

The Immigration Story of Bernard Rottkamp to America.

(Dedicated to the memory of Josephine Fausner Seidler and her work)

Bernard Rottkamp left the port of Bremen, Germany on March 29, 1847 for America on board the Brig Roland. He had traveled there from his native village Großneder in the then province of Westphalia.

He departed Bremen at a time when the immigrant trail from Germany to America was still relatively unshaped, unregulated and filled with strenuous trials. At best, he might have been enticed and advised in Germany by offices of the German Immigrant Society of New York, a recruitment and service organization reflecting the pre-eminent presence of German ancestral populations in New York. The German presence and their institutions, concentrated in the lower reaches of Manhattan, often facilitated the arrival of new and weary immigrants like Bernard Rottkamp.

Just a few years later German port emigrés would rail transit through Scotland and England to shorten the sea going voyage. They would process through immigration and travel facilities that would shorten the trip time, afford some modicum of food and shelter services, minimize the possibility of rejection or incarceration in New York for disease, criminality or pauperism, and allow transport on larger ships with more improved "steerage" conditions.

This improved circumstance reflected the development and operation by the New York State Commissioners' of Emigration Castle Garden reception center at the Battery in Manhattan (still preserved in 2010) from 1855-1890 at the Battery in lower Manhattan. It also signaled the development of the "immigration industry", one of the first "global industries" of modern times.

Castle Garden provided social services such as money exchange, baggage handling, licensing of boarding houses, labor exchanges, as did Castle Garden's successor Ellis Island post 1890 when the Federal Government took over immigration processing and regulation completely.

But Bernard's emigration was taken under the most trying of Atlantic crossing conditions. Ships leaving Bremen were among the smallest ocean going vessels compared to ships from deepwater ports Liverpool and Southampton in England because of preliminary river navigation along the Weser river that was required.

NAMES	AGE		SEX	OCCUPATION	The Country to which they severally belong.	The Country of which they tend to become inhabitants.
	YEARS	MONTHS				
Laud Wallick	24		m	muck	Germany	U.S.

Page 1 of passenger list showing *Brig Roland*
(*Rottjen* is Master from *Bremen* burthen 49 tons)

Whereas passenger ships of the time from England would disembark 400+ passengers in New York, Bernard traveled in the company of 107 other souls, all in steerage, on that long voyage. Without cabin or second class, Bernard's ship was originally designed for only trade and not passengers.

John Dabbelstein	32	M	"
Bernh. Rottkamp	24	"	"
Hein. Breker	33	"	"

Pa

Page 4 of the Roland passenger list on arrival May 4, 1847 showing

Bernh. Rottkamp (age 24, m = male, " = ditto occupation mechanic)

[Most adult males were recorded dittoed as 'mechanics' except for 5 'farmers' and 2 'laborers' as occupations. The occupation of a few females would be listed as "None".]

Although the Brig Roland could hold many more passengers than were on Bernard's trip, crowded conditions were the norm for the era. Disease spread (e.g. cholera) and numerous deaths were notorious occurrences on immigrant voyages of the time.

After a difficult and "long" period of journeying in "steerage" for 36 days on a relatively small [brig](#) for an ocean voyage, he arrived at the port of New York on May 4, 1847. In bad weather, another ten days could have been added; and if another East Coast port of call like Baltimore or Charleston were scheduled, life aboard ship could extend to 80 days. Relative to other passages of the time, he was at the average for onboard time.

His disembarkation would have been relatively simple. Only New York State law required the identification of immigrants to the United States at the time of arrival by the ships Master. The Master had to pay \$1.25 per capita "hospital fee" to New York for care to sick new immigrants. The Master was entitled to collect such a head tax from the passengers and one could presume it was part of the fare before boarding.

For the United States Government, all that was required was a customs declaration on freight for the collection of Federal revenue. In this case, the firm of J. C. Muller of New York received merchandise from Germany as it did regularly from ships out of Bremen.

Without the regulated money exchange, labor exchanges to protect new immigrants from enterprising bosses seeking the cheapest of labor, potential temporary medical care and the information function that Castle Garden was to later offer new arrivals, the disembarking immigrant like Bernard Rottkamp was on his own.

Where to go? Paid street promoters (shills and hucksters, otherwise) awaited the new arrivals to "guide, suggest, direct, or take" them to exploitative and expensive boarding houses. Pickpockets and swindlers among the vagabond class abounded to take what little money the immigrant had. Promises, often empty, by prospective employers and their agents were offered.

