

# Settling the Devil's Bog

by Vic Berecz

**Moor:** a broad expanse of open land, often with boggy areas and patches of low shrubs, as heather. That's the dictionary definition. The area to the east and northeast of Bremen, which is drained by the Hamme and Wümme rivers, is said to be the largest contiguous expanse of moorland in northern Germany. Today, that entire region has been *branded* for tourism as the **Teufelsmoor** – the **Devil's Bog**, and is generally simply called *the Moor*.

The truth is that very little of the original moor remains. When you drive through the area today, you will find pristine farmland, and in places housing developments as the suburbs of Bremen creep eastward. Shown here is a recent photo evocative of how the Teufelsmoor looked in recent years. It is the old peat canal between Osterholz and Worpswede which flows into the Hamme river.



Years ago in our research of the several family lines who have lived on *The Moor* for generations, we soon

realized the area was first settled rather recently. In fact, the town of my birth in Connecticut is nearly twice as old as all but one town in the Teufelsmoor. Why was the area settled so recently? How was it settled? How did it evolve from primitive conditions to today's prosperity? And, how did my wife Joan's maternal ancestors find their way there, and a make their livelihoods on *The Moor*? Those are the questions we'll try to answer here.

**The Name and the Area.** First let's deal with that wonderful name that mysteriously calls out to tourists from all over the world ... **the Teufelsmoor**. The name as first used was *Düwelsmoor* and is found in 14<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts referring to a small village just east of the city of Osterholz-Scharmbeck. In *Plattdeutsch*, the so-called *Low German* dialect of the area, this name can be translated as *barren (or dead) land*. Soon the term was extended to the moorlands to the north of the village along the river Beek, a small tributary of the Hamme. Over the years, the Plattdeutsch term *Düwelsmoor* (also spelled *Duvelsmoor* or *Duves Moor*) was mis-translated to standard German (i.e. *High German*) as *Teufelsmoor* meaning *Devil's Bog*. This name stuck and during the 19<sup>th</sup> century became the umbrella term for not only the moorlands along the Hamme, but also the moors to the south of Worpswede along the river Wörpe, a tributary of the Wümme.

The moorlands we're talking about cover approximately 200 square miles in a arc to the north and east of Bremen. If you draw a wide swath starting just east of Gnarrenburg, and go to



the southwest down the valley of the Hamme River and its tributary, the Beek, almost to Osterholz-Scharmbeck, and then curve southeast toward Fischerhude ... roughly the center part of the dark green area in the map above, centered on the town of Worpswede. ...that is the heart of the area known today as **the Teufelsmoor ... the Devil's Bog**.

**The Moor in Medieval Times.** The moorlands were formed during a relatively wet period from 500BC to 500AD which allowed peat moss (*Torf*) to proliferate and make the land untenable for agriculture. At its worst, the peat reached a thickness of about 30 feet in the area near present-day Grasberg.

Several villages along the west and south edges of the moorlands existed well back into the Middle Ages. These included Osterholz, Lilienthal, and Fischerhude. Further east were the old villages of Ottersberg, Wilstedt, Tarmstedt and Hepstedt. To the north of the moorlands was the town of Bremervörde. Their viability depended on higher ground with productive soil (called

*Geest*) or good river access for fishing and transport. Later settlement took place in the meadows along the Hamme river where fertile soil was deposited by seasonal flooding.

There was one livable area in the heart of the moorlands ... that is the 54 meter hill called the *Weyerberg* in what is now the town of Worpswede. Archeologists have found Stone Age relics on this sandy island of *Geest*, though it was probably abandoned during the wet period mentioned above. But by 1218, Worpswede is mentioned in the records as home to eight farms belonging to the Osterholz Abbey.

Though Worpswede was the only medieval settlement surrounded by the moorlands, other villages owned by the abbeys of Osterholz and Lilienthal began to develop along its edges. The Osterholz monastery established in 1185 founded Teufelsmoor, Viehland, and Waakhausen. The Lilienthal-Trupe monestary established about 1350 founded Timmerloh, Moorhausen, and Feldhausen. The village of Teufelsmoor in 1385 was the first place that black peat was cut to be used for heating, cooking, and forging iron, since anthracite coal was unknown in this area at the time. This gradual encroachment continued into the 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. But, most of these desolate moorlands remained uninhabited ... except for occasional criminals on the lam and other outcasts.

**Findorff's Plan for Settlement.** At the end of the Thirty Years War (1618-48) most of the area of northern Germany between the Weser and Elbe rivers came under the Swedish crown, the King of Sweden also gaining the title of Duke of Bremen and Verden. This included the moorlands we are discussing. In 1719, the area reverted to German rule as part of Hannover (then known officially as the *Electorate of Braunschweig-Lüneberg*). Hannover was in personal union with Great Britain at the time. Therefore, in 1756 when the moor settlement efforts began in earnest, it was done under the aegis of the man we know as King George II.

