

G-SIG FORUM #44

...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 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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Dangling the Hook for Information

When Jenny Baker Barker (jw50barker1970@yahoo.com) first contacted our Yahoo group (see www.yahoo.com, click on “Groups,” and search for *germanspecialinterest*), she didn’t know what to expect. In effect, she was “dangling the hook” for information.

She stated who she was, that this Yahoo group was new to her, and that she was searching for her German ancestors who came to America in the early to mid 1800s.

To her credit, she is not alone with the search. There are cousins who also have “gone fishing” for information.

To show how she baited the hook, Jenny indicated she was angling for ROTHENHOEFERS who migrated to Maryland from Germany. She said Michel was born in 1790 (Germany) and wife Margaretha Kunzeman was born over there that same year. Son Johann Lorentz Rothenhoefer was born Dec. 15, 1815, in Güntersleben, Würzburg, Bayern, Germany, but died on April 8, 1894, in Frederick County, Maryland. His wife was Christine Graff, born Oct. 6, 1816, in Germany and died Aug. 13, 1887, in Frederick County, Maryland.

Good details! Then she added the SCHAFFNER family who settled around Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky (Bernhard Schaffner was born about 1834

in Baden or Württemberg, Germany, and died on Feb. 1, 1878, in Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky).

“I was told Bernhard Schaffner came to the US at an early age, but I don't know who his parents were,” said Jenny. His wife, Katherine Luhr, born in 1830, “used to go back to Germany and visit her family after Bernhard died in 1878. I don't know who she visited or what part of the country she went to.”

Those are the facts surrounding Jenny's mystery.

Most family historians have “been there.” Maybe you are one who has hit a brick wall after accumulating some bits of information. Then... nothing seems to gel. Jenny didn't want to just sit and wonder. So she “dangled the hook” for more information.

Marlene Olson (genealogy800@yahoo.com) nibbled on it. Indeed, she tugged the line pretty significantly, to the benefit of Jenny! You see, Marlene is like many of us—she likes to help others. When she has several good ideas, she shares them with this in mind.

Marlene began, “Not sure what you are looking for at this point! But I am willing to give you several sources for you to expand your research.

“#1. Churchill of England sang songs of Frederick Co., Maryland, to President Roosevelt. Hint: There must be a book in England on that county” (I'll add the same for Germany). “Many people fail to look at European resources on a Northern American area.

“#2. Bayern has 2,890 places that the Mormons have references; familysearch.org > library > library catalog > place > Guntersleben, Bayern, Germany has a film 1183552 Item 7. Author: Johann Valentin Hart. Enter by place, film number, or by author. Remember: go from the smallest to the largest for sources.”

Marlene stated the inevitable as suggestion #3: Google the town name. “Get basic information on the area or a map.”

Another tried-and-true source was suggested in #4: check—

Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs

(the source is in German, but every researcher who has German roots can probably learn sufficient language skills to do a search).

One online source is <http://genweblog.blogspot.com/2008/06/meyers-ort-online-and-free.html>.

Marlene encouraged Jenny to seek details on Güntersleben. Some libraries or the Family History Center (FHC) have a copy. “It will give you a brief description of town, churches, railroads, post office, location, etc. Also, check out surrounding towns. Great source for German resources.”

Next comes some real thinking. Basically, use a good degree of logic when examining the past. Marlene's fifth suggestion was to check an auto atlas of old

West Germany or current unified Germany. According to her source, Güntersleben lies west of Frankfurt and Darmstadt. “It has a church,” she noted, so it probably had a church cemetery. This would be another point for contact.

Now for a little geography. The Au Graben River goes through the town and the Main River is west of town. She noted the cities and towns surrounding Güntersleben: to the West is Thüngersheim on the Main River. Northward are Retzstadt, Karlstadt, Arnstein and Gramschatz.

To the Southeast are Rimpar, Lengfeld, and the large city of Würzburg. To the Southwest rests Veitshöchheim (a spa city where people spent vacations or sought medical healing).

You can learn much from the surroundings. Towns in Germany were part of a larger whole, usually a territory administered by a noble family or anchored near a free Imperial city. Towns often maintained the same ideas and ideals of the larger community.

Marlene continued: #6. Go to familysearch.org / and check surnames just in case someone wrote a book on your family name. Get an interlibrary loan and you can check out the book before you buy it.

“#7. Get several records here in the United States : census, obits, wills, probate, deeds, plat maps, military, tax records, church records, naturalization & declaration of intention, directory, voter registration, passenger list, emigration & immigration records, etc. The list goes on and on, Marlene indicated, which means the challenges for a genealogist never seem to end.

“#8. Church records of Frederick, Maryland. I have a book that lists the names of churches of the area, if you are interested.” Also, Jenny could simply check online or contact a local source for directory assistance.

