

G-SIG FORUM #39

...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, member of the G-SIG Steering Committee and former G-SIG leader, 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 germansig@stlgs.org.

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BALTIMORE & INCOMING GERMANS

by Gerald Perschbacher

Martha Mae, a distant cousin of mine, came across information out of Baltimore: old files of German immigrants might exist! This was such great news; I simply had to pursue it.

Evidently a small German Church in Baltimore was near the epicenter of immigration to Baltimore. Supposedly, this site was “second only to Ellis Island,” says one source on the subject.

It seems there was a house for immigrants that was used until they found homes and jobs. While there is talk about a potential museum, it is merely talk at this point. But that’s how some of the world’s biggest dreams became reality.

In the files are records of marriages, baptisms, deaths, and confirmations. The records center on church involvement. Tons of records have been organized. But there is no one to scan the records or do a search on a particular surname. Also, it is uncertain as to the years these files cover. So while this information may help some people, it probably will not suffice for others.

That's not to say that someone in the small church wouldn't help.

I made contact with Dr. Lowell Zuck who digs into the old Evangelical & Reformed archives at Luhr Libraries (Eden Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.). Here is the gist of what he said: "Pastor Otto Apitz...who died in 1918, was in charge of the Immigrant & Seaman's Mission in Baltimore; he was succeeded there by (Pastor) F. A. Giese," who also was pastor at the church nearby. That's the church that evidently has the files.

As TV announcers said in the past: "Stay tuned."

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G-SIG WORKS!

Progress has been made by Janet Grau Williams (janronwill@charter.net). She says, "At the last G-SIG meeting, Mary H. stood up to say they were new and the family they were researching was the Schroeder family from Zion Lutheran Church on Dorsett Road. That is the church of my Schulte family. It turns out this Gerhardt Schroeder's first marriage was to my Great-Great-Aunt 'Kate' Schulte. Other than her name, I had not been able to find information on her other than a possible son from information on his headstone in the Zion Cemetery....We met with them and another cousin...here at our home and enjoyed a great afternoon getting to know each other, sharing pictures and research. Thanks again for the G-SIG meetings!"

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CAN YOU RELATE...?

by Gerald Perschbacher

Gene Schneider (geneschneider@att.net) appreciates help he has received from others in G-SIG. He singles out Kathy Wurth as one of those. "I am indebted to you for 'posting' the note about my great grandfather Henry Dopheide with the Osnabruck group on your recent trip to Germany....I have been contacted by the (I think) archivist for the Dopheide family. I say 'I think' because I do not speak or read German. I have a German-English dictionary that will suffice for merely translating the note word for word, but that is crude at best. As for future communications, I have some contacts that may be of help...."

“This is an exciting breakthrough for me and I owe it all to your generosity,” says Gene. “I have a complete family tree of all of Henry's descendents including the seven children to which he refers....

“It looks like I should look into German language classes as a long-term 'fix'. Thank you so very, very much. That brick wall for the Dopheides now has a crack in it.”

Can you relate, especially to the language comment?

As long as you can clearly think, speak, and read, then it is not too late to learn at least some bit of German. Yes, a good German-English dictionary is handy to have. But this will not provide sentence structures, thought patterns, phrases, and local expressions.

Learning current German will be a tremendous help, also.

However, there is more to the story than simply learning that present-day language. When I returned from my first trip to Germany, I brought a variety of newly acquired books. One of them was on the old dialect of my ancestral town. Indeed, here amid the High German language belt was an area with its own German spin. The book listed the very old manner of speaking with interesting stories about the eras. Phrases were noted with explanations. Pronunciation assists were given. Made me feel more “in touch” with the past. It also assisted in understanding select words that were not in current German-English dictionaries!

That’s a caveat you will hit right away: the older the entry, the more different the old German will be from today’s tongue and text.

Fortunately, you don’t need to master an entire language in order to understand entry comments relating to genealogy. In fact, the St. Louis Genealogical Society has helpful books that can assist in this endeavor by segregating key words for you to recognize and understand. Make contact with that office and ask about the resources (www.stlgs.org/).

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LOOKING FOR ANSWERS?

There are several steps to follow when you are in G-SIG.

First: Let people know what you seek. Is it a certain surname? Information about a territory in Germany? Help in deciphering old hand-written records? Knowledge on the meaning of various phrases? Or do you merely want to know the regional culture now and in years past?

Second: Come to a G-SIG Gathering. Don't worry – these are not meetings in the common sense. They are gatherings of people with similar goals, joining for a special evening once every three-or-so-months. A handful of announcements are made, information is shared, plenty of informative handouts are available, and maps often are displayed. A carefully selected presentation is the highpoint of the night. You can have the opportunity to announce the field of study you are pursuing. You might even find someone who embraces a similar area of study. It's a time to share!

Third: Read the *G-SIG FORUM*, past and present. Yes, past editions are available. When you receive your first *G-SIG FORUM*, reply with a request for past editions.

Fourth: Submit an entry for the *Exchange!* section of the *G-SIG Forum*. Don't unload all your lengthy details. Keep the request short and sweet (50 words or less). Send your notice to: persch3@hotmail.com for consideration.