Jürgen Christian Findorff (1720-1792), upon the death of Magnus Gerkens in 1756, took over the local efforts to develop *The Moor*. The task at-hand was to bring this wasteland into productive use, and thereby increase future tax revenue. The project was barely begun under his predecessor. But, Findorff had such success that his project had achieved national attention, and in 1771 King George III appointed him *Royal Hannoverian Moor Commissioner*. The idea was simple: 1) build canals to drain the moorlands and provide a means of transport for the area; 2) bring in settlers who would cut, dry and sell peat for fuel and in so doing create arable land; and 3) provide incentives to get people to take on these onerous tasks.

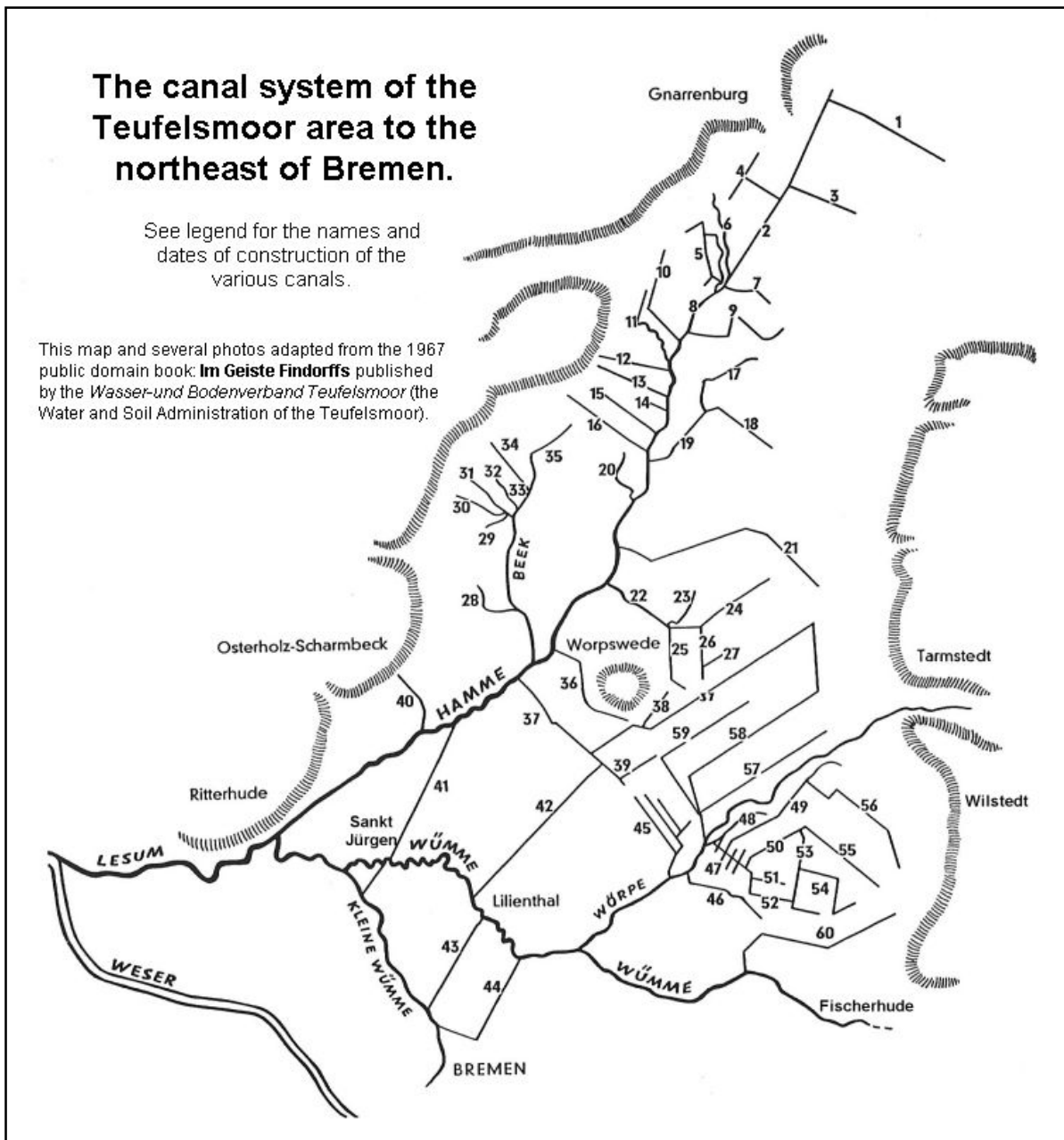


Over 35 years, Findorff oversaw a huge expansion of the project, and by the time of his death it was quite clear that it would eventually succeed. This was due not only to his technical and administrative skills, but also to his concern for the well-being of the settlers. Among other things, he prepared lists of supplies and tools each settler needed. Findorff also personally designed and managed the construction of the Lutheran Churches at Gnarrenburg, Worpswede, and at Grasberg where so many of our ancestors were baptized, married, and buried. The Grasberg church was completed in 1789, and provided a focal point for the town that was to become the center of the southern moorlands, where our ancestors resided.