Suggestion #9 encouraged Jenny to examine FHC microfilm 0417257 (Soundex film G650 for Green/ Grunn/). “Figure out the Soundex for your names, and check out what film would apply for you—the index to passenger list for Baltimore. The mayor of Baltimore received the passenger list from the ship Captain, so although the Bremen records may have been destroyed, there still are sources to check.”

#10 – Examine FHC microfilm 0417383 which covers Bremen to Baltimore before April 7, 1837. If more research is required, check 0417384 from April 7, 1837, to July 3, 1840. “Each passenger list gives you different information. Check all lists.” Why? Sometimes people did not come directly to America. There were some Germans who settled in Bermuda and Jamaica. Others went to Ireland or Great Britain and then left for America. For many years, destinations usually included Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Canada, or New Orleans.

Marlene wondered if Jenny had made contact with historical or genealogical societies in Frederick County, Maryland, who could provide keen insights or raw data.

Jenny has an advantage. She knows dates of death. So suggestion #11 encouraged, “Get obituary notices from the library from the area of death since you have the date. Give them a couple dollars for looking it up to cover copying, envelope, stamp, etc.” Our course, if someone wishes to scan the information and send it via e-mail, all the cheaper! However, an honorarium (or donation to the local society) should include their personal time and effort. I would suggest a minimum of \$5 for a couple meaty obits. Sometimes local societies charge a flat \$5 fee plus 25 cents (or so) for each page copied.

We’re pulling for Jenny and others in our midst who are tackling their challenges with enthusiasm. Bait that hook and toss it into the sea of life, and you might get more than a few bites—you might land a ***whopper!*** GP

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FISHING IN OTHER STATES

Well, not real fishing...but similar to the type being done by Jenny and others. You get the point!

Several years ago I traced a couple branches of my family to other states. We’re talking about movements dating into the first half of the 1800s. If you’ve even been fishing in public rivers or lakes, you know that there are laws. A license is required, which helps with area conservation and thus augments your fishing. So it is with historical and genealogical societies in other states.

Indeed, there are common practices and procedures which are upheld for the survival of societies, ongoing preservation of documents, office expenses, and incidentals. While volunteers are eager to seek and find the information being requested, there are underlying costs to meet.

Happily, those costs usually are minimal for someone who lives far away and cannot easily come to the society that has the answers.

So it was in my case. I was quite willing to pay the costs for research and copying. One organization had an apologetic sound when the price was mentioned via phone. They needn’t have apologized. Their assistance saved me two days of travel and research, overnight lodging, gasoline plus meals. Indeed, they did not have to apologize *for the \$11 invoice!*

What I received was about half an inch of documents, some of which related to my direct lineage. Other details related to people of the same surname, but who were quite distant. One newspaper story showed a distant kin, and (low-and-behold!) he bore a striking resemblance to my father! Reading some of the

experiences told by the person in the article, I could see that some “antics” may run in the extended family.

Go “fishing” out of state, when you have the chance. You never know what’s waiting! GP

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Regarding Volga Germans in America...

The Rev. Dr. Dennis Kastens is hardly a newcomer to the subject of genealogy, but I recently informed him of G-SIG, to his delight. A G-SIG FORUM was shared with him.

“The Volga article (FORUM #42) especially was read with interest. If ever you should write a sequel to it, you might want to cover the Black Sea Germans from Russia since that contingent was nearly six times larger than the Volga contingent. In other words, 1/7th of the Germans from Russia came from the Volga region, but 6/7th of the Germans from Russia came from the Black Sea vicinity, according to Karl Stumpp's research,” says Dr. Kastens.

He goes on: “In a few places I have read that 1/10th of all Germans immigrating to America actually came not from Germany, but from Russia and other ex-patriot places where ethnic Germans resided.”

Indeed, there is much to discover when it comes to the travels of ancestors—and the German people.

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FISHING BY ‘THE BOOK’

Bill Ziegenbein (billziegenbein@charter.net) says, “I have had great success in sending general letters of introduction (containing just the basic info of names and dates) here in the U.S.A. to those who share a family name that I found in the phone book. I tried this with the two family names of my surname ancestors. I knew they lived for at least a period of time in Hannover and Dresden. I pulled over a dozen names and addresses from each city via online white-pages and sent letters. Two things of interest happened. I heard back from EVERYONE in Hannover (unfortunately, none appear to be related, but many included their or their husband’s ancestry). On the other-hand, NO ONE responded from Dresden! I have guessed this lack of responses due to Dresden being a past East German city and maybe they still don’t trust Americans, but not I’m not sure.”

Indeed, Bill, you are onto something. As time progresses, the old East German portion of what is now unified Germany may warm up to genealogical inquiries from Americans. Several years ago, it was tough to get someone to smile, let alone look at you in the “Old East.” My first encounter with a die-hard

“Easterner” came while making a rest stop at an old military checkpoint in the countryside. Tall watchtowers still dominated the rolling and occasionally treed terrain. In fact, an extreme amount of forestland had been cleared just to mark the line between East and West. Going to the restroom, there was a person carefully eyeing everyone. This was an individual about age 65...and to this day, I cannot know for a fact if the person was male or female! The clothing was generic, as was the cap, and an air of rancid Eastern Communism abounded. Skeptical, the person watched my every move.

