

# Bartels' journey brought reward

## Family of eight came here as poor German immigrants

The family of Clamour Bartel left Germany during the mid-19th century for freedom in the United States.

The spinning wheel maker sold everything he had to finance the trip with his second wife Elizabeth, their two children Catharina and Adam, and his four children from his first marriage. The ocean voyage alone took nine weeks.

"And you can be sure they were in steerage," said Ellen Klemperer, Adam Bartel's granddaughter.

The Bartels' destination was Richmond, where Elizabeth's sister had immigrated earlier. They arrived in Baltimore, then took a train to Richmond via Cincinnati. The only word of English they knew was the name of the Indiana town. As the rest of the family slept, Elizabeth stayed alert to listen for the conductor to call out the stop. When she heard it, she shook her husband awake, "Clamour! Clamour! Richmond!"

Little did the family know that their journey would eventually lead to the establishment of Adam H. Bartel Wholesale, now at 911 North E St., Richmond.

The Bartels first stayed briefly with Elizabeth's sister, whom Klemperer remembers as Tante Erk, on their farm north of Richmond. Soon the family of eight moved to a one-room flat, using their baggage as chairs.

It soon became apparent that the struggling parents could not afford to keep all of their children, and the childless Erks offered to raise one.

"The mother looked lovingly over her brood," said Klemperer, "four of whom, remember, were not her own. Adam, who was four years old, was chosen. It must have been a terribly hard decision to send her only son away."

Clamour and the older sons went to work on the National Road bridge, son William sold sweets at the railroad station, and Catharina, with only the recommendation that she could milk a cow, worked as a maid at the Starr home on the northwest corner of North 13 Street. Four more children were born to Clamour and Elizabeth, but all died.

### Richmond remembers

By Mary Ellen Donat



The frugal Bartels within a year bought land and built a home on South 10th Street. Clamour obtained permanent employment at the Gaar home-stead south of Richmond.

Meanwhile, Adam was being raised on his aunt's farm. He left school at 14 and took a job vacated by George Knollenberg at Emswiler and Crocker Wholesale. For seven years he worked in the store and on the road selling notions from a cart pulled by two horses.

Adam went to work for George Knollenberg in 1873, where he met his future wife, George's sister Mathilda. After four years, he returned to Emswiler and Crocker and bought out one of the partners. That was the origin of Adam H. Bartel Wholesale.

Adam and Mathilda were a loving, devoted couple, said Klemperer. They had seven children, three of whom died. Two daughters, Ellen and Elizabeth (Klemperer is named for them both) died at the ages of five and seven, within one week of each other. Their son, Fred, was Klemperer's father.

In a letter written while on a buying trip to New York, Adam wrote, "Tell my boys that Papa will surely bring them what they want if they are good and mind Mama well."

The family home was built on South 16th Street (now the property of First Baptist Church.) Klemperer remembers going to her grandparents' home every Sunday after church.

The table was immaculately set with linen. Everyone stood beside their chairs until Adam appeared. He stood and recited in German the first two lines of the 132nd Psalm, then they would all sit. Her grandfather Bartel was gentle and courteous, but there was no question where the authority lay, said Klemperer.



John Eggemeyer, left, and Adam H. Bartel, right, of Richmond were best friends and relatives. Eggemeyer's daughter, Cora Caroline, married Bartel's son, Fred. Both were grandfathers to Ellen Klemperer of Richmond.

"He was absolutely devoted to St. John's Lutheran Church," said Klemperer of Adam, "but in 1890 he broke away from St. John's to establish First English Lutheran because his son Bernhart was translating catechism literally. It seemed best for their children not to be bi-lingual at that point—but to conform to the country which they'd come to love very much."

Adam's loyalty for his adopted country also was seen in his community service. He was one of the founders of the YMCA, an early member of Townsend Community Center and a member of Reid Memorial Hospital

Board.

Today, the Adam H. Bartel Company's building occupies the site where Catharina once worked as a maid. The Gaar farm, where Clamour labored, is now known as Chanticleer Farm, the home of Ellen Klemperer and two younger generations of Bartel descendants, Caroline Klemperer Green and her children.

And Adam and Mathilda, who were devout Christians, would be pleased that their home still rings with the sounds of children attending Sunday School classes in The Bartel House.