The Pioneers of the Herleman Cabin in Adams County, Illinois

by Steve Brinkoetter
August 2008

The Herleman log cabin that is on display in Adams County, Illinois, was last lived in by William N. Herleman (1852-1934) and was built by his father, Nicholas Herlemann (1811-1872), and their relatives. This is the story of their families and their contribution to the history of Adams County.

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MULTIPLE HERLEMAN FAMILIES

In order to recognize the contribution of the Herlemann family that built the cabin, it is important to distinguish this family from another Herlemann family that lived in Adams County at the same time. Both families had adults with the names of William, Jacob, and Catherine living in Adams County around 1850. The family that built the cabin was led by William Andrew Herlemann (1774-1851), who came to Quincy in 1834. Their family tree is shown on this page.
The other Herlemann family living in Adams County around 1850 is shown below. Only three members of this family—the children Catherine (1821-1908), William (1826-1875), and Jacob (1828-1912)—are known to have come to Quincy from Germany (Catherine in 1846, William in 1848, and Jacob in 1851). These siblings may have been related to the Herlemann-cabin family, since their German hometown of Wersau is just two miles down the road from Gross-Biberau, the German hometown of William Andrew Herlemann. However, I have not been able to confirm their relationship.
DIFFERENT HERLEMAN SPELLINGS

The Herlemans of Adams County used different spellings of their family name at different times. In earlier documents, their name is spelled “Herlemann.” But more recent records increasingly show their name as “Herleman,” with this latter spelling being dominant after World War I. In order to reflect this trend—and without actually knowing when specific individuals began using the more modern spelling—I have used the earlier spelling for those who lived almost all of their lives prior to World War I and the more recent spelling for individuals after this.

WILLIAM ANDREW HERLEMANN

William Andrew Herlemann and his wife Katherine (1776-1867) were born and married in Germany, living in Gross-Biberau. They came to the U.S. in 1832 with their two sons, four daughters, and the future wife of their younger son Nicholas. They lived for a while in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, later in Pittsburgh, and came to Quincy in April 1834. They soon moved to a farm near Mill Creek in Melrose Township. He died of cholera in 1851 at the age of about 77, and she died in 1867 at the age of about 91. She is buried in Woodland Cemetery with the family of her son Nicholas (block 13, lot 122). William Andrew was probably buried on the farm with two of his daughters, all of whom may have died during cholera outbreaks, since there used to be a German-language tombstone on the farm for a man and two daughters.

Since the Herleman cabin has been dated to 1850, William Andrew Herlemann was still living on the farm when the cabin was being built. He would have been 74 years old when the cabin was built, so he probably contributed little towards its construction, and it was probably not being built for him. His son Jacob had two children and his son Nicholas had six children by this time, so space for these young families was probably needed more than space for him.

CHAIN MIGRATION TO ADAMS COUNTY

In addition to building the cabin and helping to settle Adams County, the family of William Andrew Herlemann made a broader contribution to Adams County history. One important influence on immigration is a process called “chain migration”—communication from early immigrants back to their homeland, thereby bringing later immigrants to their new settlement area. With his family members, William Andrew Herlemann appears to be the first link in a chain of
people leaving the Biberau area of Germany and settling in Adams County in the 
1830s and 1840s.
I label as “the Biberau area” a small area of Germany, just six miles across, which 
contains the hometowns of a disproportionately large number of early German 
immigrants to Adams County (see the map below). The label “Biberau area” (the 
modern German spelling is “Bieberau”) is used because this area contains the 
towns of Gross-Biberau and Klein-Biberau. Gross and klein mean “large” and 
“small,” respectively, and are often used to distinguish two nearby German towns.

This map shows the Biberau area of Germany. These towns are in the Starkenburg 
region, which is within the modern state of Hessen and the old Grandduchy of 
Hesse. The town of Gross-Biberau is located about 10 miles southeast of the city 
of Darmstadt and about 25 miles south of Frankfurt.

