

# G-SIG FORUM #57

...from the German Special Interest Group. G-SIG is an effort of the St. Louis Genealogical Society ([www.stlgs.org/](http://www.stlgs.org/)) and the German American Heritage Society, St. Louis, Mo. ([gahs-stl@att.net](mailto:gahs-stl@att.net)).

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](mailto:persch3@hotmail.com).

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## **Climbing Brick Walls** by Gerald Perschbacher

Have you hit a genealogical brick wall? Realize you don't have the time to do research? If so, then whom do you get to do the research – or at least help you over the wall? Those questions have been posed by Nancy Von Behren ([nvonbehren@msn.com](mailto:nvonbehren@msn.com)), who has made remarkable progress in her search for Hessian (Hessen) roots.

Maybe these have been YOUR questions, too. Perhaps this is one very good reason you have become a G-SIG participant!

Dig, dig, dig—that's what we do. We don't expect to find a streak of gold sitting on top of the ground. It has to be dug up. Doesn't matter how capable you are, eventually you will need help. Maybe you need a new "shovel" (research tool or reference). Or maybe you just need your shovel sharpened (by finding a better source). Yes, you may need to turn to a bonified expert.

Nancy says that a true genealogist has credentials and is "a person who has done work in America," in our case, on "German research and can work with and obtain information in Germany." She suggests that you "see if they are able to read German as it is written today and the very old German Script. Check the pricing for services, then hire." Obtaining references would be a plus!



## **Taking This a Bit Farther...**

Here's another suggestion I'll offer: Trade.

That's right—trade information you have found for information someone else can find for you. Of course, you will need to find a researcher who is on your “wave length” of interest and has a focus that matches yours. If you have some information of value for a researcher, then it is an encouragement for that person to find something of value for you.

There is another option that comes to mind: Find printed works that a researcher already has compiled, and secure a copy – or at least copy the pages pertinent to your study.

Doing a “cold search” for a researcher will most likely mean you will be fully expected to pay for the help. Since you and the paid researcher may not have known each other, consider this a business transaction. On the plus side, you may establish a friendship, and perhaps later work will be cheaper (or even free). This may become expensive depending on the complexity, the distances traveled, and all costs for copying documents.

Be careful, too. Researchers become euphoric when they find a researcher who may discover the answers! But those dollar signs can quickly grow until out of hand, if you don't watch them!

That's why it is good to establish a connection with a researcher by easing into a small fact, such as, “When was my grandfather born, and where?” or “How many brothers and sisters did he have, and what were their names?” My suggestion: issue a small question first, then ease into future questions. In this manner, you test the ability of the researcher. If the match with you and the researcher doesn't feel right, then you can bow out gracefully.

If you will be dealing with a German researcher, be sure to buy some Euros when the exchange rate with the dollar is favorable. Major banks have currency exchange services, but not all local branches can do it quickly. A main location in the area may have to supply Euros to a branch only upon request. You may have to go to the branch location and buy the Euros at that day's rate, and then pick them up in a few days to allow the branch to receive them.

Not long ago, I went to a major bank in a central financial district. I called earlier to make sure they had 27 Euros, which is what I needed for a researcher. Yes, I know it isn't wise to send Euros by mail, but sometimes it's the only way. I was told there were plenty of Euros. About four hours later I showed up with dollars in hand. Two tellers went into a huddler, visited three teller drawers, and came up with 65 Euros: one 50, one ten, and one five. But I needed 27. Surprised, I asserted, “What happened? I was told there were plenty of Euros four hours ago!” One teller replied, “A customer came in and bought 3,000

Euros right after your call.” However, the bank made new arrangements, and I obtained my Euros in a couple of days. Just take warning and avoid a rush!

Don’t expect to find a researcher who will discover ALL the answers. It seems some people (maybe even in G-SIG!) hope to find someone who has consolidated all the facts and information ever wanted into a concise book. Rare chance, indeed! Instead, think about your research as “one chapter” in a book. Realize that what you unearth today puts you a step closer to tomorrow’s discoveries. Those, in turn, advance your efforts a little more. Eventually, you may look back at the trail you’ve covered and realize you truly HAVE found a wealth of information!