Fifth: Join the G-SIG Yahoo Group: germanspecialinterest . Pat von zur Muehlen explains how: go to www.yahoo.com. Click on Groups. Put germanspecialinterest in the Search bar. When the page comes up, click on "Join This Group" and follow the prompts.

Sixth: Liberally employ searches on the World Wide Web to uncover references material and new contacts.

Seventh: Connect with a Cluster. If a current Cluster covers your region of interest, "go for it." This provides a support group that could bolster your education and increase your discoveries. Clusters may meet as often as they like, wherever they choose. If you do not know the "point of departure" of your ancestors (and cannot tell your region of origin), then you have the flexibility to join any Cluster. You can learn numerous tips and glean countless ideas by participating in an active Cluster – all features that may carry over to your specific study even if it becomes clear your ancestry was not traced to that Cluster's region.

Eighth: Attend special seminars, hear speakers, engage in group travel, and more – all connected to G-SIG or its parent organizations.

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POWER OF THE PRESS!

When Dr. Albert Jabs digs into a subject relating to German heritage, he does it with conviction. We share some of his comments. He may be reached at AJJabs@aol.com .

“As a former carrier for the *Bristol Press* (in Connecticut) along with my three brothers, I will never forget the joys of bringing the local newspaper to folks.... To view a fresh copy ...was to get a window on Bristol, the country, and the world.”

What lifted this newspaper from the image of local family ownership was an incident in the Second World War. The paper was a voice that “protected the Italian Americans and German Americans from unjust incarceration.” A section called “The Barnes” editorial pages, undoubtedly “kept the above mentioned immigrant communities from the imprisonment which hit Japanese immigrants along the western coast, and German American and Italian American families in these United States.

“The hardships of imprisonment of these families is still not well known in America, and in fact, a bill rectifying this injustice, but no reparations, is still bogged down in Congress....

“It was the precious protection of the *Bristol Press* and the U.S. Constitution that kept Bristol families from the incarceration that hit about 14,000 German Americans and 8,000 Italian Americans in America as a result of the fear-induced Executive Order of FDR in February of 1942....”

Let's hope this never happens again, to any nationality.



PONDERING GERMANY

by Gerald Perschbacher

After several trips to my old ancestral village of Schaafheim in Hessen-Darmstadt, no longer am I a stranger. In fact, on the most recent trip I was accepted as one of the citizens.

Granted, I look like Germans from that territory (little wonder). I dress like they do. There are no differences in manner of walk and hand motions. And I have adopted their manner of talk, although I still have

much more of the German language to adopt. We share many of the same ideals, wants, and desires.

So, what is a German today?

Much like we were in the 1950s. Many are reserved. Some are pushy, but not as much as certain Americans. Some are brash, but not as arrogant as a high number of Americans. Germans are cordial, prefer privacy, like nature, enjoy good friends and family, and live under countless restrictions (maybe even more than Americans!). Some like to make short trips. Others prefer to stick close to home.

When they travel, they need not travel far to see wonderful historic sites. Germans can travel easily into old countries that are members of the European Union. They claim “open borders” without much checking of papers when passing through.

In the final analysis, Germans today are much like Americans. Maybe that’s why I like to visit Germany. I can drift into the mainstream of the culture, fit into daily life, and enjoy the experience from within.

Yes, I feel fully American yet part of Germany. On the recent trip I was stopped as I walked along the narrow street of the town. A car pulled nearby. The driver and passenger asked for directions—in German, of course. I paused. Should I try...? No, much as I wanted to blend in, I simply smiled and said in English, “I’m just visiting here.” They laughed and replied in near-perfect English, “Very good! We hope you enjoy your stay!” Off they went, winding along the old, narrow, heart of the town.

Seems to me that Germans live much in the present and past. Americans live more in the present and future. Yes, it’s good to visit Germany. But it’s still very good to be an American.

I wonder if this is how my ancestors felt when they came here...?

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

+ **Sue Rivett** (618-964-1413 or suzettebeacher@hotmail.com) seeks information about Maria Schmidt, raised by Conrad and Rosina Kalbfleisch.

This involves studying the history of the Saxon Lutherans who came to America in 1839 and settled in St. Louis and Perry County, Missouri. Sue adds that the Kalbfleishes joined the Saxon group in Perry County Missouri about 1840 and spent some time in St. Louis before they went to Collinsville, Illinois.

+ **Helpful! Informative!** Check these resources if your ancestry has Lutheran or Evangelical & Reformed backgrounds: the book *Zion on the Mississippi* by Walter O. Forester. Learn about Saxon immigrants at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Stephan . Scott Holl, assistant manager of Special Collections Department at the St. Louis County Library can offer insights on Lutheran (plus E&R) immigrants in or near St. Louis (call 314-994-3300; request “Special Collections”). Contact Concordia Historical Institute in Clayton, Missouri. The Rev. Marvin Huggins is interim director (<http://chi.lcms.org/about.html#contact>).

+ **“A friend of mine** sent me 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” (Kathy Wurth).

<http://geocities.com/mppraetorius/>

+ **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).

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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 Schmidt; #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140; St. Louis, MO 63143. **Not yet on the e-mail list for the G-SIG FORUM?** Write to germansig@stlgs.org . (Note: All copyright privileges for this FORUM are reserved by the compiler; no item is to be duplicated or distributed without permission.)

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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.