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5-11-1937

### Wilhelm, Peter (1848 - )

Walter B. Haupt

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#### Recommended Citation

Haupt, Walter B., "Wilhelm, Peter (1848 - )" (1937). *WPA Biographic Summaries*. 1427.  
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WILHELM, PETER

File No. B-1473

Peter Wilhelm was born on July 6, 1848, in Ozanhauser, Germany.

Peter Wilhelm is the son of Wendelin and Anna (De Temple)

Wilhelm, now deceased, who lived on a farm near Meire Grove, Minnesota.

Wendelin and Anna (De Temple) Wilhelm were born in Germany, and were married there. While in Germany, they operated a small farm. Three sons were born to this union, John, Jacob, and Peter.

In the year 1867, the family decided to migrate to America, but as the son, Jacob, was at that time serving in the German Army, the trip was postponed a year so that he would be able to accompany them. John, the eldest son, however, did not wait and left for America immediately. Arriving there he went west to Marystown, Wisconsin, where he found employment in a saw mill.

In the spring of the next year, after Jacob was discharged from the army, the family sailed for America and also came to Marystown, Wisconsin, where the father and the sons, Jacob and Peter, also found employment in the saw mill.

After a year in Wisconsin, Wendelin Wilhelm left for Minnesota, accompanied by his wife and son John, and filed on a homestead in the township of Oak, Stearns County. This place he improved on and it served as their home until they retired to the city of Melrose where they made their home with their son, Peter.

Wendelin Wilhelm died at the age of 95, on August 18, 1905 was buried in the St. Boniface Cemetery at Melrose, his wife Anna died in 1885 and was buried at Melrose.

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John Wilhelm, after several years in Minnesota, married and later moved to South Dakota, where he operated a farm. He died in South Dakota.

Jacob, born July 8, 1844 at Ozenhauser, Germany, came to Minnesota about a year after his father and filed on a homestead in Farming Township. This place he improved and it served as his home until 1910, when he retired and moved to the village of Albany. He died October 18, 1924.

Peter who was nineteen at the time he came to America, was employed in the saw mill in Wisconsin for some time after the family came to Minnesota, and then he also came to Stearns County. For a short time he helped his father with the work on the farm and then was employed on the Henry Meyer farm near Meire Grove.

On June 17, 1870, Peter Wilhelm was united in marriage to Rosena Christen of Albany. Immediately after the marriage he filed on a homestead near Meire Grove. After five years on this place, during which time he improved on it, he traded it for some property in Melrose.

On this property he erected a hotel, known as the Pacific House, located a lock north from where the Great Northern Depot now stands. This hotel he conducted for over fifteen years and then disposed of it to Joseph Hilt. A short time later he purchased a cafe, which he enlarged to serve as a hotel. This hotel was known as the Great Northern Hotel and was situated where the Meyer Brothers Lumber Company now stands. After about five years he traded the hotel for a farm in the township of Oak, which he operated for a year and eight months and then sold it to John Neiman and moved to the City of Melrose, where he has lived in retirement since.

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While in the hotel business in Melrose, Peter Wilhelm was one of the organizers of the Volunteer Fire Department. The first meeting was held in Nick Koenegs Saloon and during this meeting the members fought the first fire with wine. Mr. Wilhelm remarked as follows concerning the meeting, "At the first meeting there were about ten members present, seated around a table on which stood a gallon of wine. A kerosene lamp hung directly over head. After the meeting was quite well along sparks from the lamp ignited the ceiling, by that time we were pretty well organized as firemen and we all filled our glasses with wine and dashed it at the fire and in this way extinguished it."

The only equipment the department had was several buckets. Concerning the first two fires Peter further remarked, "The first fire, outside the one at the meeting, occurred in a house that stood near the river, so we were well supplied with water and the house was saved. The next fire however occurred at a house in the west end of town and the only water supply was the family pump which soon ran dry and the house was destroyed."

In 1881 when the City of Melrose was incorporated a water system was installed and the fire department received a hose cart. Later a ladder wagon was added. In 1934, the Melrose Fire Department celebrated the fiftieth anniversary and Peter Wilhelm was elected Honorary Fire Chief. He is still a member of the Melrose Fire Department Relief Association being its oldest member both in age and length of membership.

For eighteen years Mr. Wilhelm was on the police force at Melrose. This was also during the time he operated the hotel and also served on the village council for one term.

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On June 17, 1930 Peter and Rosena (Christen) Wilhelm celebrated their Sixtieth Wedding Anniversary, both in the best of health. About a year later. Rosena (Christen) Wilhelm became ill and after a few months passed away on October 29, 1933. Burial was made in the Immanuel Lutheran Cemetery at Farming. At the time of her death she was 84 years old. Rosena was the daughter of Jacob Christen and she was born in Switzerland on March 4, 1848.

Interviewed: Peter Wilhelm  
By: Walter B. Haupt  
Date: May 11, 1937

Publication Granted

FROM THE RECORDS IN THE STEARNS COUNTY COURT HOUSE

FOR THE PETER WILHELM BIOGRAPHY

MARRIAGE RECORD BOOK C. PAGE 457

Peter William and Rosina Christen

Married at St. Cloud June 17, 1870

By: Nathan F. Barnes City Justice

Witnesses: Jorkel Wilhelm and Maria Schneider

DEATH RECORD BOOK Y. PAGE 16 LINE 416

Rosina Wilhelm Born in Switzerland March 4, 1848

Daughter of Jake Christen

Died October 29, 1932

Age 84 years 7 months and 25 days

DEATH RECORD BOOK 1905 A14 PAGE 221

Wendelin Wilhelm Born in Germany January 14, 1810

Son of John Wilhelm

Died August 18, 1905

Age 95 years 7 months and 4 days

DEATH RECORD BOOK Q PAGE 9 LINE 225

Jacob Wilhelm Born in Germany July 8, 1844

Son of Wendelin Wilhelm

Died October 18, 1924

Age 80 years 3 months and 10 days