

G-SIG FORUM #22

...from the German Special Interest Group. G-SIG is an effort of the St. Louis Genealogical Society and the German American Heritage Society, St. Louis, Mo.

This communication is a forum for educational, historical and genealogical information with fresh insights and ideas on German traditions and ancestry. Gerald Perschbacher, Group Leader for G-SIG, serves as *FORUM* compiler and coordinator.

If you would like to include a notice or request, please submit your information in condensed form for the *EXCHANGE!* section (limit 50 words). *EXCHANGE!* notices run only once, but you may resubmit. We reserve the privilege to shorten and edit. Send your *EXCHANGE!* submission to persch3@hotmail.com.

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REQUESTS FROM FAR AWAY

By Gerald Perschbacher

There seem to be countless requests from individuals seeking genealogical information. Genealogical societies from coast to coast often are the recipients. Maybe you have received several, also.

Exactly what can be done to help? First, investigate what is known.

Recently we received an e-mail from Janice De Lattre [jnldelattre@yahoo.com]. She lives in Louisiana, but has roots in St. Louis, Mo. She is searching her father's paternal side.

Janice says, "FREDERICKA (last name not known--could have been UMBACH) married HENRI F. BAUERLIN (Bauerlein). She had a son who went by WILLIAM FREDERICH BAUERLEIN for several years (his stepfather), then in later years went back to the name of UMBACH...William married ELIZABETH THERESA WAX who was born in St. Louis as far as we can tell. ELIZABETH was born the 18th of JULY in 1847 and later died in New Orleans, La., on the 13th of Nov. in 1928--and she is buried there." She adds that WILLIAM was born in GERMANY (April 4, 1846, and came with his mother and stepfather to America about Nov. of 1852 from LA HARVE--the family was from Wuerttemberg, Germany. Janice also knows that WILLIAM BAUERLIN served in the Civil War, registered in the 149th Regiment, Illinois Infantry (1865, for one year).

Now some ideas. It's good to chart the names and relationships. On my first trip to Germany, I was favorably impressed with the swiftness of Germans to unroll their charts, pour over details new and old, converse about additions, and fill in new entries. It's beneficial to make contact with genealogical experts and researchers who offer special services. G-SIG is different in this regard. It is a group of like-minded individuals who are researching on their own and who band together on a similar journey

through time and files. It's also a group that seeks to learn insights on German ways and culture over recent centuries.

Perhaps you have more ideas on how Janice and others can be helped. If so, share those ideas with Janice, then submit a copy to me. We can share the best ideas via the FORUM.

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SPEAKING OF BANDING TOGETHER...

“I have an idea that I'd like to pass along. Several former members of the Jewish Genealogical Society of St. Louis (now disbanded) embarked on a project several years ago to cultivate contacts in various areas of Europe that would be of help in doing some research. One group located a college professor that is in the process of transcribing all of the records pertinent to the Jewish Community in a small area of Poland. The members all had ancestors who came from that area and have banded to together to support the effort. For a small monthly fee, each receives a copy of the latest transcribed records.”

So says Gene Schneider (geneschneider@att.net) who had served the disbanded organization as board member and as technology chairman.

He adds: “While much of what they receive may not be pertinent to their ancestry, often they 'strike it rich.' A good friend of mine told me that in one of the reports he found a wealth of information about an ancestral line that he knew existed but could not find in all his 15 years of researching. It turns out that the village from which he thought they had come had been destroyed in the early 1800s and the families move to this new village went unrecorded. The data turned up when some tax records were transcribed and reported by this professor and his group of students. I wonder if such a process could be useful to the G-SIG Clusters?”

This certainly is an idea worth considering. The exact options and obligations could be explored by interested individuals.

Gene put a feather in the cap of G-SIG re: a recent presentation: “Not only was it very informative but entertaining as well. I guess I shouldn't have been surprised. After all, that is the general tenor of all the G-SIG gatherings my wife and I have attended. I know a little bit about the behind the scenes functioning of such organizations and, from what I've seen, you do a magnificent job of pulling together all of the resources that are needed to make a group function well. It takes a great deal of time and effort, and you are to be commended and thanked for all your efforts on behalf of the group.”

I'll add that we have a delightful core leadership that joyously swings into action. The results prove it, as Gene has noted.

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MORE FROM GENE...