The following table shows the early settlers of Adams County who are from this 
area. One pattern that suggests communicated information is the eventual 
destination and profession of these immigrants. The names listed in italics—most 
of the names on the list—became farmers in Melrose or Fall Creek Townships.

This table also lists the German hometowns of these immigrants. Listing a 
“hometown” for someone on this list means simply that they lived there not long 
before emigrating to the U.S. They may not have been born there and may not 
have actually considered this to be their “hometown.” However, a person living in
a small town to which a letter from America is sent in the 1830s is likely to have learned of the contents of that letter, thereby allowing chain migration to occur.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>German Hometown</th>
<th>U.S. Arrival</th>
<th>Quincy Arrival</th>
<th>Arrival Port</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William Andrew Herlemann (11)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Maus (4)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td>1834-5</td>
<td>1834-5</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Philip Bert (5)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td>1832</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simon Glass (3)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td>1834</td>
<td></td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Conrad Waldhaus (4-5)</td>
<td>Klein-Biberau</td>
<td>1833</td>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Merker</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sebastian Dingeldein</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marie Dorothea Pfeiffer Keller</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Jacob Waldhaus (5)</td>
<td>Klein-Biberau</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Merker (2)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Liebig (2)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Breitwieser (1)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1838</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Rettig (3)</td>
<td>Gross-Biberau</td>
<td>1831</td>
<td>1838</td>
<td>East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wendel Schnellbecher (2)</td>
<td>Wersau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Speckhart (1)</td>
<td>Brandau</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>New Orleans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Michael Loos (1)</td>
<td>Frank-Crumbach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Vornoff</td>
<td>Nieder-Kainsbach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Loos</td>
<td>Frank-Crumbach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Politsch (2)</td>
<td>Wersau</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>East Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catherine Herlemann</td>
<td>Wersau</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Keil</td>
<td>Frank-Crumbach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1847</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individuals in italics became farmers in Fall Creek or Melrose Townships.

In its early stages this migration chain brought people to Quincy from only Gross-Biberau and Klein-Biberau. Simply sharing the hometown with the Herlemanns probably would have brought news of Quincy to most of these immigrants from Gross-Biberau. Family and professional links would have also helped to spread the name of Quincy across Gross-Biberau, since George Liebig was the father-in-law of both Bert and Glass and since Breitwieser learned the shoemaking trade from Liebig in Gross-Biberau. The Waldhaus families expanded this migration chain to nearby Klein-Biberau. Henry Conrad Waldhaus would have known the Herlemann family by having lived in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, with them in 1833. A second Waldhaus family in Klein-Biberau, that of George Jacob Waldhaus, had the same hometown as this earlier Waldhaus family and was probably related to them.
Numerous connections also existed in the late 1830s to expand this migration chain beyond the two Biberaus and into neighboring towns. Schnellbecher’s younger sister, Anna Maria Schnellbecher, married into a nearby Herlemann family (see page 3), probably related to William Andrew Herlemann, so he could have learned of Quincy through this connection. Schnellbecher, Speckhart, and John Michael Loos appear to have come to the U.S. together, since *People’s History* (p. 748) says that John Michael Loos “had come in company with a considerable party headed by John Speckhart” and since sources describe Schnellbecher and Loos as arriving in New Orleans on the same date. Speckhart probably knew the Loos family, since the Loos hometown of Frankisch-Crumbach was also the location of Speckhart family events (e.g., marriages and deaths) beginning in 1826, suggesting that the Speckharts may have moved to Frankisch-Crumbach by the 1820s. Vornoff followed Speckhart to the U.S. to be his bride. Peter Loos was the father of John Michael Loos. Catherine Herlemann was the niece of John Wendel Schnellbecher, and she was probably related to William Andrew Herlemann, since her grandfather was born in Gross-Biberau, William Andrew Herlemann’s hometown. Finally, George Keil was the brother-in-law of John Speckhart.

