

G-SIG FORUM #52

...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 forum is for genealogical, educational, and historical information with fresh insights and ideas on German traditions and ancestry. Gerald Perschbacher is *FORUM* compiler and coordinator.

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



Why They Came

M. Gordon Seyffert (gordonseyffert@mac.com) has been studying reasons Germans left for the New World, and he is itching to share his discoveries. Gordon has condensed reasons by certain years. That's a good idea, since reasons (and circumstances behind them) often can change quickly. The old adage that "my ancestor came to America to avoid the draft" holds up for certain times, but may not be the dominating reason in other years. Let's let Gordon share his findings.

"Some musings on the reasons for emigration of the 19th century German ancestors....Writing summaries such as these forces one to crystallize one's thinking, while simultaneously creating food-for-thought for future generations." Gordon says he hid the family names for personal protection of descendants.

Chances are, "Your ancestors came to these shores in either the 17th, 18th or 19th centuries. With the earliest forbears it is usually impossible to deduce the reasons for their coming. But with those who came in the 1800s -- all Germans -- it is possible to squeeze enough information from the records to hazard some intelligent guesses. Here are four 'case studies' of the varied reasons that America offered the promise of a better future....

"1834 -- Family 'A' from the Principality of Lichtenburg ('the Agrarians'). They didn't want to become Prussians! Their homeland was being acquired by Prussia at a time that Prussians were viewed as unsympathetic to either French-inspired reforms or the liberalization that

many of the German peoples were demanding from their rulers. Because the family's livelihood was based in agriculture...it is unlikely that economic reasons were a strong consideration. But chain migration played a part.

“1852 -- Family ‘B’ from the two Mecklenburgs, by way of Brandenburg, Prussia (‘the Disgraced’). They desired a better life, free of social constraints. Both the father and his children appear to have suffered prejudicial treatment with respect to the trades they could enter and the people they could marry (owing to the father's illegitimacy), and while they had sought to live in less restrictive Prussia there were still apparently obstacles sufficient enough to prompt them to emigrate for the economic and social freedoms they would gain.

“1854 -- Family ‘C’ from the Kingdom of Saxony (‘the Artisans’) The patriots lost, and conscription threatened the sons. While the family's adult men were guild members or their equivalent, and thus privileged citizens of the middle class, the father's participation in the Revolution of 1848 (and fear of Prussian-Saxon authoritarian ways) led them to follow one of father's comrades-in-arms to St. Louis, where the father and eldest son could continue their trade as turners.

“1857 & 1860 -- A Mother-Daughter duo - parents from first East & then West Prussia (‘the Displaced’). The parents' loss of hometowns offered them no safety net. They came from different regions and ethnicities to marry, it seems, in a city new to them both. When the children were near adulthood it was found the mother had cancer. It appears she chose to use her remaining time to come to America, seeking to arrange marriages for her two daughters. The father was to stay put where they'd met, secure in his career as a petty bureaucrat. He could watch over the younger children -- all sons -- until they were ready to emigrate as well. This is an interesting case of chain migration within a nuclear (and not an extended) family!”

Good insights, Gordon. Of course, I'll add that there may always be other special reasons we may never uncover: petty theft, family arguments, a young family's need to “get away,” and the hope of riches, just to name a few. In fact, there may be a variety of reasons and not just one. Gordon's research certainly gives ideas. Check whether any of these work for you!

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Typing in German

Is it possible? Can you type German characters on your computer's English keyboard? “YES!” says Carol Whitton (whittoncarolyn@att.net).

She says it can be done using “Windows (1) character map (under Accessories) or (2) using Alt+code key combinations, but only if you have a separate number pad (not if you don't) or (3) by switching to the DE keyboard (Control panel, languages, add German) but you have to remember where the umlauted characters are and to switch back to English keyboard after using it.”

There's more. She goes on about “a new alternative I found recently -- a software program that can be downloaded for free. It still uses the right Alt key but with the English keyboard, so a = ä, u = ü, o = ö, and s =ß. This makes it much easier to continue typing in English afterwards.”

Now, don't be discouraged if this is becoming too technical. Just share the news with computer pros among your family or friends, and they can probably work through it on your behalf.

The free keyboard can be obtained by going to this Web site: http://german.about.com/library/blcomp_win.htm. While there, Carol says, “You can read about how to do the 3 methods above and Dovark keyboards vs. U.S. keyboards, vs. U.K. keyboards. Click one of the several links to the ‘free Dekey’ (zip) program and download it. It adds an extra keyboard link next to the blue EN symbol in the bottom right corner on your task bar (different from the blue DE symbol added by Windows when you do no. 3 above). You can then click this keyboard symbol and turn on US + German and simply leave it on all the time and still type in the standard US English keyboard as usual, only using the right Alt with an a, u, or o whenever needed. Lots simpler!”

Pat von zur Muehlen (patvonzurm@msn.com) tried to set up her system. She googled "switch to German keyboard" and followed the instructions. She says, “Didn't know if I had succeeded. But now when I go to spell check something in Word, I get this message about German spell check not being available or being available or something to do with German spell check. I have to close that dialog box. And sometimes when I type a ‘y’ it prints a ‘z’ and other crazy stuff happens.”

Pat continues: “I don't know how to undo it and have not taken the time for further study into the matter. You gave a very valuable piece of info and this is also extremely useful. One day I hope to become proficient in alternating between German and English keyboards.

“One other way to type German characters in Word: Click on ‘Insert’; choose ‘Symbols’; locate the umlauted letters and the eszett; click on the one you need; click on insert; click on close. It's a cumbersome method, but it does work and is useful for those who do not have separate number pads on the right of their keyboards.”