“On a personal note, I would like your advice on how to proceed with some research,” Gene Schneider (geneschneider@att.net) continues. “My maternal great grandparents came from the Minden area in Prussia. From the Civil War pension records

for my great grandfather Henry (Heinrich) Dopheide and other records I have learned that he was born in either Babenhausen, Bielefeld, Minden, Werther, or Bealze, all of which with the exception of Minden are within 10 miles of each other. All of these villages are 30 to 40 miles east of Osnabruck and about the same from Melle, the town that Dr. Anita Mallinckrodt spoke of ...when she spoke of the Germans who settled New Melle.

“Henry, his father Ferdinand and mother Anna Maria, nee Niederwittler, all emigrated to the United States sometime before 1860 since they are listed in the 1860 Federal census as living in St. Louis. Henry was born in either 1847 or 48 but that does not narrow down the immigration dates very much. I have searched for any record of their immigration while at the Allen County Library in Fort Wayne but could not find it in any of the Ports of Entry microfilms in their collection which, as I understand it, is a complete set of NARA films.

“Taking your suggestion, I searched the Internet and found that Babenhausen, Minden, and Werther all have Web sites but they are in German, and I neither speak nor read German (yet). In looking at the Family History Library Catalogue, I note that there are several microfilms of Protestant church records from the Minden area but there is some doubt that the family spent much time in Minden since only one of the dozen or so records I have mentions Minden. The preponderance of references cite Babenhausen.

“Faced with this problem, I was wondering how you would proceed? I have a great deal of information about the family from circa 1860 on when they lived in St. Louis but would like to trace the family back in Germany back beyond my great-great- grandfather Ferdinand. Any suggestions you could give me would be greatly appreciated.”

OK, Gene. Your request is admirable and echoes those of others.

Here is my first observation: Be sure you check the proper towns and villages via their Web sites. I know of two towns named Babenhausen. Be sure you have connected with the proper one. I made this mistake with tracing the village of Mosbach, where one of my ancestors held an administrative position for the Order of St. John (Knights of Malta) in the 1500s. I made contact with Mosbach via a Web site and received a nice response (we were able to converse in English and with the help of an online translation service, as needed). An official even sent some booklets on Mosbach, but added that he did not find any reference to my ancestor.

Still, I anticipated the arrival of the information via mail. When it came, I felt foolish. The material was grand, but it clearly was about a Mosbach that was nearly 100 kilometers away from the Mosbach of my ancestor. I should have known better, but enthusiasm got the better of me.

So, if you (or Gene) were able to find your ancestor's potential village via a Web site, the next step is to check the list of contacts. Look for a historical society (Geschichtsverein) and write to the individual in charge. You may also write to the Burgermeister and local church official. However, I would not write all three at the same time. Stagger your request by at least one week. Often, one may talk with the other, and sending your message simultaneously to three sources may make them conclude that you are too pushy, or that one of the others will handle your request. In your second message, simply indicate that you had written to “Herr So-and-so but have not yet received a reply” and that you fear your first e-mail message failed to go through.

Here is another idea. If you know of someone heading to an area of Germany where your family traces its origin, ask if they will carry a cover letter from you plus a printed copy of your basic information, handing it to an official in the town. If possible, include a small gift (perhaps a historical book, an old German song book, or a Bible printed in America). Small books in German from the late 1800s and early 1900s can be purchased for a very small amount at annual book sales. Such a gift may make all the difference in Germans sensing your seriousness about ancestry.

Also, be willing to pay a modest amount if you receive help from Germany. You may need to negotiate the figure.

Once you establish contacts overseas, remember not to treat the persons as “disposable.” In effect, you have made friends. Honor them.

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MAPS ARE GREAT!

“ I am new...and attended your (recent G-SIG) presentation.... It was excellent! Wish I could hear it again,” says Karen Carroll. Unfortunately, we are not permitted to record presentations of G-SIG where we currently gather. However, there often are handouts at each gathering. Officials at the St. Louis Genealogical Society in St. Louis, Mo., are willing to duplicate copies of handouts (within reason) and send them to you if you cannot attend. Just be sure to send a self-addressed and stamped envelope along with your specific request.

I am convinced that everyone should become familiar with good maps of Germany, old and new. Germany was prone to countless changes of borders and territories due to inheritance and dispersion among the nobility, the results of war, and other circumstances.

Maps reveal the names of villages that no longer exist. Did you ancestor come from “Ringenheimburg” in 1850? That village may have been absorbed by another in 1875 – or perhaps even as recently as the reunification of Germany with the melding of the East and West . Find an old map and you may discover the village’s location. Historical maps also explain how territories changed over the years. We investigated this subject in a previous FORUM and related it to the growth of Prussia.

