

Migration from Germany to Illinois

Name	Date	From	To
Andreas Andrew Gruenewald (1831-1872)	1851	Oberfell, Rhine Province, Prussia, German Confederation	Chicago, Cook, Illinois
Susanna Preib (1838-1923)	1855	Mittelstrimmig, Chochem-Zell, Rhine Province, Prussia, German Confederation	Chicago, Cook, Illinois

Andreas Andrew Gruenewald (1831-1872)

Andreas Andrew Gruenewald was born in 1831, near Oberfell along the Middle Rhine. Though details of his early family life remain unknown, he likely would have grown up in a world defined by hard physical labor, close family ties, and limited prospects for advancement. Andreas grew up at a time when economic instability and lengthy military service limited future opportunities for young men.

The Rhineland Context

In the decades following the Napoleonic wars, Rhineland experienced repeated shifts in governance and growing state control. These pressures intensified after the failed Revolutions of 1848, when widespread hopes for political reform and economic relief were met instead with repression. The hope for a stable home life became even more uncertain for many rural families.

Young men faced an additional burden: compulsory military service, often beginning around age eighteen and lasting for years. Against this backdrop, emigration—once unthinkable—became an increasingly practical alternative.

Sometime around 1851, Andreas made the decision to leave Germany and travel to the United States. His journey likely followed a well-established emigrant route: down the Rhine to a North Sea port such as Antwerp or Rotterdam, then across the Atlantic in steerage aboard a crowded sailing vessel. After landing in New York, he continued inland by riverboat, canal, and Great Lakes steamer before finally reaching Chicago—a fast-growing city that had become a magnet for German immigrants seeking work and community.

By the time Andreas arrived, Chicago offered something the Rhineland could not: steady employment, ethnic neighborhoods, German-speaking churches, and the possibility—however uncertain—of owning property and building an independent life.

Susanna Prieb (1838-1923)

Susanna Prieb was born in 1838 in Mittelstrimmig, a small Catholic farming village on the Hunsrück plateau, not far from Andreas's homeland. She grew up in a tightly knit household with siblings,

surrounded by extended family and neighbors whose lives revolved around the land and the church. Economic margins were narrow, and inheritance customs often left younger children with few options beyond wage labor or emigration.

In 1848, when Susanna was ten years old, her father died. Like many widows in small Rhineland villages, her mother, Sybilla, likely relied on a combination of family support, community assistance, and her own labor to keep the household intact. Children contributed wherever they could, and survival depended as much on cooperation as on income.

By the mid-1850s, worsening economic conditions and poor harvests pushed many families from the Hunsrück region to consider emigration. In 1855, Sybilla made the difficult decision to leave Germany with her children. Sybilla, Susanna, two brothers, and a sister departed from Antwerp aboard the *George Hurlbert* and arrived in New York on 25 June 1855.

Unlike Andreas, whose journey west is unrecorded, Susanna's passage is documented. From New York, the family likely followed the same inland route to Chicago, joining an established stream of Rhineland immigrants. It was in Chicago that Susanna met Andreas, married, and had a family.