

EMDEN, GERMANY

Emden has, as do many other German cities, a little sister; she is however at home on another continent, Emden in the State of Illinois. They were emigrants out of the Krummhorn that founded this town that will celebrate the hundredth year of its existence. The Wall Lake "Ostfriesen Zeitung", the home publication of these emigrants carries an account of this in its latest edition:

"The town of Emden may well celebrate the 100th year of its existence. The origin of this town with the same name as the 1000 year old city on the Ems River in Ostfriesland is a romantic story of the settlement of the western prairie, it was difficult but rewarding. In reviewing the episode we must go back another 26 years to the year 1848 when emigration from Ostfriesland was at its height. Ideally these emigrations were to a new world. Some ships headed for Texas, then changed plans and ended up in New Orleans, then up the Mississippi and landed where the city of Quincy now stands. Others landed at Alton where they found better land than their own native acreage. From other communities in Ostfriesland came the more spirited of the population, some to St. Louis by river steamer. There were enough Germans in this city to support the publication of two German language newspapers in 1848.

Among these early immigrants was a young blacksmith named Teis Smid. For such as he there was work in abundance at good pay. On arrival, he wrote his father back home to come also to this paradise and bring his other children and all relatives. The next year, 1849, the father and six children arrived after several months at sea, part of the trip being made by sailboat. By this time the industrious Teis had scouted the new country for opportunities which he found at existing Peoria. At that time all the land in that area was prairie and the early settlers found the sod would not yield to the then existing plows just as it did not to the clay soils of northern Germany. With this in mind, Teis Smid, the blacksmith, made plows that would handle prairie sod. The news of this new plow quickly spread thru Central Illinois and the demand soon exceeded the supply. Teis Smid wrote to the Krummhorner villages and asked that workers of all kinds be sent to work in the new enterprise. They came by the hundreds and the plow factory was moved across the river to Pekin which was then being settled by almost purely Ostfrieslanders. In 1865, Teis Smid went back personally, to his native land in order to recruit more workers, offering to pay

their fare in advance and guaranteeing everyone a well-paying job.

Between the years of 1865 and 1870, the emigration from the villages of Hamswehrum, Upleward, Groothusen, and others was so great that they lost one third of their population. Many of the newcomers were naturally not fit for factory work and so Smid helped them to start farming. About 40 miles south of Pekin in Logan County, an Irish speculator named Scully, had acquired 40,000 acres of land for which he sought tenants. Anyone wishing to farm could find room there. Smid helped everyone and was responsible for their welfare.

In 1872, a railroad from Pekin thru Logan County was built. People asked if Teis Smid had built this at his own cost; at any rate the first locomotive coming down this new railroad bore the name of Teis Smid in large letters on its side. Later this road became the Pekin, Lincoln and Decatur. It was self-evident that the first town along this new road be named "Emden". The village of Hartsburg followed. Both communities were totally Ostfrieslander; at one time it was estimated that there were 2400 Ostfrieslanders in the two villages and surrounding farms; for several decades only low German was spoken among them.

So Emden of the 1000 years has had this little sister now 100 years old. It is admitted that in fertility this community in the USA rates higher than that of the old country, although not without labor.

As to the fate of Teis Smid, we will not go into detail here. We can say, however, that his plow works was later sold to John Deere when it became the John Deere Plow Company whose product is known today on every continent including Germany."