## The canal system of the Teufelsmoor area to the northeast of Bremen.

See legend for the names and dates of construction of the various canals.

This map and several photos adapted from the 1967 public domain book: **Im Geiste Findorffs** published by the *Wasser-und Bodenverband Teufelsmoor* (the Water and Soil Administration of the Teufelsmoor).



Still, after Findorff's death in 1792, decades of work were needed to finish the canal system and generations of settlers ceaselessly toiled to create fertile land. When the program of moor settlement officially ended in 1850, 69 villages had been settled. Survival of the moor farmers (*Mooranbauern*) continued to depend on peat. But, in 1872 due to air pollution restrictions in Bremen, a changeover to cleaner-burning coal began. Life in the moorlands suddenly became more difficult. An *Institute for Moor Research* established in Bremen in 1883, led to innovations in cultivation that resulted in the productive farms we see on *The Moor* today.

This map shows the eventual result of Findorff's plan. It is taken from the 1967 book **Im Geiste Findorffs** (*In the Spirit of Findorff*). The legend, on the next page, includes the names of each of the numbered canals and their date of completion. The family farm we will primarily focus on in this study ... Meinershausen Hof (house) #15 ... was on the Meinershauser Schiffgraben (#53 on the map) that was completed in 1783.

1. Augustendorfer Kanal	1832	23. Mevenstedter Schiffgrb.		41. St. Jürgenskanal	1818
2. Oste-Hamme-Kanal	1764	24. Schlußdorf-Winkelmoor. Schiffgrb.	1810	42. Neue Semkenfahrt	1869
3. Barkhauser Kanal	1823	25. Bergedorfer Schiffgrb.	1780	43. Torfkanal	
4. Dahldorfer Kanal		26. Neu-Bergedorfer Schiffgrb.		44. Kuhgraben	
5. Kuhstedtermoor. Schiffgr. und Alter Nordgraben		27. Adolphsdorfer Neuer Graben	1800	45. Worphauser Landwehrgrb.	1759
6. Neuer Nordgraben in Kuhstedt		28. Speckgraben (Pennigbüttel-Altenbrück)	1760	46. Neuer Rautendorfer Schiffgraben	1765
7. Ostegraben in Findorf und Karlshöfen		29. Klostergraben (Niedersandhausen)	1780	47. Saatmoorgraben mit Saatmoorlinien	
8. Kollbeck (Meinershagen)		30. Pferdeggraben (Hambergen-Ströhe)	1765	48. Grasberger Schiffgrb.	1831
9. Nordsoder-Karlshöfener Schiffgraben	1790	31. Göttegraben (Hambergen-Spreddig)	1770	49. Eickedorfer Schiffgrb.	1753
10. Giehlermoorer Schiffgrb.		32. Wriedengraben (Hambergen-Spreddig)	1770	50. Grasdorfer Schiffgrb.	1782
11. Ahrensdorfer Schiffgrb.		33. Hunneggraben (Hambergen-Spreddig)	1770	51. Neu-Dannenberger Schiffgraben	
12. Lunzengraben	Vollersode und Wallhöf. Moor	34. Wehmannsgraben (Hambergen-Heilsdorf)		52. Dannenberger Schiffgraben	1795
13. Brasengraben		35. Verlüßmoorer Schiffgrb.		53. Meinershauser Schiffgraben	1783
14. Wendelkengraben		36. Wörpedahler Schiffgrb.	1766	54. Mittelsmoorer Schiffgraben	1838
15. Friedensheimer Schiffgrb.	1840	37. Alte Semkenfahrt	1754	55. Huxfelder Schiffgrb.	1797
16. Bornreihner Schiffgrb.	1840	38. Ostendorfer Schiffgrb.	1765	56. Schmalenbecker Schiffgraben	1761
17. Ostersoder Schiffgrb.	1760	39. Lüningshauser Schiffgrb.	1799	57. Wörpedorfer Schiffgrb.	1774
18. Heudorfer Schiffgrb.	1754	40. Osterholzer Hafenkanal	1768	58. Tüschendorf-Schröttersdorfer Schiffgraben	1793
19. Hüttendorf. Schiffgrb.	1820			59. Neu-Otterstein-Worphauser Schiffgrb.	1847
20. Wendelbrocksgraben/ Teufelsmoor				60. Rautendorfer Schiffgraben	1764
21. Neu-St. Jürgener Schiffgrb.	1752				
22. Umbeck (Grenze Weyerdeelen/Überhamm)	1753				

Legend for map of canals in the Teufelsmoor area.

At right is a photo of our family's church at Grasberg.