German mapping experts produced some marvelous atlases and maps prior to 1925. Even if you find an atlas in German, don’t hesitate to buy it if the price is affordable, if the detailed printing is superb, and if it bears any possibility of providing help for your research. If the maps are small, a quick visit to a photocopier can probably enlarge the maps, even print them in color.

Travel agencies (including AAA Auto Club) offer current maps of Germany to their members or customers. Just ask.

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HOW MUCH?

Bob and Lois Waeltz of New Athens, Ill., ask: “What would be an amount to offer to church people who help us out with info at various German villages?”

Answer: Depends on the amount of effort, time, and results. I received two sheets of detailed genealogical information from a church official, then we examined the old books for about one hour. My German friend said we should make a donation to the researcher. I asked if 20 Euros would be sufficient. He said it would be fine. That was about four years ago. Today, suppose 20 Euros is a good starting place. I would also think that 50 Euros would be a pretty normal maximum for perhaps 5-8 pages of results, so use your own judgment.

You could offer something in trade. Is the researcher seeking old German books printed in America or Germany, or English books about Germans in America? Try to the books they want and offer the material in trade for work accomplished.

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MUSEUM TRACES EMIGRATION

On Aug. 15, 1857 – 150 years ago -- Albert Ballin was born in Hamburg. In his honor, Europe's unique emigration museum bears his name. "Port of Dreams – BallinStadt – History of Emigration Hamburg" recently was opened. It is dedicated to more than five million people who departed on their journey to the New World from Hamburg. So reports Peter Soppa (p.s@soppamedien.de).

Ballin was the founder of the Hamburg Auswandererhallen (Emigrants' Halls) and was one of the leading personalities of his day. Ballin was not only a close friend of the Kaiser, but was also General Director of the Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft, at the time the largest shipping company in the world. Ballin constructed departure facilities which were unique: sleeping wards with room for up to 5,000 persons daily, dining salons, churches, a synagogue, and even a music pavilion and rooms for medical examinations. In this "exemplary facility," persons from widely differing cultures came together to wait for their crossing to the New World.

For more on this museum, check www.ballinstadt.com .

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EXCHANGE! Comments, ideas, and requests from those in G-SIG:

+ Joe Wotka says it only takes a little effort to check the German phonebook online. Go to Das Telephonbuch at <http://www.datelefonbuch.de/> The dialogue box asks for location or "Ort." No need to fill in. Just enter a surname and you can get the numbers of people with that surname in all cities and towns.

+ Bill Ziegenbein (billziegenbein@charter.net) would like to hear from someone, who through their letter writing efforts, has successfully obtained church and/or civil records from Germany.

+ Bob Remmert (NRemm10335@aol.com phone: (314) 522-3718) says, "I am looking for information about Wilhelm Vogel. He controlled immigration from Borgholzhausen to America in the mid 1800s."

+ From Elizabeth_Trescott@nps.gov -- Any information on a 19th century family named Bechtel from the Mansfield area? Elizabeth is Museum Technician at the Division of Museum Services, Gettysburg National Military Park, 97 Taneytown Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325 and also may be reached at (717) 337-2219.

+ Wolfgang Dreuse from the Osnabrueck. Society in Germany has a friend seeking descendants of Jules C. Splete (born March 15, 1904) married to Catherine W. Wilson (circa 1927). Lived in St. Louis. Any descendants? Also Edwin H. Wesseler (born Feb. 19, 1892) married Leatha (?) after 1930; lived at 2057 Blendon Place, St. Louis. He died Oct. 1947 in St. Louis. She died in 1997 in St. Louis. Any descendants?

Respond to: Kathleen Wurth [kathyinwashington@hotmail.com]

+ David A Salsman, 10826 40th Ave SE, Everett, WA 98208 -- [d.salsman@kendra.com] -- researching my surname in Dent County, Mo. Henry Salsman, born 1844 in Pa., his brother Barnabas "Barney" Salsman, born 1855 in Ohio and his brother John W. Salsman, born 1855 in Ohio; orphaned around 1860 in Dent.

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Want a printed copy of G-SIG FORUM by mail? Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: St. Louis Genealogical Society, Attn. Ed Schmid; #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140; St. Louis, MO 63143.

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Have some great ideas for the G-SIG FORUM? Any topics to suggest? Want to share your findings in order to help others in their search? Please submit your material to:

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or mail it to: StLGS, Attn: G-SIG; #4 Sunnen Dr.. Suite 140; St. Louis, MO 63143