In short, there were possible communication links between these individuals not only as a result of the geographic proximity of where they have lived, there was also numerous family and professional links that may have allowed earlier immigrants to influence the decisions of latter immigrants. The multitude of these possible communication links supports the claim that this stream of individuals from the Biberau area to Adams County represents the effects of chain migration.

It also appears that the family of William Andrew Herlemann were the ones to start this chain migration to Adams County. As seen on this list of Biberau-area immigrants, the Herlemanns were indeed the earliest of these immigrants to settle in Adams County. Since several other immigrants from Gross-Biberau also arrived in Quincy around the same time, though, it is worth looking at the timing of their arrivals more closely. The Herlemann family arrived in Quincy in April 1834. They would have had something to write about early on, since property records show that the Herlemanns purchased their Melrose farm in October 1834. Maus arrived after the Herlemanns, since his family left Germany in 1834 and arrived in Quincy “six months after they left the home of their childhood” (*Quincy and Adams County*, p. 292). The brothers-in-law Bert and Glass came to the U.S. via different routes, met up in St. Louis, and arrived at Quincy together probably in 1835. Since the Glass family did not leave Gross-Biberau until the latter part of 1834 and since they “intended to locate in Quincy” (*Quincy and Adams County*, pp. 296-8), it is likely that they had heard of the Herlemanns’ arrival previously.
THE “DISCOVERY” OF QUINCY

We also know that the Herlemanns, in heading west from Pennsylvania, did not have Quincy as an established destination based upon communications from previous Biberau-area immigrants. We know this because the process by which his traveling party selected Quincy as a destination is told as part of the biography of Adam Schmitt in Bornmann’s Sketches (p. 11). Adam Schmitt, like William Andrew Herlemann, lived in Pennsylvania and traveled to Quincy in 1834 with the Herlemann’s. This story was published by Heinrich Bornmann in 1901:

Now Adam Schmitt and the Herlemanns, in a group of fifteen people, decided to move west down the Ohio and Mississippi to St. Louis from where they moved to Belleville, Illinois, where relatives of the Herlemanns lived. From Belleville, Adam Schmitt and Wilhelm Dickhut went by foot in the search for an appropriate place to settle. They came to St. Charles, Missouri, but still not satisfied they crossed the river, got a steamer going north and went to Quincy which had around 100 inhabitants then. Adam Schmitt rented a blockhut at Third and Hampshire where were standing wholesale firms. These huts had a lower room under a garret room to which residents had to climb on a ladder. Returning with the next steamer to St. Louis he returned to Belleville and brought the entire company to Quincy and all fifteen stayed in the blockhut. That was in April 1834. Wilhelm Andreas Herlemann the father-in-law of Adam Schmitt moved shortly to a farm.

Not only is this the story of Herlemann, Schmitt, and Dickhut, this is also probably the story of how the immigrants from the Biberau area discovered Quincy.

We can determine with some confidence the members of this settlement group, as well as how they probably met, from their individual biographies in Bornmann’s Sketches and Quincy and Adams County. The Herlemann family at that time consisted of at least 9 individuals: Andrew William and his wife Katherine, their two sons Jacob and Nicholas, their four daughters, and Katherine Zimmermann, the future wife of Nicholas. The Herlemanns came to the U.S. in 1832 and settled in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where Adam Schmitt had settled after coming to America in 1831. Schmitt married Marie Margaret Herlemann, one of the Herlemann daughters, and they had a son, John Adam Schmitt, in Chambersburg in 1832. The Herlemanns and Schmitts then moved to Pittsburgh, where Christopher William Dickhut, his wife Caroline, his brother Christian Gottlob Dickhut, and his brother’s wife Johanna had moved after coming to the U.S. in 1831. Christian and
Johanna Dickhut had a son, Charles W. Dickhut, who was born in Pittsburg in March 1833. The Dickhuts must have met the Herlemanns and Schmitts in Pittsburg, because after Adam Schmitt’s furniture factory in Pittsburgh was destroyed in a fire, they all came down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi to St. Louis, then to Belleville and then to Quincy.