**The Task At-Hand.** The prospective settlers paid for their land with labor, digging the canals by hand. The first canal completed in the northern section was the 3-mile-long *Neu-Sankt Jürgener* canal (#21 on map) in 1752. The first in the southern part of *The Moor* was the Eickedorfer canal (#49) in 1753. Once the canals were built draining much of the moorlands, the land theoretically could be settled. The land grants were sized to be sufficient to support a family of six. Once a settler had constructed a house, and was presumably on the land to stay, he received a "gift" of five-gold-thalers from the government .



But, the soil was extremely poor and wouldn't support normal crops. The farmers burned the *white peat* at the surface, and planted buckwheat in the ashes. This course grain was the basis of early survival. As anticipated, the *black peat* beneath the surface could be cut, dried, and transported on the canals to Bremen for sale. There it was burned for residential heating as well as industrial uses.

Wherever the peat was completely removed, there was decent, arable soil for growing vegetables and other crops ... but it took great effort and decades of work to reach this point. That's the rationale for the well-known Plattdeutsch proverb shown here referring to generations

of moor farmers: The first is doomed to an early death, the second will suffer misery, the third may have sufficient bread.

So how did Findorff convince people to sign-up for this very difficult life? Simple, offer them land that they would actually own in exchange for labor ... something that was not possible in much of Germany where the last vestiges of the feudal system still persisted. And, throw into the mix freedom from all taxes and from military service for the life of the original settler. It was an offer that many ambitious, but landless, farm laborers could not refuse. But, little did they know how short and miserable their life on *The Moor* was likely to be. Actually, according to noted moor historian Roland Washausen, "... people in the moor region died earlier than in other regions, and children had little chance of surviving. So it was the 5th generation who could live normally."

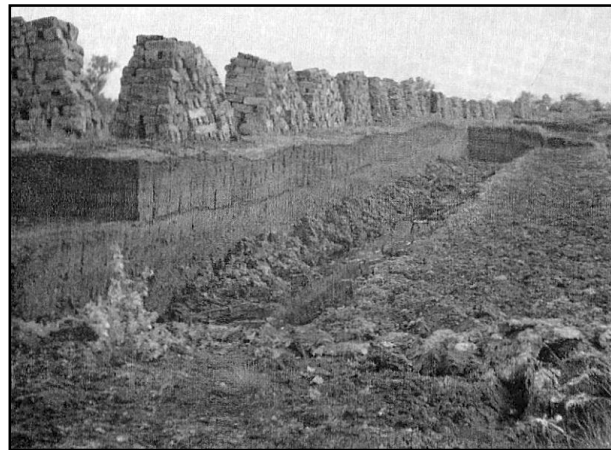
*Den Ersten sien Dod,  
den Tweeten sien Not,  
den Drütten sien Brot.*

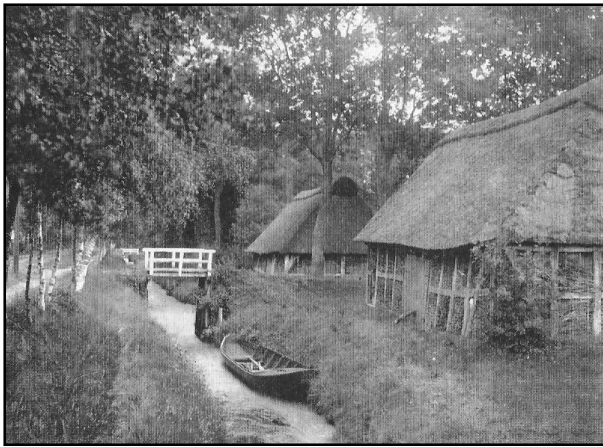
The farms that were offered were long, very narrow strips of land abutting a major canal at their narrow end. They were each 12½ hectares (about 30 acres). The expectation was that the settlers would build a rude hut to live in, grow what they were able, cut peat beginning at the canal using the low quality upper-layer of *brown peat* to heat their own home, and selling the better quality *black peat* found below. Gradually, they would work back on their plots, creating more arable land as they went. The early homes were essentially windowless A-frames with the peat-thatched roofs going right to the ground, as envisioned by the drawing at the right.



Water-filled ditches between the farms provided a way to move the peat from the *back-lot* to the canal. Boats were loaded with dried blocks of peat and dragged (or poled) through the network of canals and rivers for sale in Bremen. The series of old photos below give an idea of what life was like on *The Moor* ... but keep in mind these pictures were taken more than an century after the original settlers decided to inhabit the wasteland of *The Moor*.

Probably about the time these pictures were taken, Fritz Overbeck was an artist working in Worpswede. He was a student of the moor and frequently painted scenes of the moorlands. He also wrote of the plight of the moor farmers. In 1895, he wrote (translation by Roland





Washausen): “Under a flat skipper cap a face like leather, crumbled by sun and wind, black with peat dust. Blue-white vertical striped linen shirt without collar, battered pants, hand-knitted woolen socks in straw filled clogs. The bit labored and sluggish looking walk, and a back, bent by premature hard work.” ... “The fight for survival of these people was really made hard: the work of a peat-farmer is harder than the work of a normal-farmer. Peat-farmer’s work is more monotonous and even mind killing, because he does not know the difference between expectation and fear of losing a crop; he does not know the joy at sowing, growing, thriving and the ripening in the end. He is only engaged in satisfying necessities of life, so he will never get to know a higher way of life.”



