

G-SIG FORUM #37

...from the German Special Interest Group. G-SIG is an effort of the St. Louis Genealogical Society (www.stlgs.org/) and the German American Heritage Society, St. Louis, Mo. (www.gahs-stlouis.org).

This communication is a forum for genealogical, educational, and historical 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.

+++++

INVESTIGATING NAMES...

Investigating your lineage? Ever wonder what all those old German names meant? Experts explain that personal names used by Germans over the centuries came in two main types. The first was based on ancient Germanic traditions, even tribal preferences. When we say “tribal,” we refer to the earliest days of German history that reach to the fifth century. Second, there are biblical names reflecting the era since the 500s when Christianity came to the German lands thanks to St. Boniface who got his start in, of all places, Ireland.

Hence, a name like Hermann refers to the leader of the ancient Germanic tribes that brought a halt to the advance of the Roman Empire in Europe. The year was 9 A.D. and the engagement was called the Battle of Teutoberger Wald.

Often first names have been handed down through the generations. Some families find the name Fred (Friedrich) reappearing, or William (Wilhelm) and a host of others.

First names may ebb and flow in popularity. Consider the first names being given to American newborns in current years. Examples: Megan and Joshua are

plentiful but there are less Debbies being named today, fewer Franks, and hardly any with the name Erasmus.

Anstatt (a man's name derived from Anastatius) was a name that appeared with a degree of frequency in Germany during the 1500s and 1600s. Lorenz was another man's name that was used in the 1500s through the 1700s but is not prevalent today.

At times, you may be able to place first names in cultural contexts. In Catholic Upper Alsace, the tax rolls around 1600 used Hans as the prefix (considered a baptismal saint of choice), with the common name coming next: Jacob, Diebolt, Conrad, Martin, Ulrich, Andreas, Heinrich, Paul, and Melchior, to name a few.

The same area in the late 1800s commonly used Franz Joseph, Franz Xaver, Johann Baptist, and Johann Peter. While women seldom were listed in the earlier listing, they did appear in ledger entries in the late 1800s. They carried names such as Anna Maria, Marian Anna, Maria Therese, and Maria Rose.

With the encroaching advance of French thinking in Alsace, the Germanic names lessened. By the 1890s, Upper Alsace ledgers showed only one-fourth of the names as being German in heritage, compared with a two-thirds prevalence in the 1400s.

Now jump to the sixteenth century in Protestant Wurttemberg in Ulm. The baptismal name Hans or Johannes dominated for men. Women carried Maria and Anna. What we would call the middle name (I call it the common name by which they were called) showed some marked preferences: Abraham, Andreas, Jeremias, Matthias, Michael, Petrus, Rebecca, and Sara.

So, where does this take us? Investigate the first and second names of your ancestors (preceding their surname). See if a repeat pattern developed over the generations. Check the area of Germany in which you believe your ancestors originated. Investigate the usage of names from the period you believe your ancestors departed. You may find some intriguing clues to your lineage. You might even be able to narrow your bloodline of direct descent.

GP

+++++

“ A FRIEND OF MINE SENT...this site with pictures of old sailing vessels. It is pretty cool. I found pictures of three of the ships my ancestors came over on. Perhaps you will be lucky, too,” says Kathy Wurth. Here is the site: <http://geocities.com/mppraetorius/>

+++++

WHEN, HOW, WHY...?

The **North German Confederation** (*Norddeutscher Bund*) had its start in August of 1866 as a military alliance of 22 states of northern Germany. Leading the list was the Kingdom of Prussia. The next major step toward merging these states into a nation followed in July of 1867, and once a constitution was in force, the German Empire soon resulted.

You can trace more details on Wikipedia at this link:
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_German_Confederation

Of course, all sorts of information can be added to Wikipedia, so be cautious with what you find. Still, it's a fun way to open your eyes to some interesting details...and probably many facts.

+++++

PAT VON ZUR MUEHLEN MADE A DISCOVERY...

“I went to eat at the St. Louis Gast Haus and took my mother, Margaret Konert. It turns out that Bill and Maritza knew my parents and some of my younger sisters quite well.

“My father, the late August G. Konert, and younger sisters traveled with Bill and Maritza to Jefferson City to promote the passage of certain bills in the legislature. My father was very active in Jefferson County civic affairs.

“At that time Bill and Maritza lived off of Romaine Creek Road about a mile from Konert Road. But they moved away from there many years ago. Nonetheless, they sent my mother a letter when they opened the restaurant.

“It was serendipity that I found out about this connection. I was driving my Mom home from church and was just about to mention a German Restaurant that I heard about on the radio. Before I spoke, my mother pointed out a place we were passing and said that Bill and Maritza Stock used to live there. I was astonished as they were the owners of the very restaurant that I was just about to mention to her. That is when she informed me that she knew them and knew about the restaurant as she had gotten the letter announcing the opening. Until then I did not know they knew each other.