Given their ages at the time, it is not surprising that William Andrew Herlemann would not be part of the scouting party to select the settlement site for this group. The ages of the heads of households in 1834 were the following: Herlemann, 60; Schmitt, 29; William Dickhut, 28; and Christian Dickhut, 30. So age was probably one factor in choosing Schmitt and William Dickhut to search for a settlement site. In addition, with these two men comprising the scouting party, they had representatives of both family groups in the scouting party: Schmitt to represent his own family and his in-laws, the Herlemanns, and William Dickhut to represent the two Dickhut couples.

Knowing the members of this settlement group from Pennsylvania, we therefore know that none of the other members of this group were from the Biberau area. Adam Schmitt was from Georgheim on the Bergstrasse, in the state of Hesse. The Bergstrasse is a route that goes south from Darmstadt and gets to within about 8 miles of Gross-Biberau, but that would not have put Schmitt in position to start the flow of immigrants from Gross-Biberau. Even more distant, the Dickhuts were from outside the state of Hesse, over 100 miles away from Gross-Biberau. The bride-to-be of Nicholas Herlemann, Katherine Sommermann, was born in Rheinheim, which is located about three miles to the north of Gross-Biberau. Thus, it is only the Herlemanns who could have communicated information about Quincy back to Germany to begin the chain of emigrants from the Biberau area—first from Gross-Biberau itself and later from the neighboring towns.

One minor discrepancy is the number of people in this settlement group. The above account predicts 16 people in the group: the original nine members of the Herlemann party, Adam Schmitt and his son, two Dickhut couples and the Dickhut baby. However, the story in Bornmann’s Sketches says that 15 people were in the party that left Pittsburgh and came to Quincy.
THE HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE IMMIGRANTS

These immigrants from the Biberau area had a significant impact on Adams County. An impact could be expected from this migration chain because of how early in the history of Quincy these immigrants arrived. With the first white settler in Adams County arriving in 1820, the county’s population grew to only about 70 people by 1825 (Past and Present of the City of Quincy, p. 256). Estimates vary regarding the population of Quincy in 1834 when the Herlemanns arrived. The Adam Schmitt biography in Bornmann’s Sketches specifies “around 100 inhabitants” at the time of their arrival, while his biography in Quincy and Adams County describes the population as “several hundred.” Providing a somewhat larger estimate, the 1830 census identifies 350 heads of household in Quincy, which means many more inhabitants than 350. Angela Borstadt Meyer, a woman who came Quincy in 1837, writes that Quincy “at that time had only a few houses and lay in a wild, unfriendly area.” (Bornmann’s Sketches, p. 31) Indeed, one of those houses was Adam Schmitt’s house, since that is where her party stayed upon their arrival in Quincy. Regardless of its exact population in 1834, Quincy in the following two years saw 30 new arrivals who were from the towns of Gross-Biberau or Klein-Biberau. This sudden stream of immigrants from the same small German towns must have created a noticeable pattern for some of the early inhabitants of Quincy.

One indication of the significance of this migration chain from the Biberau area is the proportion of the early German immigrants to Adams County that they represented. The Adams County ILGenWeb Project has compiled a list of “Early German Settlers,” and about 450 of these settlers have their hometowns listed. The settlers from the Biberau area of Germany comprise 8 percent of those with known German hometowns, even though the “Biberau area” that I am referring to represents only 30 square miles—or 0.02 percent—of the area of modern Germany. With the Biberau area representing only 0.02% of German territory but providing 8% of the German immigrants to Adams County, this tiny region of Germany made a disproportionately large contribution to the settling of Adams County.