The photos above and Overbeck’s prose show rather graphically the hard manual labor involved in cutting, drying, and transporting the peat ... as well as the rudeness of the life on *The Moor* around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But, this 1895 painting by Fritz Overbeck also shows the beauty of the moorlands.

Until after World War I, transport in the moorlands was still by canal and river. It was only later that roads were built from the paths along side the canals so that wagons could be used to transport peat and crops to Bremen.

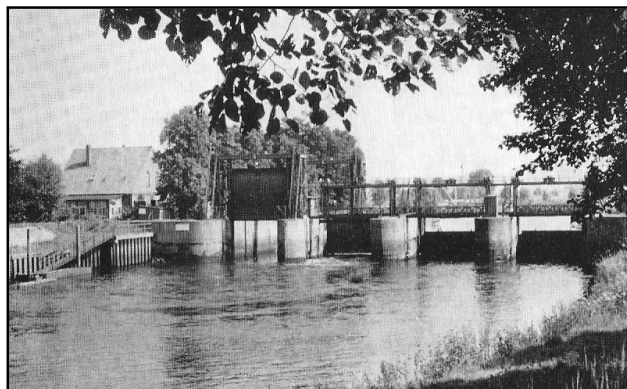
Joan’s mother, Mathilde Brüning remembered her father transporting peat to Bremen on a canal boat in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. There, he sold the dried peat to *Beck’s Brewery* for use as

fuel. In 1949, Joan herself went by a horse-drawn wagon to Bremen, with an uncle, to sell peat and vegetables in the city. Progress came slowly to *The Moor*. The 1900 family photograph above shows Johann Hilken of Schmalenbeck house #25, the father-in-law of Joan's aunt Maria, on a peat boat in the Eickedorf Canal with the Eickedorf windmill in the background. The Schmalenbeck Canal (#56) ran directly into the Eickedorf Canal (#49) which connected with the Wörpe river in Grasberg.



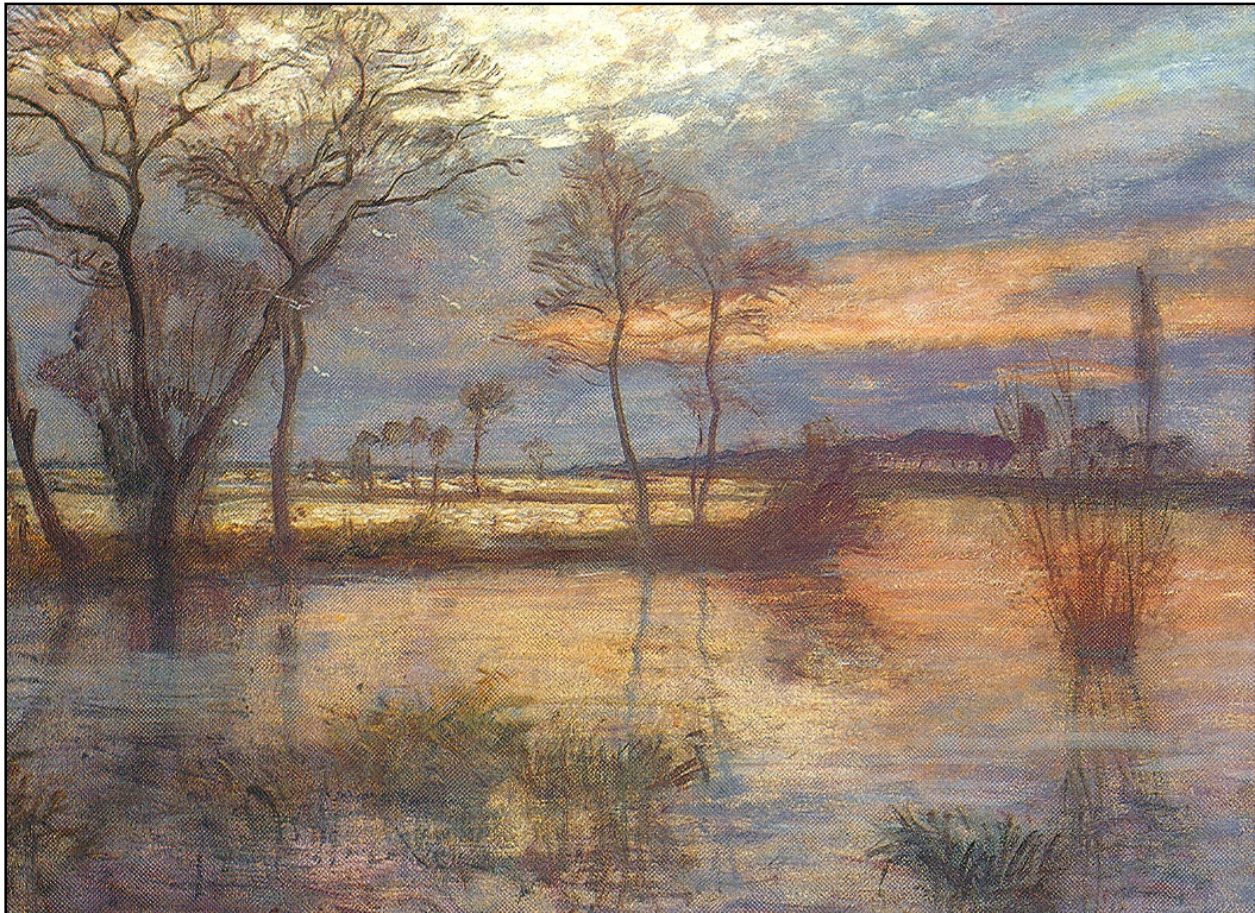
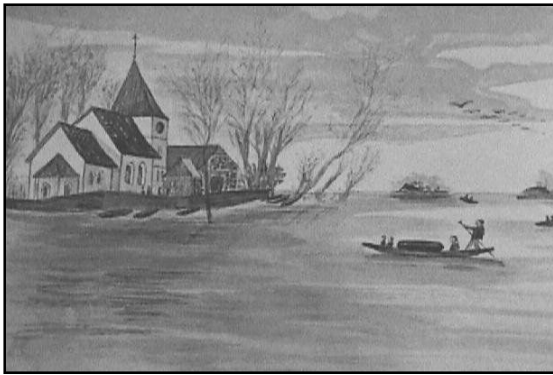
Today, at the very end of the Schmalenbeck Canal sits the farm of one of Joan's cousins. At the back of that farm you can still see where the peat-cutting ended. There is a 15-foot wall of peat beyond which is a modern highway that runs along the edge of the *Wilstedter Geest*.