Searching for Epidemics and Burial Facts

Jenelle Hopkins (kjhopstuff@hotmail.com) has been researching the St. Louis Cholera epidemic of 1849. Why? “My great-great grandmother, Marie Christiane (Enders) Schwartz, emigrated from Germany and arrived in St. Louis in May 1849...she is reported to have died of cholera while on Arsenal Island. I see that the island has since washed away, but that some bodies were reinterred. Can you help me locate her gravesite? I realize this is probably a tough problem, but any assistance will be appreciated. I have a cousin who lives in St. Louis, and he is checking the genealogy section of the library there. I learned that Jefferson Barracks was used to reinter some bodies, but it says they died of smallpox. And that Assumption Cemetery was also used, but Marie was not a Catholic.”

Kathy Wurth (kathyinwashington@hotmail.com) took the challenge and offered this advice: “I suggest you call or e-mail the St. Louis City Library at <http://www.slpl.lib.mo.us/libsrc/stl-death.htm>. Also call or e-mail the St. Louis County Library at <http://www.slcl.org/branches/hq/sc/>. Ask for Special Collections to help -- or try Missouri History Museum and Research Center. Ask for Dennis Northcutt (<http://www.mohistory.org/home/>).”

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Monuments Men and the Wealth of the Ages

By Gerald Perschbacher

Complete fascination. That’s what I discovered when I caught a portion of the two-hour documentary on television, titled *The Rape of Europa*. The high-quality production traced the greatest theft in history: the systematic looting of precious paintings, sculptures, artifacts, and other artistic treasures past to us through the centuries.

Robert M. Edsel is the power behind the Monuments Men Foundation, which has picked up where the U.S. military left off soon after the Second World War. In the past 14 years he has directed his passion toward the project of teaching the world the virtues of precious art, its ownership, and (in the case of looted art) its return to rightful owners or their descendants.

I have had the opportunity to be in contact with Mr. Edsel. He explains that there were 345 men and women who volunteered for the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section of the military during the war (later they were simply called Monuments Men). They came from 13 nations and had an average age around 40. Most had families and a background in art. Several went on to key positions in the art world, even heading important posts in prestigious art museums.

The production (which aired on PBS) traces the planned looting of precious art from helpless citizens overpowered by Nazi terrorism or the rigors of war. What it also shows is the respect German officials held for ageless art by Da Vinci, Michelangelo, Vermeer, Rembrandt, Cranach, ancient Greeks and Romans, and many others, while disrespecting certain types. The production traces the plan Adolph Hitler was pursuing to make an art museum in Linz the center of his new capital!

For some top Nazi officials, accumulating art was an addiction. Edsel also has captured the swirls of Europe's artful history from the late 1930s into the early 1950s through two books: *Rescuing Da Vinci* and *The Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves, and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*. I highly recommend them for your understanding of Germany's appreciation of art from more than half a century ago and how masterpieces were stolen, lost, forgotten, and destroyed. After all, even this is a part of Germanic history.

Robert Edsel was co-producer of the TV documentary and soon enlarged that effort considerably to include nine hours (on three DVDs) of video segments along with lesson plans for teachers. The initial documentary is included. What resulted was *The Greatest Theft in History Educational Program*, the result of a panel of distinguished educators and leading experts.

Far reaching in impact is the publishing of *Beyond the Dreams of Avarice: The Hermann Goering Collection*. This massive book shows pictures of the art stolen by that Nazi leader, who made 20 special trips to key sites in France just to secure art for his own benefit. The book is written by Nancy Yeide and is said to be an essential tool for art experts in the area of restitution, education, and the Jewish Holocaust.

I mentioned that women were involved in the "Monuments" effort. One of them was Mary Regan who earned a Master's degree in Fine Art at Harvard. She was one of the first women to join the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC). Shortly after America's entry into the war, more than 40,000 women had applied but only 450 were chosen. After the war, she went to Berlin to volunteer for the Monuments Men.

One of the women she worked with was a French woman, Rose Valland, who had been beyond suspicion by the Nazis as a minor worker in an art institution, but who secretly kept tabs on the stealing and shipping of important art. Thanks to Valland's notes, many rare pieces were discovered and returned.

To learn more, check online at: www.monumentsmenfoundation.org.



Thinking about Going to Germany?

Then consider the time of year. My experience shows that taking a trip outside of the normal tourist season will net lower airline fares and hotel rooms. Heading over before Memorial Day may bring very good fares. In fact, if you plan to travel about one or two weeks before that American holiday, your airline fare may be reduced by nearly half. Granted, you will need to layer your clothing for a few brisk days, but if your trip lasts two weeks or so, you will be enjoying the pleasant spring Germans sing about! In southern and central Germany, the fields are in bloom and nicely green by late May. And waiting lines at tourist attractions are short and (sometimes) cheaper.



Exchange! G-SIG Comments, ideas, and requests

+ Michael Featherstone (pterolithos@gmail.com) writes, "Thank you for having posted the notice...about the records of the German Church... I have found what I was looking for (in records in Switzerland). If you see Mrs. Gatz, please give her my greetings. She helped me find a lot of things I was looking for, too."

+ Available: *Venne in America* by Udo Thörner. *The 19th century Mass Emigration to America of Tenants and Small cottage Farmers from a Rural Village in the Region of Osnabrueck.* This book will help people with ancestry from Venne or who have ancestry in the old Kingdom of Hannover. Chapters cover the social, economic, and political conditions in that region and supply reasons for emigration plus what it was like to travel to America. Detailed listings run from 1830 –1900. Only \$28 from the St. Louis Genealogical Society or contact Kathy Wurth at kathyinwashington@hotmail.com.



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