The impact of these immigrants from the Biberau area can also be seen by considering individual accomplishments. Most notably, George F. Waldhaus, who came to the U.S. from Klein-Biberau with his father George Jacob Waldhaus in 1837, was the first German mayor of Quincy in 1865 and also served as city marshal, city treasurer, and member of the board of supervisors. Nicholas Herlemann and Katherine Sommermann, both of whom were part of the original
settlement group in April 1834, were the first couple of German descent to get married in Quincy (in August 1834). John Speckhart, arriving in 1840 from either Brandau or Frankisch-Crumbach, was the first German to settle in Fall Creek Township. Also in Fall Creek Township, 9 of the 18 original charter members of Bluff Hall Church in 1860 were either immigrants from the Biberau area or their children, and at least 8 of the 13 men who committed in 1894 to build the current Bluff Hall Church building were descendents of these Biberau-area immigrants.

To the degree that the immigrants from the Biberau area of Germany helped to shape Adams County, this impact could be considered to be part of the legacy of the William Andrew Herlemann family. After all, these Herlemann pioneers were probably most responsible for introducing that tiny corner of Germany to this little corner of America.

THE CHILDREN OF WILLIAM ANDREW HERLEMANN

The best way to track the early history of the Herleman cabin is to follow the history of the sons of William Andrew Herlemann—Nicholas Herlemann (1811-1872) and Jacob Herlemann (1803-?). Recall that William Andrew Herlemann came to Quincy with his wife, two sons, and four daughters. However, none of the daughters appears to have ever lived at the Herlemann farm near Mill Creek after the time that the cabin was built in 1850.

One daughter, Marie Margaret Herlemann (1808-1889), married Adam Schmitt in Chambersburg and stayed with him in Quincy, where he built a furniture store. Another daughter, Marie Herlemann, married Carl Vierheller, who “settled at Mill Creek where he farmed many years until he moved to Quincy in 1850 and died soon thereafter; his wife died one week later” (Bornmann’s Sketches, p. 42). The farm that the Vierheller’s settled on at Mill Creek was evidently not the same as the Herlemann farm, since their daughter, Julia Ommert, in 1860 was residing on a farm in Melrose Township that was two census pages away, and probably some distance away, from the Herlemann farm.

The fates of the two other daughters is much more uncertain. They are not listed as living at the Herlemann farm during the 1850 census, and I have found no trace of them in other historical records. One clue to what happened to them is the earlier existence of a small cemetery on the Herlemann farm just north of both the old stone house and the current residence. The details of this cemetery were reported by several members of the Lubbert family, who purchased the farm from the Herleman family in 1946. Other than a few scattered rocks, this cemetery
consisted of just one large tombstone (4 feet x 2 ½ feet x 4 inches) with German inscriptions describing three people. Based on these inscriptions, the Lubberts understood these three people to be one man and his two daughters who died of cholera. William Andrew Herlemann did indeed die of cholera on his farm near Mill Creek, and since he is not buried in Woodland Cemetery with his wife and son’s family, it is likely that he was buried on this farm. If the two other daughters also died at about the same time, these may be the three people buried at this cemetery and recorded by this tombstone.

While this probably describes the fates of the two missing daughters, it is unlikely that these three family members died at the same time. The 1850 census shows William Andrew Herlemann, but not the two daughters, as still living on the Herlemann farm, which indicates that they did not die of cholera together. However, there were two cholera epidemics to hit Adams County around this time—one in 1849 and another in 1851—so the two daughters may have died in the earlier epidemic, with William Andrew dying in the latter one. This close timing of the deaths could have still inspired a single tombstone for all three of them. The location of the tombstone is not known, however, since the Lubberts found it broken one winter, accepted the offer of someone to fix it, and never had the tombstone returned to them. So this artifact may have been lost to history.

