

Andreas Mattijetz-Inventor

Did you know that Andreas Mattijetz, a Wend, was an inventor? Neither did I, and he was my great grandfather (my mother's paternal grandfather). Thanks to Weldon Mersiovsky and Kathe Richards of the Wendish Research Exchange, I found out that Andreas was awarded six patents. For most of my life, I did not even know I was Wendish. My mother did not even know she was Wendish. She thought she was German, Polish or Czech. She never once spoke about her grandfather so there were no family stories to be told. The way I found out about Andreas is from books, the internet and people like Kathe and Weldon (Thank you!). Here is what I have found.

My great grandfather, Andreas Mattijetz (also spelled Mattiez, Mattiez, Matthijetz), was born in Kaschel Germany in 1847 and emigrated to Texas, at the age of 6, in 1853 with his parents; Matthaus Mattiez and Dorothea Rohle, and his siblings; Hanna (age 4), Maria (age 2), and Agnes who was born October 9, 1853 on their way to Galveston on the ship *Reform*. The *Reform* sank off the coast of Cuba on October 25, 1853; the passengers and crew survived, but they lost all of their possessions. The passengers eventually arrived in Galveston, but that is another story. Other siblings born in Texas were: Johann, born 1856; Carl August, born 1858; Theresa, born 1860, and EmstAdolph, born 1863.

Andreas Mattijetz married Magdalena Zwahr, another Wend who at 5 years of age, was a passenger on the *Ben Nevis* with her family. Andreas and Magdalena married on February 27, 1867 at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Serbin, Texas. They had 6 children: Johann August, born on March 5, 1868 and died on April 10, 1868; Johann Hermann, my grandfather, born on September 25, 1869 and died on August 3, 1933 in Los Angeles, California; Maria Otilia, born on April 10, 1873 and died March 8, 1875; Maria Christiana, born on August 21, 1875 and died in Los Angeles, California on November 25, 1965; Anna Theresia, born on February 21, 1878 and died on December 2, 1964 in Los Angeles, California; and Auguste Theresia, born on October 10, 1880 and died on June 26, 1881. Magdalena Zwahr Mattijetz died on January 7, 1881. Shortly after his wife's death, Andreas married Magdalena Lehman, also Wendish, who was born about 1837 and died on March 28, 1910 in Los Angeles, California. I do not believe that Andreas and Magdalena Lehman Mattijetz had any children. I also do not know when Andreas died.

According to baptismal records from St. Paul's in Serbin, Andreas Mattijetz was a tinsmith in 1869 and then a farmer by 1873. Andreas was awarded his first patent on April 10, 1888 for a baling-press (used to bale hay) that could be operated by hand or by some other power source. The *San Antonia Daily Press* made note of Andreas' patent in the Friday May 11, 1888 issue. Because Andreas had been both a tinsmith and a fanner, he seemed to put those skills to work in creating his inventions. On February 25, 1890, Andreas was awarded a second patent. This patent was for a redesigned baling-press that was not only a baling-press, but could also carry the source of power to be used, and could produce adjustable sized bales. The third patent awarded to Andreas was on March 15, 1892, and was an improvement to the baling-press he invented in 1890. This patent received recognition in the *Scientific American* on April 2, 1892. While learning about Andreas' inventions, I often wondered what those times were like.

The era was sometimes called the "Second Industrial Revolution". Many changes were occurring in the United States in the 1890s. The railroad was expanding across the country, the first gasoline engine tractors were being developed, and electric lights were just starting to appear in some cities, among many other advances. The nation's economy was booming, and while the bulk of the country was poor, many people tried to be a part of this "revolution" in an attempt to gain notoriety or to become wealthy, or both. The cost of filing a patent request was about \$30.00, and while this seemed like a large sum of money for most of the population of the time, it did not dissuade Andreas from continuing to invent new things. In December 1892 Andreas was awarded his fourth patent, for a metallic railroad tie. This patent, given notice in the Wednesday December 14, 1892 issue of *The Galveston Daily News*, was a departure from Andreas' other patents. Why was Andreas interested in railroad ties? Did he go to work for the railroad? It is possible, but not a fact I have been able to verify.

Researching metallic railroad ties, I found that some 750 patents were issued between 1839 and 1894, 250 between 1890 and 1894 alone, and only about 30 were ever mass produced, of which Andreas' was not included. But Andreas never gave up, and in December 1893 he was issued a fifth patent, for a Cultivator for plowing a field using one or more horses.