Numerous waterworks projects were constructed over the years to handle both elevation differences between the waterways and to control flooding. They went from primitive sluices to modern lock systems. We see examples below.



Even so, flooding is endemic to the region. Floods brought the good soil that allowed parts of the Hamme valley to be settled early. Floods devastated the early settlers of the moorlands. Floods were feared by two centuries of moor residents, and still plague them. Below is a drawing of the flood of 1920 surrounding the church at Sankt Jürgen, and a photo of the recent January 2012 flooding along the Hamme.





Worpswede by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and more recently Fischerhude, evolved into a major artist colonies and tourist centers. One of the great artists of Worpswede was Otto Modersohn (1865-1943) who specialized in landscapes of the moorlands. Below is a copy of his 1938 painting of flooding on *The Moor*.

So, for more than a century life was difficult on *The Moor* ... hard manual labor, damp and dank surroundings, difficult transportation, frequent flooding, and the overriding fear of starvation. Now, let's examine our ancestors who opted for this life ... and many of whose descendants still live on *The Moor*.

**Our Ancestors on the Moor.** As noted above, it is my wife's maternal ancestors who lived on *The Moor*. Obviously this brings to mind the birth-name of her mother – Brüning. But, as we trace back her lineage, we find among her direct ancestors dozens of other surnames ... all

people who lived in the moorlands for over 200 years but can be traced back to earlier residences. Many of these people came from the areas immediately surrounding the moor area, as would be expected. The towns to the west of the moorlands and Bremen itself are well represented. There are also several families that came from the Wilstedt and Tarmstedt areas just east of *The Moor*. Finally there are several families that who came from farther a field.

The best way to illustrate this is the following table showing many of Joan's direct ancestors who settled on, or moved from place-to-place in *The Moor*. **Gen** is generation number back from Mathilde Brüning (who is 1). **Year** is year of settlement in the moorlands or of the move.