“The visit to the St. Louis Gast Haus was a delight. Maritza and my mother caught up on the news in their lives over the past twenty-five years. I'm longing to go back and enjoy the good food and learn more about their personal histories.”

GP: What does this tell us? Ask about your family history, before it is too late.



THE GERMANS WHO MOVED TO RUSSIA...

In 1762, when Catherine became the Czarina of Russia, some in that large country could not believe it. A German was in charge! Indeed, she was! But what resulted was a series of innovative moves that helped Russia to advance among the nations of Europe.

Catherine invited German, Austrian, and French craftsmen to bring the Imperial porcelain works up to date. Export duties were discontinued. That allowed Russia's best exports to be used in trade without restriction. Soon Russia's vast resources of timber, hemp, flax, leather, pelts, and even iron were available throughout the continent.

There was more. In 1764 Catherine decreed that all governor-generals take a census and draw accurate maps of their provinces. The infrastructure of roads and bridges was repaired.

The Germans who moved to the Volga River area and other parts of Russia in response to Catherine's invitation made what seemed a great move, at the time.

As G-SIG's John Maurath puts it, "She knew her people to be the most industrious, hardest-working people. She promised them many concessions, including the perpetual promise that they could keep their German customs, heritage, language, etc." He makes special reference to those who settled in the Odessa area on the Black Sea.

"Many stopped temporarily in various spots in Yugoslavia, (the Banat region), Hungary, Romania, etc.; and ended up staying in these areas. That's why there are so many German-speaking towns in these various countries. Ann Fingerhut Sueme and her sister Maritza Fingerhut Stock (related to the famous Fingerhut mail order company) are descended from Germans who lived in Yugoslavia. Ann, Maritza, and Maritza's husband Bill own the St. Louis Gast Haus restaurant at 18th and Chouteau in St. Louis, Missouri. All three of them have very fascinating stories."

Now, fast forward.

John adds, “When the Russo-Japanese war broke out around 1905...Russia broke its promise to the families of German immigrants and forced them to join the army and fight in the war. This resulted in a great exodus of German Russians, who came mostly to Canada and America...but many were forced to stay.

“During World War Two, Hitler tried to capture these various German regions and persuade the people to fight with Nazi Germany.

John Maurath may be contacted at (maurath1@juno.com).

+++++

MARLENE’S GREAT IDEA!

Marlene Olson (genealogy800@yahoo.com) has marvelous advice for researchers seeking facts in Illinois. She encourages them to check the state marriage index by “googling” the Illinois State Archive. (Here is the link: <http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/databases.html>)

She searched one bride’s surname: Lessing.

”What appeared was an alphabetical list of all Lessing women and the names of the grooms whom they married, with the dates, with the volume and page numbers, license numbers, and names of the Illinois counties in which the marriages were recorded.

“This may tell the migration pattern of the family since most families traveled together and married six miles from each other.”

Marlene then suggests mailing the Illinois Regional Archives Depository (IRAD) for further information. Randolph County is at Southern Illinois University. Researchers can find more information and the addresses of the depositories on the IRAD Web site at this link:

<http://www.cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/archives/irad/iradaddr.html>

Marlene recalls that they charge 50 cents or so per record with a minimum of \$1. Work is done by college students. She adds, “Check out the index information of “Marriage” or “License” to pick up other siblings or cousins in the area.

She noticed that since the listing showed that husband “John G. Lessing died so young, his widow probably married another time or two. If you don’t follow her list of marriages, you might not find her obit. She might not have used the first

name that you know her by. Germans usually used derivatives of Mary, Marie, Margaret, Magdalene, etc. ... watch for clues of initials in other records. Then repeat with the Groom's side.”

+++++

EXCHANGE! *G-SIG comments, ideas, & requests:*

+ **Kathy Wurth** (kathyinwashington@hotmail.com) is compiling a list of emigrants from Osnabrueck who settled in America. She says “the Osnabrueck Genealogical Society and the local Heimatmuseum in Versmold ... would very much be interested in what happened to family members who left Germany and perhaps would like to contact living descendants. You would not have to put dates in for living persons only state ‘Still Living.’ If your software program would let you run an index of the names in the file, that would be great if you could attach that, also.”

+ **G-SIG Clusters** are “where the action is”! Meet and communicate with others who have similar aims in research and information. Learn from them. Share your successes. For details on existing Clusters, or to explore the formation of a new Cluster, contact Lisa at lmclaughlin@polsinelli.com) or Kathy at kathyinwashington@hotmail.com).

+++++

Want a printed copy of G-SIG FORUM by mail? Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: St. Louis Genealogical Society, Attn. Ed Schmidt; #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140; St. Louis, MO 63143. **Not yet on the e-mail list for the G-SIG FORUM?** Send an e-mail to germansig@stlgs.org . All copyright privileges for this FORUM are reserved by the compiler; no item is to be duplicated or distributed without permission.)

+++++

Have great ideas for the G-SIG FORUM? Submit your material to germansig@stlgs.org or mail it to: StLGS, Attn: G-SIG, #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140, St. Louis, MO 63143.