By 1896, Andreas had moved to Los Angeles, California and was employed as a woodworker. Why he moved to Los Angeles is unclear but he continued to invent things, filing a patent request in August 1897 for a feed cutter for "cutting hay or other coarse feed". The 1897 patent request resulted in his being issued a sixth patent in April 1898. It seems he was still a farmer at heart, but it appears he spent the rest of his life in Los Angeles. In 1904 he was working for the Western Iron Works, and in 1906 for the Western Gas Engine Company. By 1920 he was 72 years old, no longer working, and living in Los Angeles with his daughter Anna and her husband Christopher Ploss. After that, I have been unable to find him anywhere.

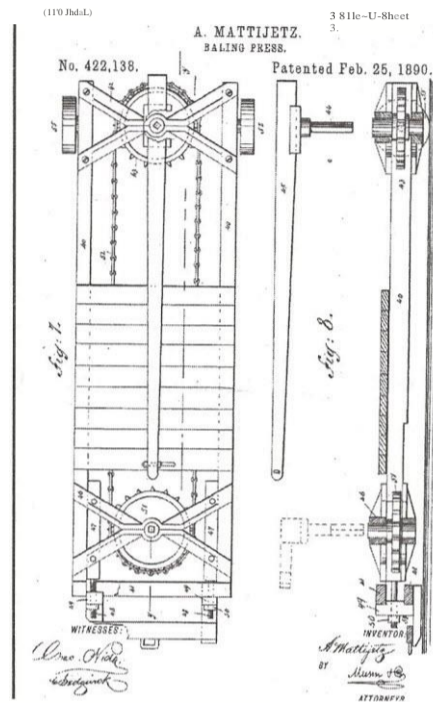
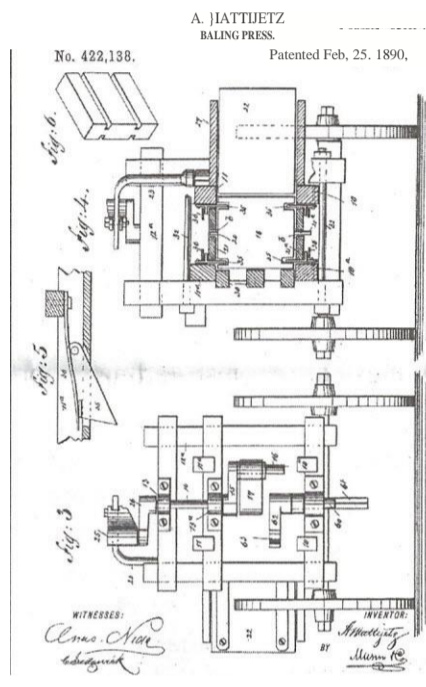
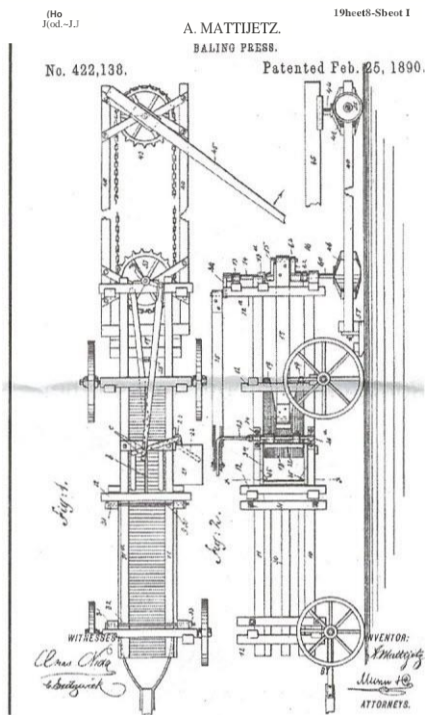
Over a period of ten years, while in the prime of his life, Andreas Mattijetz was issued a total of 6 patents.

Some would call him a dreamer, a man looking for the next big invention in his lifetime. That may

be true. But he may have also been a creative person with a keen interest in finding a better, more efficient way of doing things. It is unlikely that any of Andreas' inventions were ever mass produced, but I would not be surprised to find that his baling-presses and cultivators were used within the Wendish community.

Written by Frank Wissel

Patent 2 - Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3



As found in the Texas Wendish Heritage Society Newsletter, Volume XXVII, Number 1, January 2014 available from www.texaswendish.org