How to eat? A family oral tradition from Elizabeth Rottkamp Froehlich passed to her daughter Teresa Froehlich Wesnofske and told to the writer about 1952 was that upon arrival, Bernard sought to find something to eat.

In all likelihood, what was described in this tale took place in one of the many German beer establishments concentrated among the substantial German population in what is today lower Manhattan.

Seeking food, it is told, Bernard entered an establishment and put down his German coins to establish his *bona fides* to pay in a new land with unknown customs and behavior regarding getting a meal. The bartender seeing his German money said no to his request for food. Bernard left.

At the next establishment, he ordered his food without showing his coins. He was rewarded with his meal and the establishment had to take his German money in payment.

Thus of experience is wisdom born for those who are hungry.

His immediate job or jobs are not known. Family tradition has at one point in time Bernard as a farm worker on a farm at Astor Place at the time of his marriage in 1851. Maps of the Astor Place area of 1852-3 show concentrated building development and residential housing for New York's upper class. Newspaper stories of the time talk of the entertainments and business of the area. There was no place for multi-acre farming in 1851; this places the accuracy of this family story in doubt.

It was much more probable for him to be a factory worker in the area than a farm laborer. With three unbuilt vacant parcels of approximately 100' wide along the streets of the neighborhood, it was unlikely that "farms" were operating in the area. It is possible that a few unbuilt parcels were yet "gardens" before being built upon. Perhaps he was tending a garden plot. Perhaps Bernard's later movement to an Astoria Post Office location in 1860 created confusion for the family folklore on this matter.

SCHEDULE I.—Free Inhabitants in the County of Westchester, State of New York enumerated by me, on the 16th day of Nov. 1850. *Robt. Pollock Jr. Ass't Marshal*

Dwelling-houses numbered in the order of visitation.	Families numbered in the order of visitation.	The Name of every Person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1850, was in this family.	DESCRIPTION.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each Male Person over 15 years of age.	Value of Real Estate owned.	PLACE OF BIRTH. Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	Attended School within the year.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.	
			Age.	Sex.	White, black, or mulatto.							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
193	231	Conrad Buhre	50	M		Farmer		Germany				
		Maria S.	25	F			12.00	Idt				
		Katharina	14	F				New York				
		Friedrich C.	12	M				Idt		/		
		Mary	10	M				Idt		/		
		Jacob	8	M				Idt		/		
		Elizabeth	6	F				Idt		/		
		Maria	4	F				Idt				
		Polina	2	F				Idt				
		Barney Rudcom	28	M		Laborer		Germany				
144	232	Thomas Wilson	40	M		Idt		England				

ABOVE: 1850 Census page section listing the household of Conrad Buhre (var. Buer) with a German farm laborer 28 yo Bernard Rottkamp listed as 'Barney Rudcom' on line 31.

He did work on an established farm of an earlier German immigrant named Conrad Buhre in Westchester County in 1850. He is enumerated in the Census of 1850 as "Barney Rudcom". The development of the Harlem River Rail Road connected the population and markets of lower Manhattan to the land immediately across the Harlem River in the then Westchester County. This was important for feeding the growing population of lower New York in the 1850's. A similar story would eventually apply for the agricultural land across the East River in Queens and Brooklyn served by ferries. The ferries would later be used in the 1850's by Bernard as a Queens County farmer to

sell his farmer's produce.

The Buhre farm was located off Westchester Avenue close to the current Pelham Bay Park in what is today the Bronx. (See <http://www.fostersmeadow.org/Rottkamp/Bernardimmigration.html>)

We know the area by a more contemporary name of Throg's Neck and today's Westchester Avenue is accessed in the Borough of the Bronx by taking the first local westbound exit on the Cross Bronx Expressway after crossing the Throg's Neck Bridge.

Portions of Westchester County were annexed sequentially by New York County as it sought pure water supplies and then by New York City as the City was consolidated in 1898. Subsequently, the Borough of the Bronx/Bronx County (the last county to be formed in New York State) was separated from New York County/Borough of Manhattan. This boundary puzzle makes for a striking historical comment that Bernard Rottkamp worked on a farm in Westchester County. Bernard's marriage in July 1851 and movement from New York out into Astoria Queens and then to Foster's Meadow in 1861 are stories for other pages in the Rottkamp saga.



Bernard Rottkamp Farming History

Part 1 Newtown (Astoria Post Office in 1860)

When Bernard Rottkamp and his new wife Caroline decided to have Bernard leave his job as a factory worker in New York and embark on a farming enterprise in the mid-1850's, a few years after their marriage, they could have little idea of what the future held for them and their children.

