

Herman Weigel
Nominated by Jennifer Witzel

Herman Weigel was born in 1859 in Weigelsdorf, Silesia, Germany (now known as Wigancice, Dolnoslaskie, Poland). Herman arrived in Marshfield, Wisconsin in the early days of the settlement.

Herman came to the US in November of 1878, arriving at the port of New York, then making his way to Milwaukee where he hoped to find work as a cabinet maker. He only had \$9 in his pocket upon his arrival and had no tools. He managed to find some work but wages were low and rent was high. Herman decided to come to Marshfield where two brothers had settled.

When he arrived at the rough settlement that was Marshfield, he inquired after his brother Paul. A resident told Herman to continue north on the muddy lane that is now Central Avenue for another mile and a half, then ask for directions from someone there. At the county line, he met a woman who pointed into the woods and told him that his brothers traveled in that direction when they passed by. There was no trail, barely even a cow path but Herman followed the path until he came to a clearing with a small farm. There the farmer directed Herman further on to his brother Paul's property.



Herman stayed with his brothers Paul and Joe and helped them clear land for a little over a year then went back to Milwaukee to work in his trade of cabinet making. In 1882, the last of the brothers, August Weigel, made it to Wisconsin and bought land on the county line next to his brothers. The three farms were side by side on the north side of McMillan Street running almost from today's Galvin Avenue east to Stadt Road.

By 1883 Herman was back in Marshfield and secured a position at John Upham's plant making extension tables. Lots were being sold for \$10 and lumber was relatively cheap. Herman built a small house at 532 South Central Avenue, which is the current location of the parking lot for Heinzen Printing, and walked to work every day. Herman married Clara Hartl at St. John's Catholic Church on 14 September 1885 and they lived in their little house for nearly 20 years.

The little Weigel house was a story and a half with a small barn in the back. The house survived the fire in June of 1887 that destroyed most of Marshfield. Herman and Clara woke the morning after the fire to find residents packed into the lower floor of their home with the belongings that could be salvaged piled in with them. The refugees stayed until temporary housing could be built.

Herman enjoyed working for Upham. He told of a time when work was slow and he thought about quitting the Upham plant but he didn't have a good reason. Then a mechanic at the plant borrowed some of Herman's tools and ruined them. Herman felt that he could use the broken tools as his excuse to give notice. When Upham asked him why he wanted to leave and Herman told him about the tools, Upham told Herman to go right to the hardware store and replace the tools at the expense of the company. Herman was then sent back to work and, having nothing else to complain about, he stayed for 23 years.

Herman's health began to decline and he sold the little house on Central Avenue to George Donhard around 1901. It was at this time that Herman decided to move out to McMillan Street near his brothers.

Herman bought 100 acres beside the property of his brothers in section 34 in the town of McMillan. Herman and Clara Weigel lived on their farm until their deaths – Clara in 1940 and Herman in 1947. Herman was the last survivor of the Weigel siblings who traveled from Germany to the US. He came when Marshfield was still just a few rough houses and muddy tracks for roads. Wagons and trains were the primary means of transportation. No one had electricity or indoor plumbing. During Herman's life, he saw the city burned to the ground and rebuilt into a prosperous community. Homes had electricity, radios, and telephones. Cars and trucks were the means of transportation. Tractors replaced horse drawn farm equipment. Herman was among the last of the "old settlers" of Marshfield and he was truly a witness to the birth of our little city.