Gen	Name	Birth-Death	Year	Moved From/To
8	Jürgen Brüning	c1700-c1760	c1740	Nedm. (?) to Neu-Sankt Jürgen
6	Gevert Hinrich Brüning	1747-1777	c1770	Neu-Sankt Jürgen to Tüschendorf
2	Johann Brüning	1872-1937	1898	Tüschendorf to Meinershausen #15
8	Gevert Lütjen	Unknown	c1750	Huttenbüsch to Neu-Sankt Jürgen
6	Harm Kück	1743-c1785	c1775	Klostermoor to Worpheim
6	Alheid Tietjen	1737-c1780	c1775	Torfmoor to Worpheim
6	Arend Schnakenberg	1722-1782	1760	Aussendeich to Wörpedorf
6	Gretje Blanken	1744-1815	1775	Oberneuland to Wörpedorf
5	Gerd Schnakenberg	1777-1855	c1798	Wörpedorf to Seehausen
6	Jacob Behrens	1741-1815	1780	Achim to Moorende
6	Rebecca Bartels	1746-1829	1780	Oberneuland to Moorende
5	Johann Schriefer	1779-1824	1802	Worphausen to Seehausen
6	Hinrich Martins	1755-1811	c1780	Boitzen to Tüschendorf
6	Cathrina Dühn	1758-1837	c1780	Duden to Tüschendorf
6	Peter Poppe	1751-1809	c1780	Boitzen to Tüschendorf
7	Rencke Rotermund	1688-1735	1713/20	Waakhausen to Wührden to Torfmoor
6	Rencke Rotermund	1722-1800	1750	Torfmoor to Kleinmoor
5	Jacob Rotermund	1750-1829	1790	Kleinmoor to Eickedorf
4	Jacob Rotermund	1791-1865	1819	Eickedorf to Meinershausen #15
6	Arend Mindermann	1744-1814	1783	Bassen to Dannenberg
----	Eberhardt Bollmann	1766-1845	1783	Rockwinkel to Meinershausen #15
5	Maria Mindermann	1778-1816	1801	Dannenberg to Meinershausen #15
5	Christoph HW Wiechmann	1786-1869	c1815	Drackenburg to Huxfeld
5	Margarethe Lüllmanns	1793-1886	1815	Bremen to Huxfeld
3	Meta Wiechmann	1849-1933	1870	Huxfeld to Meinershausen #15
6	Gerhardt Schnakenberg	1744-1802	c1770	Vorwerk to Eickedorf
6	Hinrich Mahnken	1759-1820	1782	Tarmstedt to Schmalenbeck
6	Geshe Ficken	1757-1829	1782	Büchholz to Schmalenbeck

The table also places emphasis on when her ancestors came to Meinershausen Hof #15 which we will focus on below. From this table, we see that most of our ancestors who were moor

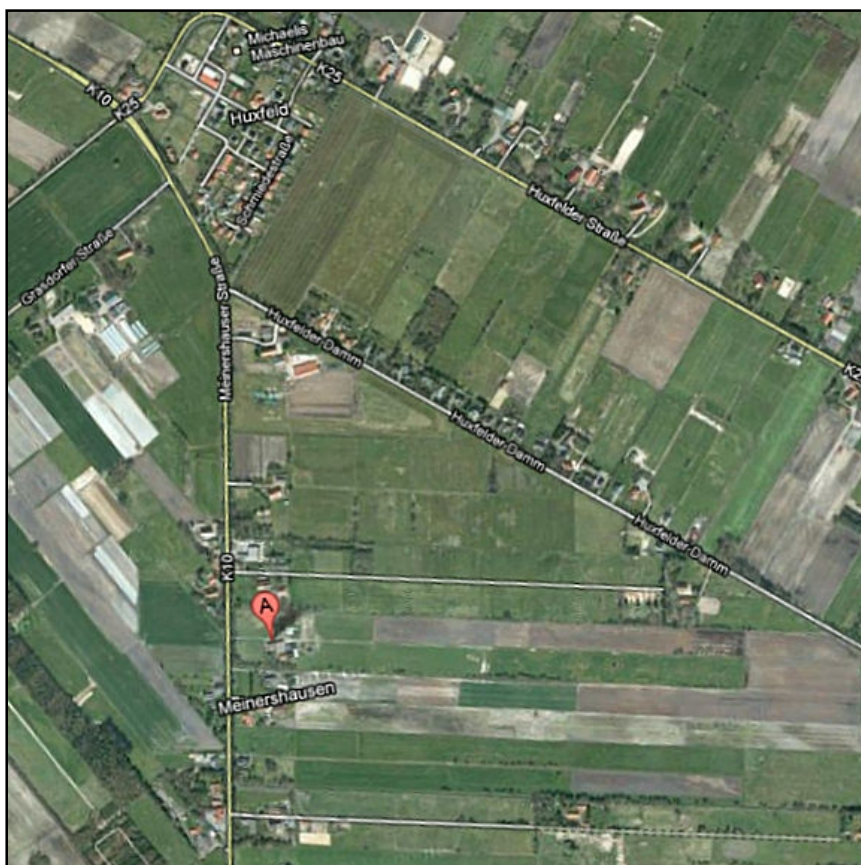
settlers originated nearby, but there were a smattering from more distant locales. Also apparent is that Joan's maternal ancestors had all lived on *The Moor* for several generations ... during most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century people didn't migrate there, they got away from there. Until relatively recently, *the Moor* was not conducive to *the good life*.

**A Case Study: Meinershausen Hof #15.** I have chosen this farm as our case study because it is where Joan's mother grew up; we can trace it's ownership in our family back to the original settler; and it is still the home of members of our family.

At the right is a *Google Maps* satellite view of *The Moor* identifying Meinershausen Hof #15 ... the Brüning-Rotermund family farm. Notice how the long narrow farms that were originally allocated to the settlers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can still be seen. Also note that the present-day streets follow exactly the paths of the major original canals – see canals #50, #53, and #55 on the page 4 map.