For the young couple it may have seemed like it would be the move of a lifetime – but as it turned out, it would be a temporary transition for a few years until a decisive and permanent move into Foster's Meadow in 1861. His initial purchase of a farm of 20 acres in Newtown had been achieved primarily on savings from working by the mid 1850's. When it was to be sold at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, it would be valued at a hefty price of about \$500 an acre.

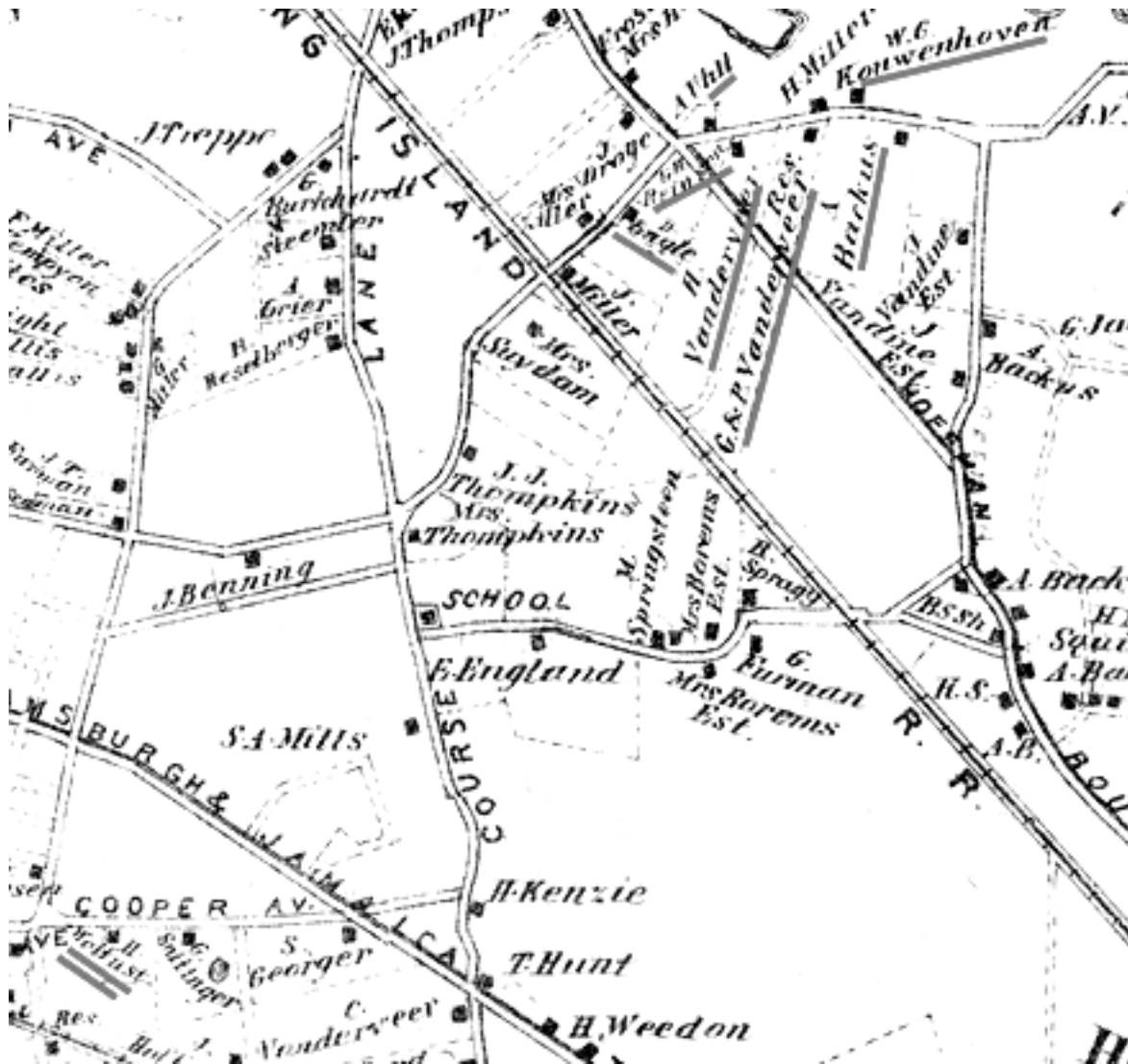
Bernard's purchase of that farm in Newtown Township of Queens County in the 1850's turned out to be a boon. The growing population of New York County opposite Queens on the East River began to spill over at that time in a growing wave of new immigrants, many of whom had earned the resources by 1855 to expand their horizons and settle in Queens. And for a farmer, the market across the river in New York County was ripened by the newly expanded ferry systems.