Another insight from the 1850 census is the fact that two dwellings existed on the Herlemann farm in 1850, which supports the claim that the cabin was indeed completed by 1850. According to the Lubberts, two old dwellings existed on the farm in the 1940s—the log cabin on the eastern half of the farm and a stone house on the western half. Because the farm is a mile wide, these two dwellings were separated by just over a half mile. According to the 1850 census, two dwellings were indeed occupied by Herlemann families. In one dwelling resided the younger son Nicholas, his wife and six children, two laborers, and William Andrew Herlemann with his wife. In the other dwelling resided the older son Jacob with his wife and two children. Thus, it does indeed appear that the cabin had been completed by 1850.

It also appears that Jacob and his family were the ones residing in the cabin, with Nicholas, his family, and his parents residing in the stone house. Two pieces of
evidence suggest this. First, the stone house would have been closer to conveniences than the cabin. In this farm map from 1872, the log cabin is the structure in the clearing to the east, which was nearly ½ mile from the stream and nearly a mile away from the road. But the stone house, the bottom of the two structures on the left, was much closer to water sources, the main road, and the eventual location of the cemetery (north of the stone house and close to the stream), making the stone house the likely residence for the elderly parents. Second, in the 1850 census the family of Nicholas is listed before Jacob’s household and directly after the inhabitants of the Wenzel farm, which was directly across the street from the western end of the farm where the stone house was (see the 1872 plat map below). Since the census entry for Nicholas is listed between the Wenzels and Jacob Herlemann, the dwelling for Nicholas was probably between the Wenzels and Jacob Herlemann as well. Thus, the first occupants of log cabin were probably Jacob Herlemann (b. 1803), his wife Elizabeth (b. 1800), his son Leonard (b. 1827), and his daughter Elizabeth (b. 1835).
While there is substantial evidence for the claim that Jacob Herlemann and his family were living in the log cabin during the early 1850s, who lived in the log cabin during subsequent decades is much murkier.

Nicholas Herlemann retired from farming and moved to the city in the 1850s, since his obituary says that he lived near Mill Creek for “some 20 years” and since he had moved to the farm in 1834. The farm had originally been in his name, part of it from when he purchased it from the United States government in October 1834, and part of it from when he purchased it in June 1856 from Francis Moore (who had been the original purchaser in July 1835). Even though he moved from the farm in the 1850s, he kept ownership in his name until he died in August 1872 and passed the farm to his son William N. Herleman. By 1880, Nicholas’ widow Katherine had moved in with their daughter’s family. Their daughter, Anna Philipina, had married John Wessels in 1876, and they all lived in Quincy. It is unknown when Katherine Herlemann died, since the Woodland Cemetery index shows her death as being in 1877, while the 1880 census shows her as still living with the Wessels. In any case, both Nicholas and Katherine are buried together with his mother in Woodland Cemetery (block 13, lot 122).
After the family of Nicholas Herlemann left the farm in the mid-1850s, the farm was run by Jacob Herlemann. This is described in the biography of Georg Horbelt in *Bornmann’s Sketches* (p. 234):

After arriving here [around 1855] they moved into the country where Georg Horbelt worked for several years for Jacob Herlemann in Melrose, then rented a piece of land and ran a farm himself. At the time there were still deer in this county; one time, while Horbelt was occupied cutting wood on Herleman’s land, no fewer than seven deer appeared in a clearing of the woods and watched him working; then they turned and disappeared into the woods.

By the 1860 census the only Herlemann family listed as living on the farm (spelled in this census as “Holman”) was that of Jacob Herlemann—himselves, his wife, his son Leonard, age 33, Margaret, 28, and Magdalena, 14.

However, it is not clear which structure the family was living in. Given the more convenient location of the stone house, they may have moved out of the log cabin and into the stone house. But in the 1860 census, Jacob Herlemann is separated from the Wenzel household by three families plus a “vacant house.” This suggests that Jacob Herlemann may have decided to keep his family in the log cabin and to leave the stone house vacant. Both dwellings had a cellar and a loft for sleeping. Their likely housing options are shown in the photos to the right.
Nicholas and Katherine Herlemann had 7 children, but their first 6 children were girls: Elizabeth (b. 1833/4), Margaret Elizabeth (b. 1836), Maria Katharina (b. 1838/9), Elizabeth (b. 1840/1), Anna Philipina (b. 1846/7), and Emelia Katharina (b. 1849/50). So when their son William was born in 1852—and when this turned out to be their final child and thus their only son—they had an obvious choice about to whom they should pass ownership of the farm and the cabin.