The Meinershauser canal (#53) was begun in 1782 and completed in 1783. The original settler of Meinershausen house #15 was named Eberhardt (usually referred to as Erert) Bollmann. He is not Joan's ancestor, but his wife Maria Mindermann is. Let me explain.

We know little about Bollman's early life. That he was an original settler of the 52 morgan (1 morgan = ¼ hectare) property which was #15 on the Meinershauser canal in 1783, or soon thereafter, is a certainty. He was born in Rockwinkel, outside of Bremen, in 1766. That means he was probably still



a teenager when he took on the onerous task of carving a farm out of the moor. We do not know whether he was married or had children in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. If so, they all died before 1800 ... not an unusual outcome for moor settlers. In any case, in 1801 this 35-year-old then-single *Mooranbauer* married Maria Mindermann in the church at Grasberg.

Maria Mindermann was born in 1778 in Bassen to Arend Mindermann and Maria Bischoff, and as a child moved to *The Moor* with her parents, who were early settlers along the Dannenberg canal. In 1798, she had a daughter out-of-wedlock. That girl, Anna Maria Mindermann was listed as illegitimate in the Grasberg baptismal records. But, when she married in 1818, she gave her name as Maria Harms and listed her father as Claus Harms of Lilienthal. We know little about Harms, other than he was born in Warf, just outside Bremen. Presumably, he was married at the time of her birth, but subsequently acknowledged paternity.

Anna Maria was raised on the Bollmann-Mindermann farm at Meinershausen #15 along with the four children born to Erert and Maria between 1802 and 1810. Things did not go well for the struggling family. Two of their children died in infancy. Bollman was himself unable to make a living of the farm, with only one son who was too young to help much. His debts compounded. His wife Maria died in May of 1816, and apparently Erert couldn't manage without a woman and so within two months of Maria's death he married an older widow, Lucca Welbrooke.

In 1817-18 the Bollmann farm in Meinershausen was in dire straits ... then along came Jacob Rotermund. Jacob was the second son of an Eickedorf *Mooranbauer* of the same name. He was born in 1791. Remember, it was only original settlers who were immune to conscription. Following the first defeat of Napoleon and the re-establishment George III as ruler of Hannover, Jacob was drafted into the army. Jacob fought under the Duke of Wellington in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, as a private soldier in the *Landwehr Battalion Verden*, part of the *4th Hanoverian Brigade* of the *6th Division* of the Anglo-German forces. Years later, his daughter-in-law Meta Wiechmann remembers him saying that he was one of only three members of his unit that survived the battle. We are pleased to own his silver medal awarded to all the troops who fought under Wellington and survived. See the *Research Report* titled **The Battle of Waterloo** for further details about the role of his unit in the battle.

So Jacob Rotermund was a strong, probably handsome, young war hero who, as a second son, wouldn't inherit his father's farm. He took a liking to Anna Maria, the step-daughter of struggling farmer Erert Bollmann, and the feeling was apparently mutual. Because the farm was on the verge of going under, and Erert's only living son was too young to be of much help, an unusual arrangement was hatched. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of March in 1818, Bollmann "due to his own frailty, the farm's debt, and the age of his only son" turned control of Meinershausen #15 over to Jacob Rotermund. Rotermund paid off the debts, married Bollmann's step-daughter on May 16, and the final transfer of ownership took place on July 30.

Erert Bollmann lived on at Meinershausen #15 in retirement with his family. His wife Lucca died in 1831. For the record, son Arend married in 1832 and took over his father-in-law's farm in Huxfeld and daughter Gretje in 1834 married another Meinershausen *Mooranbauer*. Bollmann himself was apparently not as frail as he claimed ... he died in 1845 at the ripe old age of 78.

Jacob Rotermund and Anna Maria Mindermann (Harms) had ten children, eight of whom lived to adulthood. Oldest son Jacob never married, but inherited Meinershausen #15 on his father's death in 1865. Second son Johann Hinrich married in 1868 and moved across the canal to take over his father-in-law's farm in Grasdorf. Third son Diedrich in 1870 married Meta Wiechmann, daughter of a Huxfeld moor farmer. At that time, his brother Jacob sold the farm (including all debt) to Diedrich for 400-gold-thalers.

Dietrich and Meta had only three daughters. The oldest, Maria, married Peter Köster who owned another Meinershausen farm. The second, Anna, married Johann Brüning of Tüschendorf in 1898, and they took over Meinershausen #15 on Diedrich Rotermund's death in 1901. They are the parents of Joan's mother Mathilde Brüning. The youngest daughter, Meta, married Diedrich Müller of Hambergen.

The Meinershausen #15 farm remains in the Brüning family to this day. It was inherited by Hermann Brüning upon his marriage in 1933. Hermann was killed in World War II. The farm was then operated by his step-father until Hermann's son Hans Hermann came of age. Hans Hermann Brüning died in 2008 and the farm passed on to his son. That brings the saga of Meinershausen Hof #15 up-to-date.

