Family Times was edited by Rox Ann Johnson, Pagel Family Reunion historian, who takes full responsibility for its content. You may contact her at (512) 925-4804 or roxannjohnson@me.com.

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Johanna (Kuehne) Pagel's Home in Hallettsville

"At that time, a family very often buried its own on the family land. My grandfather selected for his family's burial plot a site near two huge live oaks on the banks of the Lavaca River. Twenty seven members of the Pagel family, among them my great-grandparents, Grandma and Grandpa Kuehne,⁴ my grandparents, and my parents, now lie at rest here in this sandy spot on the Lavaca. Mama and Papa rest beside my Uncle Henry and Aunt Ida. Since the two brothers married sisters, identical headstones were placed over their graves by their children.

"At the present, only one of the live oaks, still impressive but gnarled with age, is standing. The other tree was destroyed by fire years ago. Some neighborhood boys, while hunting one night, chased a 'possum into a hollow in its trunk, and in an attempt to smoke the animal out, they built a little fire at the base of the hollow. The fire got out of hand and destroyed the tree, to the indignation of the whole Pagel clan.

"Unlike many family cemeteries that become neglected in time, ours is very well kept. Money is collected to pay for its maintenance at the annual reunion of Johannah and Charles' descendants and a member of the family is elected to do this maintenance. Several years ago we had the plot enclosed with a sturdy chain-link fence.

"The cemetery is a lovely, solitary

place to visit. As one stands in the shade of the ancient oak, with cool breezes blowing in from the Lavaca, he sees wild flowers carpeting the ground, hears birds singing in the trees, and is enveloped with a feeling of peace and quietude. He feels that "all's right with the world," after all."

Editor's Notes

1. Charles came to Lavaca County with his father and step-mother, Gottfried and Johanna "Anna" (Zorn) Pagel, and most of his eight siblings in 1858. Charles' parents had first settled in Fayette County in 1850, when he was fourteen.

2. Ernst Pagel moved his family to Tivoli by 1910. Gottfried Pagel and his granddaughter, Caroline (Fischer) Wiechring, are the only known Pagel descendants buried in the sandy lands of Pagel Settlement Cemetery, six miles south of Hallettsville.

3. Actually, Johanna's house, without the fancy porch, was moved to La Grange Street.

4. Helen's great-grandmother, Johanna (Krause) Kuehne, died in 1870, two years before Charles and Johanna bought the property north of Hallettsville. There is no marker for her and it's extremely unlikely she is buried in the Charles and Johanna Pagel Family Cemetery.

If you would like to own a copy of *Childhood Days—Wildwood Days: Growing Up in Lavaca County*, we will have them for sale for \$5 at the family reunion.

Like Us on Facebook

Check out our Facebook page, The Pagel Family in Texas, for the latest family news, plus photos—both old and new.

www.pagelfamily.org

Our cousin, Clay Maeckel, generously provides space on his server for our family reunion web site. Thank you, Clay!