William N. Herleman (1852-1934) was born on the farm but was raised and educated in Quincy. He therefore acquired interests other than farming. William loved reading, attended college briefly in Missouri, and spent some time in New Orleans to follow buggy racing. When his father Nicholas died in 1872, William became the owner of the Herleman farm at age 20. In 1875 he married Emma Dickhut, whom he considered to be the prettiest girl in Quincy, and a few years later they moved to the farm. Interestingly, Emma Dickhut’s grandfather was Christopher William Dickhut, who had journeyed from Pennsylvania to Quincy with William Herleman’s parents and grandparents in 1834.

By 1880, the Herlemans living on the farm (spelled “Hellerman” in that census) consisted of William (age 27), his wife Emma (age 24), his daughter Katherine (age 3), and another daughter (age 2, identified as “Mama” in the census). Since there is only one Herleman family listed in the 1880 census as living on the farm, they would not have needed to occupy two dwellings. But it is unknown which dwelling they lived in and, indeed, which dwellings existed on the farm at that time.

At some point a wood-frame house was built on the farm, a house that burned down around 1925. It is likely that this third dwelling had been built by the time William Herleman moved back to the farm, since the 1872 plat map shows three structures on the farm—in the location of the three historical dwellings. In addition, other pioneer German farmers nearby had built larger houses by this time—e.g., John Michael Loos in 1859 and John Speckhart shortly thereafter—so it is possible that William Herleman had a larger house to live in by the late 1870s. In any case, it is unknown who, if anyone, was living in the log cabin from 1870 until 1910. William’s family left the farm before the
end of the century, so that by the 1900 census his family was once again living in Quincy (Ward 4).

CABIN LIFE DURING THE 1920s

After his wife Emma died in November 1906 at the age of 51, William Herleman returned to the farm. In the 1910 census he was listed as living in a single dwelling—probably the main house—with his sons Harry (age 23) and Russell (age 18). By the 1920 census, however, William was listed as living in a separate dwelling on the farm, with his son Harry (now age 32) renting the main dwelling for himself and his wife Anne (age 24).

Between 1910 and 1920 therefore began the period—lasting until about 1932—during which William Herleman lived in the log cabin by himself at the far end of the mile-wide farm. William Herleman was about 60 years old when he moved into the log cabin, but as his grandchildren and neighbors later recalled, he was happy living there. On one side of the cabin (the side facing away from the camera in these historical photos), the roof of the cabin extended out to cover an enclosed porch. Because the side of the cabin with the porch faced to the north and away from the sun, it was a suitable place for visitors to pull up a chair when they came to visit. On the eastern end of this porch William had a workbench, around which he stored his tools. Directly inside the cabin from the porch was the kitchen area, containing a table that provided additional seating for guests. Stairs led to a loft, where people could sleep when the cabin was being used to house an entire family. William had a bed in a small separate room on the main floor. The cabin also had a full cellar with a dirt floor. The cellar was accessible from the outside on the side of the cabin facing the camera, with the cellar door at ground level and largely hidden from the camera.

![Earliest photo of the Herleman cabin - mid-1940s](image-url)
The cellar was used primarily to store wooden barrels of liquid refreshment that William Herleman produced, some of it in his still that was located near the cabin. He sat the barrels on wooden racks that covered three walls of the cellar. He reportedly made blackberry wine, cider, and whiskey. The period during which William Herleman lived in the log cabin coincided closely with the Prohibition era in the United States, which lasted from 1920 to 1933. However, according to prohibition law in the U.S. (Section 29 of the Volstead Act), up to 200 gallons of wine and cider could be made from fruit at home each year. The fruits grown around the cabin supported these endeavors. Near the cabin William had an apple orchard, a huge blackberry patch to the south, and about nine pear trees.