To help realize this and to help a researcher assist you further, document your findings in orderly fashion. Duplicate what is extremely pertinent. Scan documents and compilations of lasting worth. Separate little notes from significant findings. In other words, after you “dig,” then “sift” for gold.



## **It’s About Time, Too!**

Time is a tough element to overcome. Some researchers are up in age and literally don’t have many years to find—or enjoy the results of finding—facts on their ancestry. Others are too busy with personal matters or a six-day-a-week job to do much more than WANT to research.

I remember a word of advice from my mother. While doing homework, I often asked, “Mom, what do you know about...,” or “Mom, how do you spell the word...” My mother ALWAYS responded the same way-- “Look it up!” I didn’t always know WHERE to look it up, but I tried. She guided me. When I used a dictionary on my own and was frustrated, I would shout, “That word isn’t in here!” Of course it was! I just didn’t look for the proper spelling. I anticipated where it SHOULD be and didn’t find it there.

Much the same may be said of our research. “I can’t find the facts” may not be true. Maybe you are looking for facts as YOU think they should have been recorded, filed, or otherwise preserved. That’s when our hunt becomes especially challenging. You’ve got to “think like your prey.” Where would your ancestor have his or her birth recorded? Marriage? Death? How did old Germans list the basic facts? Can you discover names of the children by checking a housing list?

If this is your brick wall, then secure the advice of others who have climbed it. Ask how they overcame the seemingly insurmountable. Their tips may be good enough to help you over!

I knew of a child who often had trouble finding things. His family’s house had a walk-in pantry off the kitchen. When he tried to find cookies (or some

other treat), he'd open the door and ask, "Where is it?" I understand his mother would belt out a sentence from the other room. "Here he is, cookies! Jump in his hands!" Then she would come to the pantry, point to the item, and exclaim, "It was right under your nose. Think before you look."

Think before we research, too. I can't count the number of times I have heard people say, "I've been given this fact and that fact, but I need one more--so what do I do?" I think, "Here they are, cookies! Jump in their hands!" We know this won't really happen—we've got to THINK before we look.

Simply GATHERING information does not bring an automatic answer. Instead, wrestle with it. Think through it. In many cases, nuances can be realized. Observations can be noted, and conclusions postulated.



## Surprise Yourself

This leads us to another option: learn how others have found the answers by checking resources, reading this *FORUM* diligently, joining a Cluster, and networking with our Yahoo group or some other aid. You may surprise yourself with the nimbleness you truly have to climb over that brick wall! And if you do, you will find an extra reward in your feeling of personal accomplishment.

Back to the first question: Is it time to get a professional genealogist? All this being said, yes, there are times you STILL need help from others. Choose wisely, be comfortable with the association, don't grumble on the agreed cost, and make as much effort as you can once that brick wall is climbed!

Finally, a note to those of you who have had success in climbing your walls—TELL US what you did, how, when, etc., and the results. We'll be pleased to share your achievements with others who receive the *G-SIG FORUM!*



**The G-SIG Formula...** is composed of three parts: one part "*FORUM*" (which is what you are reading), one part "CLUSTER" (which is a special group that bands together for common research and insights), and one part "GATHERING" (which originally took place quarterly but is now bi-monthly). What makes this formula work is a catalyst—YOU! Sure, there is a G-SIG Steering Committee and there are some marvelously dedicated leaders, but the success of G-SIG rests on the people it attracts. If you are willing to volunteer to help at (or with) a GATHERING or CLUSTER, contact Group Leader John Wittenberg for ideas! ([johnwittenberg@cjthomas.com](mailto:johnwittenberg@cjthomas.com))



## Thanks for 'D.A.N.K'

G-SIG's Gordon Seyffert has made a connection with D.A.N.K. (the German-American National Congress, or Deutsch Amerikanischer National Kongress). This is "a national organization 'for Americans of Germanic descent.' Here is a link to the home page of their web site: <http://www.dank.org/>