Coming out of the restroom, the person began shouting wildly. I had not dropped some coins in the tray! The “tip” was quickly deposited. No thank you, no nod, no smile—the money was expected.

In succeeding years I have notice that time has eased the skepticism among “Easterners.” However, if you go to the old “East,” take some extra coins just in case....

Bill continues: “I am willing to explain this (letter-writing) strategy, what I have done and the many results I have gotten to any and all you think might be interested. *Questions:* I have read all the books and online sites concerning writing, including all of the templates you can follow. But I also realize there are tens-of-thousands of Americans also following this step. The amount of mail these German civil or religious clerks get must be overwhelming. It’s presumptuous of us to think they are just sitting around waiting for our letters and while they may not discard any mail, I’ve got to believe that most wind up in a file cabinet never to be acted upon.

“To help ensure my letters are read and acted upon, what should the initial correspondence be? What should it contain? To whose attention should it be sent?”

We can handle some of these questions at a G-SIG Gathering, but I’ll venture a couple observations now. First, KNOW THE THINKING AND HISTORY OF THE AREA TO WHICH YOU ARE WRITING. Don’t be “John Q. American” who is viewed as wealthy, aloof, and rude. Introduce yourself as someone who has a common bond with that particular area of Germany. Be kind, cordial, and don’t ask for the whole world on a platter. The German way of life often is more ridged and regimented than ours, and it carries a degree of etiquette that reminds me of the 1950s. If you master a polite tone and make a connection as one of “their kind” now in America, it may likely open a door you will enjoy.

More ideas in future FORUMS! If you have insights on the subject, please submit them.

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

+ **Doug & Judy Broleman** (thebrolemans@yahoo.com) found another bit of information they'd like some help with. There was an emigration record on www.auswanderer.bw.de for a great-great-grandfather. They have an emigrant ID number - 225000, year of 1832, and last place of residence being Hohberg. Their intent is to contact Hohberg's archive to see if there is more about the family left behind in Hohberg. Specifically, Judy is seeking her husband's grandmother from Crimmitschau, Saxony, her great-grandfather from Eberling (or Uberlingen) on the Bodensee and Lake Constance, Baden, and her grandfather in Kupprichausen (small village near Boxberg, Baden). Any suggestions?

+ **BUT, WAIT! THERE'S MORE...!** *Re: Crimmitschau*

Pat von zur Muehlen applied herself to the task and came up with some details to help. Check www.Crimmitschau.de . The following information is from the Web site: Rathaus *Besucheranschrift*: Markt 1, 08451 Crimmitschau

Postanschrift: PF 1139, 08441 Crimmitschau

E-Mail-Adresse: stadt@crimmitschau.de

Telefon: (0 37 62) 90-0 *Fax*: (0 37 62) 90-99 01

+ **Mary Mitchell** (mmitchell156@tampabay.rr.com) is researching several lines from St. Louis: Ferdinand Krause (born Oct. 1851 in Germany, died 1917 in St. Louis); Johanna Korman (born 1855 in Germany, daughter of John Kormann and Louise (born 1827-9, Hesse-Darmstadt; also Angelo Kuzman (born 1895 in Hungary, died 1973 in St. Louis), married Mary.

"I would be interested in exchanging material with anyone researching these families and would like to correspond with any known descendant."

+ **Mike Gerding** (Magerding@aol.com) writes: "I am a native of St. Louis and a researcher of my family Gerding. I was inspired to submit the following for *Exchange!* after reading G-SIG FORUM #43." Mike wants information on the group that traveled to America from Hille, Germany, with his great-grandfather Carl Friedrich August Gerding (St. Louis bound) age 16 in 1888, on the S.S. Ems from Bremen to New York, arriving on Aug. 13, 1888, including Wilhelmine Schlüler (18), Caroline Grannemann (21), Sophie Töllner (17), Marie Meyer (21), Sophie Brand (19), and Christian von der Ahe (16).

+ **From Michael Featherstone** (pterolithos@gmail.com)

"What became of the marriage and confirmation registers of First German Presbyterian Church in St Louis? My great-great-grandfather emigrated from

Switzerland and was married in this church in 1871. I would like to see whether there is some indication of WHERE he was born in Switzerland.”

The archivist (Terry Epling) of the Lovejoy Presbytery in St Louis, which succeeded the Peter’s Presbyterian Church (which had in turn succeeded the First German Church), cannot find any trace of these records. They are also not in the Presbyterian Historical Society in Pennsylvania. “I live in France and can only do this research by post or e-mail.”

+ Maximize your potential -- connect with a **G-SIG Cluster**. Each Cluster brings together a small bunch of people with common interests. Interested in a 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 persch3@hotmail.com or mail it to: StLGS, Attn: G-SIG, #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140, St. Louis, MO 63143.