Other activities that William Herleman engaged in appeared to be connected to his alcohol production. Continuing his love of buggy racing that he developed as a young man, Herleman built a horse racetrack on his farm, just south of the main dwellings on the western half of the farm. In addition, he provided the service of pulling infected teeth for local folk—a service that, for those who needed it, Herleman’s access to hard liquor would have been quite convenient.

In his later years, William Herleman used a black cane with a silver head and liked to wear a black felt Stetson hat—making for a memorable appearance. Also distinctive was the five-foot-long black snake that he kept in his log cabin to help control the mice. One granddaughter remembered being startled when she saw this huge snake curled up on her grandfather’s bed, while another recalled seeing the snake climbing on the steps going up to the loft. Several grandchildren recalled his sense of humor and his prankster nature. One of his tricks was taking a baby mouse and raising it to his mouth as if to eat it alive, only to let the mouse go and disappear in his beard—leaving the grandkids thinking that he consumed it.
The use of the log cabin as a residence ended around 1932, when William Herleman's health—especially the cancer in his cheek—worsened to the point that he had to move in with his son Russell Herleman. William Herleman lived the last several years of his life at the farm of Russell Herleman located on Herleman Road in Melrose Township. This was the location at which Russell’s wife, Ruth, opened a gift shop, called the Herleman General Store, in the 1960s.

William Herleman died on August 15, 1934, at the age of 82. William and Emma Herleman are buried with his parents Nicholas and Katherine Herleman in Quincy at Woodland Cemetery (block 13, lot 122).
After William Herleman left the farm, his son Harry continued farming. When the main house burned down around 1925, Harry Herleman’s family moved into the stone house while they built a Sears bungalow to replace the destroyed house. This bungalow was torn down around 2001. The farm was sold to Walter C. Lubbert in 1946, and he donated the cabin to the city of Quincy in 1968, at which time it was reconstructed on Quinsippi Island as part of Quincy’s historic preservation park, Adams Landing. Although it has been partially inundated during several floods in recent decades, this log cabin still stands as a reminder of the lives of these pioneers and the contribution they made to the history of Adams County.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank the following contributors for helping me assemble this information: Joann Beckman, Virginia Echternkamp, Al and Janette Ehrhardt, John Gebhardt, Bill Herleman, Ione Hildebrand, Charles Lubbert, Ruth Ann Lubbert, Walter Lubbert, and the Adams County ILGenWeb Project. Living 1500 miles away from Quincy, I would have had to settle for a much lesser product without their help.

As I write these words, the Herleman cabin is under several feet of water as a result of the floods of June 2008 (see photo below). I hope that this booklet contributes in some small way to the efforts being made to preserve this and other historical structures for future generations. My thanks also to all those who have contributed to such efforts in the past and to those who will make such contributions in the future, for without them there would be fewer artifacts left to bring the stories of the past to life.

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CONTENTS OF COMPACT DISC

The accompanying CD, “The Pioneers of the Herleman Cabin in Adams County, Illinois” includes all of the information found in this booklet. This booklet can be printed from a Microsoft Word file contained on the CD. All photos, documents, maps, and family trees in this booklet are embedded in this Word file.

The CD also contains much that is not part of this booklet, including the following:
- The CD contains a GEDCOM file containing not only the family tree printed on page 2 but also some family branches not shown on this printed tree. GEDCOM is the file format used to share genealogical information between family-tree programs, so most genealogical software programs should be able to read this file.
- The CD contains some modern photos of the cabin and historical park and some additional documents related to individuals discussed in this booklet. Most of these photos and documents are in JPEG format, and most of the documents are of sufficient resolution that they can be expanded to full-page size for better printing or viewing.