"After 50 years of existence, they recognize that they and most German-American organizations are losing membership owing to the gradual fading from the American scene of those who immigrated to our country after the Second World War. (In Kansas City, the Turners, the German American Citizens Association, and another group were all very active at one time, but I never felt I belonged because the emphasis was upon transplanted Germans connecting with others who were German-born and whose first language was German.) So D.A.N.K. has reached out to persons such as myself, who strongly identify with their German heritage, but who may not speak German and who were born in this country rather than in Europe. They want to bring together both subsets of 'Germanic-Americans,' lest we lose our historical and cultural moorings within another generation."



## But wait, there's more...

Gordon is on a roll with information! This is what he recently discovered: "Mr. & Mrs. Adolph Moll [were] married in 1861. He is the Moll of the Moll Grocery at 7th & Franklin Ave., and I've found that he was exempted [from military service in the Civil War] because of an injury to an Achilles-tendon that would have kept him from being able to march. But Ernst D. Kargau's 1893 work, *St. Louis in früheren Jahren: ein Gedenkbuch für das deutsche Element*, talks about his business. By 1861 he had already achieved a measure of prosperity; I have a silver nut bowl in the form of a carriage with working wheels that was given them as a wedding present -- an example of 'St. Louis Silver' as once chronicled in *Antiques* magazine.

"I have access to the National Archives (NARA) branch here in Kansas City, and specifically to the records of the Provost Marshals for the First and Second Congressional Districts that included St. Louis. Thus, if [someone] wishes further information about St. Louis men during the war, I'm available to do the records research.... The Provost Marshals were in charge of recruitment and the draft, beginning in 1863." So says Gordon Seyffert, 441 E. 65th St., KCMO 64131-1131 (816) 444-9777.



## Looking it up...

Marlene Olson ([genealogy777@yahoo.com](mailto:genealogy777@yahoo.com)) has been on a whirlwind trip through electronic files. She glories in the results, and we share in that joy. She came across a Sept. 23, 1906, newspaper article from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (page 4, column 3). It was an obituary story on Carl Daenzer, 86, founder of the *Westliche Post*. News of his death was transmitted by cablegram, which was the "e-mail and Internet" of its day. The news initially emanated from Neckarsulm in Wurtemberg, Germany.

Daenzer also was editor of *Anzeiger des Westens*, for 35 years and (in that era) was among the greatest names in German journalism in the United States. His death came from age and infirmities. For his last eight years he resided in Germany. However, his heart was with the New World. The report says that he "had until recently written and spoken frequently of returning to St. Louis, a plan which he gave up only in his final illness."

Daenzer was born in Odenheim located in the Grand Duchy of Baden, eventually studying law in Heidelberg. When revolutionary fervor swept through the area in 1848, he was part of it and was exiled upon its failure.

"In 1860 he sold the *Westliche Post* and returned to Germany, having received assurance of an amnesty." Later, he came back to St. Louis and revitalized the *Anzeiger* which he then served until 1898.

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## **Exchange!** G-SIG Comments, ideas, and requests

+ **Congratulations!** Thanks to G-SIG, a mystery was solved by Michael Feathstone ([pterolithos@gmail.com](mailto:pterolithos@gmail.com)). He is grateful and no longer needs any G-SIGer to respond to his request. His question involved German church records. Maybe you, too, will find YOUR answers!

+ **Maximize your potential** -- connect with a **G-SIG Cluster**. Each brings together a small bunch of people with common interests, varied abilities, and successful tactics. Contact: Lisa at [lmclaughlin@polsinelli.com](mailto:lmclaughlin@polsinelli.com) or Kathy at [kathyinwashington@hotmail.com](mailto: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? Write to [germansig@stlgs.org](mailto: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: [persch3@hotmail.com](mailto:persch3@hotmail.com) or mail it to: StLGS, Attn: G-SIG, #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140, St. Louis, MO 63143.