The farm was located in the general area south of the hamlet settlement of Newtown (today's Elmhurst) along the area of Hoffman Boulevard (today's Queens Boulevard) at about the intersection of today's 57th Avenue. His nearby farming neighbors in the 1860 Census were the two Vandeevers, Engle (not related to Caroline), Backus, Remsen, Uhl and Kouwehoven.

BELOW: This 1870's property map indicates with a single grey underline the farming neighbors of Bernard Rottkamp at the time of the 1860 Census. He had moved on to Foster's Meadow about 1861, but there was little change in his old farming neighborhood. Hoffman Boulevard is today Queens Boulevard. The cross street is today 57th Avenue. The neighborhood is now known as Elmhurst. At the time real estate promoters saw to the name change from Newtown to Elmhurst, one newspaper observer remarked there was not an elm tree to be found in

Elmhurst.

The double underline bottom left corner indicates the homestead of Henry Wulforst on Cooper Avenue. His daughter Theresa born in 1865 would later marry Henry Rottkamp, from Foster's Meadow, and the son of Bernard and Caroline. It suggests that the families maintained close ties after the Rottkamp move from Newtown to Foster's Meadow in 1861. (See http://www.fostersmeadow.org/Rottkamp/Newtown_Astoria_1873_map.html)



The appreciated value of Newtown farm land Bernard sold in 1861 under the pressure of development was invested in the purchase of a more permanent homestead and farm property on Foster's Meadow Road on the border of Jamaica and Hempstead Townships in Queens. This was before the consolidation New York Brooklyn, Long Island City, and suburbs into Greater New York City in 1898.

The hard work and the labor supply from the large family that followed would allow acquisition of even more land for farming in the Foster's Meadow area and its passage to the next generation of farmers of the Rottkamp clan.

Bernard prospered on his original farm in Newtown. By the time he was moving to Foster's Meadow, he had 4

cows, 2 for milk and 2 for beef. Along with that he had a mule on his 20 acres, a team of 2 horses to pull his market wagon (and probably the vehicle of church and travel to the Astoria village). Oxen remained part of some traditional draught sources on farms in the area but Bernard had none.

Along with this livestock were 5 pigs. Altogether, the livestock would be worth about \$450. During these years some of the beef cows and swine would be slaughtered for family consumption and sale to the market. This would provide an income of about \$40 from animal product.

Besides livestock, Bernard had vegetables and grain production. A major item was beans and peas to the extent of about 300 bushels produced. Potatoes were a slightly smaller crop of about 100 bushels off the farm. The potato production probably was used mainly for family consumption. A century later, potato crop yields of 400 bushels per acre on farms of 200 or more acres could be found on Long Island – with the help of better soils, fertilizer, pest control and mechanization of production.

Grain production was important for animal feed and household baking and food needs. On Bernard's farm in Newtown, his significant crop was "Indian corn" for animal feed to the tune of 200 bushels per year.

Besides the corn, the farm produced about 50 bushels of oats, 40 bushels of wheat, and 30 bushels of rye plus 10 tons of hay per year. Milk from the 2 cows was churned into about 200 lbs. of butter, some for domestic use and the rest sold.

His income from farming at the time was about \$1,500.

1860 U.S. Census of Agriculture

Line 3: **Bar^d Road** is Bernard Rottkamp

Page No. *23*

SCHEDULE 4.—Productions of Agriculture in *Newtown* **in**
Post Office *Astoria*

NAME OF OWNER, AGENT, OR MANAGER OF THE FARM.	ACRES OF LAND:		Cash value of Farm.	Value of Farming Imple- ments and Machinery.	LIVE STOCK, JUNE 1, 1860							Value of Live Stock.
	Improved.	Unimproved.			Horses.	Asses and Mules.	Milch Cows.	Working Oxen.	Other Cattle.	Sheep.	Swine.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<i>Almeta & Henry</i>	<i>24</i>		<i>14000</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>10</i>		<i>75</i>	<i>4</i>			<i>20</i>	<i>5000</i>
<i>Shallet Marshall</i>	<i>95</i>		<i>60000</i>	<i>800</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>32</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>1700</i>
<i>Bar^d Road</i>	<i>20</i>		<i>10000</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>		<i>2</i>		<i>5</i>	<i>450</i>
<i>Alfred Vietnam</i>	<i>10</i>		<i>12000</i>	<i>300</i>	<i>2</i>		<i>2</i>		<i>2</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>500</i>

Henry Wulforst is #25 on the same page; almost twice the farm acreage and four times estimated value of the farm.

