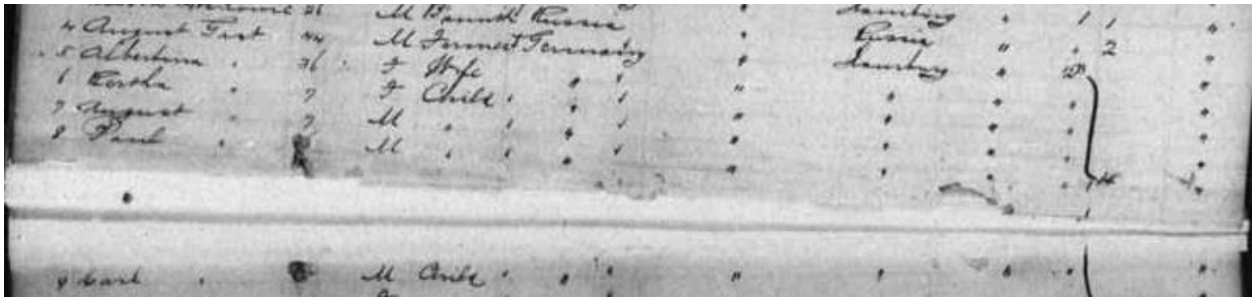
Swedish Pomerania

All of my life, I have held that belief that my mother's family, the Gast and Knitter families came from Germany and were therefore, German. I have ship records of the families leaving Stolp, Germany for England and then across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. We also know that Stolp which is on the border of Germany and Poland has been held by both countries. I have records from my cousin Neoma Laken of a German bible in the Gast family. I have records showing that the Gast family spoke German when they arrived in Minnesota. However, based on DNA results from Ancestry, MyHeritage and 23and Me, I show over 50 percent Norwegian and at least 25 percent Swedish ancestry and very little from what we now know as Germany or Poland. The two families settled in an entirely Scandinavian Marsh Grove township in Marshall County, Minnesota. In one of her stories Neoma wondered why two German families would settle in that area rather than one of mostly German families. So, of course, I had to do more research and what I found is interesting and may explain it all.

Svenska Pommern in Swedish means Swedish Pommern in English and was a Dominion under Swedish rule from 1630 to 1815. The Treaty of Stettin in 1630 gave Sweden the area plus the islands of Rugen, Usedom and Wolin. Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus invaded Europe in the early 1600s and as part of the peace treaty was given parts of Germany including Pomerania. Since Pomerania was ruled by the Swedish King, he gave parts of Pomerania to some of his noblemen, who moved to Pomerania, settled and intermarried with local nobility. Swedish tradesman, merchants and other workers also moved to Pomerania and settled there. Perhaps these individuals married local people. Or the Swedish people may have formed neighborhoods of only Swedish people and married among their own countrymen and women. That would keep the Swedish strain intact over the years. The map on the left shows that part of the Swedish empire in Green with the orange color showing Pomerania. The white color indicates water while grey indicates other land. In 1814, Sweden ceded Pomerania to Denmark in exchange for Norway. A year later, 1815, the Congress of Vienna Treaty gave Prussia Swedish Pomerania in exchange for Saxe-Lauenberg which became Danish.

The earliest confirmed date of birth for the Gast family was August Gast, Sr born on 20 May 1844 in Stolp, Pomerania, Germany, just over 100 years before I was born. His wife Albertina Wihelmenia Schwinke was also born in Stolp on 28 February 1850. The couple and their children migrated to the United States. Below is a section of the passenger list with their names.