25	Henry Wulforst	34		4000	500	2	2	1		2		5	450
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NOTE: The incorrect recording and misspelling of 'Rottkamp' is common in the historical and newspaper records.

There is no doubt that this Bernard Rotkamp because the discovery of the BELOW 1860 household census lists the family members then living for the Barnard Road family, daughter Sarah who was to die in 1872.

Page No. 274 721
**SCHEDULE 1.—Free Inhabitants in Newton in the County of Dutchess State of N.Y. enumerated by me, on the 15th day of July 1860. Victor Ludov Ass't Marshal.
 Post Office Catonsville.**

Dwelling-houses— the numbered in the order of visitation.	Family number in the order of visitation.	The name of every person whose usual place of abode on the first day of June, 1860, was in this family.	Description.			Profession, Occupation, or Trade of each person, male and female, over 15 years of age.	VALUE OF ESTATE OWNED.		Place of Birth, Naming the State, Territory, or Country.	Married within the year.	Attended School within the year.	Persons over 20 years of age who cannot read & write.	Whether deaf and dumb, blind, insane, idiotic, pauper, or convict.	
			Age.	Sex.	White, black or mulatto.		Value of Real Estate.	Value of Personal Estate.						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	
11	1465	1544	Barnard Road	38	M		Farmer	10000	450	Germany				11
12			Caroline "	24	F					"				12
13			Sarah "	6	F					"	1			13
14			Yozsch "	4	M					"				14
15			Mary "	2	F					"				15
16			Henry "	1	M					"				16



**Rottkamp Romance, or,
The Triple Play that Failed**

Rural agricultural life poses several challenges for romance and marriage.

The small population of such a community limits the number of persons available as potential mates. In Foster's Meadow, ambition for elevated economic social status beyond that of farmer may have made some women limit their interest in agricultural males of a farming community and search elsewhere thereby decreasing opportunities as mates in the community.

The intense institutions of a small community like Foster's Meadow built familiarity for the young around elementary schooling, church going, small town commerce, common economic interests and community social entertainments like those introduced by the German immigrant families. These created a small corral for mate

selection and made for much intermarriage among families of separate origins in one generation, particularly in the case of families with German ancestry.

For agricultural life, large families existed to generate cheap family agricultural labor and the social security system of the time: aging parents of increasing dependency and needs being cared for with the places and resources (sometimes inherited) of their young.

Thus, there were often large numbers in Family A living in close proximity to another Family B in which the conditions of nearness and familiarity made mate selection easier if not always successfully blissful.

So it is not uncommon to find pressures to marry within very localized family circles. The most obvious manifestation is the pairing of two siblings of one family marrying two siblings of a second family.

In the case of the writer's four sets of great grandparents (three having lived in Foster's Meadow as neighbors to each other), there exists in each of the four branches examples of the two siblings of one family marrying two siblings of another family.

In the case of Foster's Meadow families, one of the most prominent **Double Play** of siblings marrying siblings is that of the sisters Rottkamp marrying the brothers Froehlich.

Bernard and Caroline Rottkamp had a large family in their Foster's Meadow domain. Not unusual for the time, but tragically never-the-less, there were two infant deaths and two adolescent deaths. Despite these deaths, there were ten surviving children who married (and were to procreate 103 births for the next generation!).

Less than half a mile away as the crow flies from the Rottkamps homestead on Foster's Meadow Road (and 3/4 mile following the dirt path off Central Avenue into the Town of Jamaica) was the Frank and Madeline Froehlich family. There, the two oldest sons Frank and George found romance with two daughters of Bernard Rottkamp. Caroline married George January 16, 1883. Elizabeth married Frank March 2, 1886. By 1894, the two Froehlichs were joined with the Wulforst, Muller, Haslach, Miller, Schmitt, and Jacob families as providing spouses of nine of the ten Rottkamp children.

The tenth and youngest child of Bernard and Caroline, daughter Anna Rottkamp (born 1875), was unmarried in 1894. She caught the eye of John Froehlich (born 1867). He had already been married and become an early widower. His older brothers Frank and George already had Rottkamp wives.

Anna became sweet on John as did John on Anna. And the romance proceeded forward enough that the community was of a mind that the forthcoming marriage would be the social occasion of the year.

On July 4, 1894, farmer John dressed for the occasion of meeting his sweetheart and taking her to a picnic at Foster's Meadow sponsored by the Catholic Benevolent League.

He drove from Foster's Meadow toward Springfield Store along Central Avenue and when he arrived at the Rottkamp place, mother Caroline informed John Froehlich that daughter Anna had already gone to the picnic. Disturbed, John immediately went to the picnic and sought out Anna.

John asked for an explanation on why he was stood up. Anna replied in the midst of a surprised audience with a curt "I will have nothing more to do with you, sir. I have found you have deceived me".

The community was ablaze in gossip for the following week about the to do between members of two families of status in the agricultural community. Was there another man in Anna's life?

Then after a week another rumor surfaced in the gossip circuit. John Froehlich was involved with another woman. The rumor pegged 17 year old Annie Brown of Hempstead Town as John's paramour. Born in New York of Irish parents no less, not German. The rumor reached John's ear.

<p>MR. FROEHLICH LIED ABOUT</p> <p>HIS NAME CONNECTED WITH THAT OF AN ELMONT GIRL.</p> <p>This Caused Miss Rutcomb to Break with Him, and He Is Subpoenaing Various Gossips to Find Who Started the Story.</p>	<p>John wasted no time. Over the next few days, he cleverly gathered conversation from others about all they had heard. He then sought out a lawyer William Stanford from Jamaica who saw to it that thirteen subpoenas were issued to young women and men of Foster's Meadow in an court action using the obscuring tactic naming one "John Doe".</p>
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The subpoenas were the first inkling anyone in the community had that something was afoot although who "John Doe" remained unknown to most. The subpoenas were returnable July 13th in Justice Searing's court at Mineola.

As word spread of the possible meaning and identity of the "John Doe" action in the community, a number of the women subpoenaed lost no time in hurrying to cover their tracks by checking with their neighbors as to what they might have said and thus causing even more notice and stir about the affair.

On the day the case was to be heard, witnesses were accompanied to Mineola by Constable Henry Felton. The court hearing was packed by virtue of the story of the subpoenas being passed far and wide.

Justice Searing was observed as very serious and John Froehlich as looking angry during the hearing.

Questioning was done one by one and out of earshot of the other witnesses by John's lawyer and Justice Searing. The information provided by witnesses gave no conclusive answer as to who first whispered the rumor. All witnesses claimed to have heard the story of John's "other woman" from someone else and was not to have been the originator.

Without a clear answer, lawyer Stanford had a dozen more subpoenas issued to other members of Foster's Meadow society and the case was adjourned until July 18th.

<p>After the first hearing, John Froehlich expressed his confidence that the additional finger pointing about the phony story of his love life that came out in the hearing would lead to justice.</p> <p>On the day of the resumption of the hearing, additional witnesses were questioned. Miss Annie Brown, who had been linked in the scandalous story to John, testified she was merely an acquaintance and nothing more and that she would sue her slanderers as well.</p>	<p>A RURAL SLANDER HUNT</p> <p>Surprised Natives Summoned to the Court Room.</p> <p>Young Farmer Froehlich Is Very Much in Earnest, for if He Does Not Clear Himself He Will Lose His Sweetheart—Another Batch of Subpoenas Out.</p>
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Mrs. Phillipa Finn, the wife of Arles Finn who farmed between Central Avenue and Dutch Broadway in Foster's Meadow, finally identified to the satisfaction of the Court the two women who started the tale. The two had previously been examined at the first hearing and as a consequence, Justice Searing issued arrest warrants for them.

Miss Annie Rottkamp was satisfied her lover's denial of the rumor was true and that he had been loyal to her and had proven it by his actions. The couple was reunited in love.

**FROEHLICH CLEARS HIMSELF,
And Miss Hutcomb Again Accepts Him—
Warrants for the Slanderers.**
JAMAICA, L. I., July 18.—John Froehlich, the young farmer of Elmont whose sweetheart broke with him recently on account of a story that was circulated about him and another young woman, succeeded in clearing himself in Justice

But the **Triple Play** of Rottkamps to Froehlichs was not to take place.

The couple would split again. John Froehlich would marry another lady eighteen months later. Anna Rottkamp would marry Jacob Jacobs in February 1896.

Because Bernard Rottkamp Jr. had married Mary Jacobs, this would make the second **Double Play** for the Rottkamp family: the Froehlichs and the Jacobs.