

# G-SIG FORUM #67

...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-stlouis@earthlink.net](mailto:gahs-stlouis@earthlink.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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## ***Special Extended Edition!***

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### **CRACKING THE CIVIL WAR BARRIER** by Gerald Perschbacher

I knew one of my ancestors was a soldier in the American Civil War. But I put off finding out about him until my research interests dipped into the mid-1800s. Then, a true mystery surfaced.

Approaching the Civil War is easier than most studies. Every five-year advance in the anniversary seems to bring a boost in the amount of information compacted in online sources. Do a search on any Civil War topic by battle or high-level officer and your mind might soon be swimming through a virtual sea of on-screen information waves.

If you suspect an ancestor to have served on the Union side for any stint of time from 1861 through 1865, then there is a potential wealth of information awaiting you in federal service records and pension files. There are some files on Confederate troops, too, but not as detailed.

I knew from an old book that Frederick G. Perschbacher was listed as a soldier who fought in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Illinois Infantry – basically a German American unit that was at the bloody engagements of Shiloh and Vicksburg. But I wanted to dig for more. Know the feeling?

Adam Eggemeyer, a friend associated with G-SIG, encouraged me to contact the National Archives at <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/civil-war/civil-war-genealogy-resources/index.html>. It's a great place to go. The site offers tips and lists a wonderful bibliography for in-depth study. But to make early progress you'll need some vital facts (date of birth, company name, place of residence, etc.). Using two forms off the site, I carefully added exact information as I knew it. You've got to be short and to the point on the form.

**What came back was a seven-page set** of pay-role "muster" cards that provided marginal information beyond what I knew. A couple weeks later an envelope with a stack of more than a hundred sheets of photocopied documents appeared in my mail box. I was happy to pay the \$25 for the pay-role search; I was ecstatic to pay the \$75 for the larger file, due to the immense amount of information contained therein.

What did I discover in the larger set of documents? Pay dirt!

It quickly became evident that there was a problem in 1894 when the five minor children of the late Frederick G. Perschbacher filed as survivors under his pension. Another person by the same name had already filed for his pension. Surprisingly, both men were claiming to have served in the same company!

Federal officials balked at the 1894 application. Lawyers and notaries became active in the case as affidavits and medical assessments flew to Washington, D.C., from St. Louis and from St. Clair County, Illinois.

What also triggered the paper wave was the death of Frederick as the sole parent of his five children. His mother was named as guardian but only after all sorts of legal positioning and a \$1,000 charge. That amount in 1894 would have been nearly astronomical for a commoner, which (the file indicates) is exactly what she was.

**The complete file traces the breakup of that family.** The children were sent to live with other relatives in order to pay for their room, board, and schooling. Involved was the half-sister of Frederick, who showed compassion for her half-sibling in two letters written by her while he was fighting declining health. Those letters were included in the file.

Frederick had been married three times, another forgotten fact. There was a child by each prior wife, but they died young. He and his third wife had five children, which he was hard pressed to support due to digestive illnesses linked to the war. Interestingly, a portion of the paperwork was filed through St. Louisan Lorenzo Dow Immell, a battle veteran and Medal of Honor recipient. This information came in a later e-mail from a Missouri historian.

There was a four-page, legal size affidavit from Frederick's 76-year-old mother telling how he was "christened" as Fritz G. Perschbacher and, as far as she was concerned, THAT was his real name.

Indeed, this surfaced in another document, whereby the soldier himself was heard to have said that his infantry unit in the Civil War had two Frederick G. Perschbachers, one being called “Fritz Number One,” the other “Fritz Number Two.” We can only surmise which was One and Two by reason of who enlisted first in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Illinois Infantry.

**Other lengthy affidavits** were included from his half brother in New Athens, Illinois, a 63-year-old barber and friend, a 61-year old hotel keeper, a justice of the peace, and a cooper who served in the 7<sup>th</sup> Illinois but “saw him several times” with the 43<sup>rd</sup> during the war.

Reports abounded from doctors, medical analysts, government officials, and family members. For a while there was speculation that someone was perpetrating fraud, since checks were being sent to Frederick G. Perschbacher and they were being cashed. But it wasn't THIS Fred. However, an official noted that it would be hard to say there was any fraud if the checks truly were cashed by a man with the same name, who served in the same infantry unit in the same war and was entitled to pension compensation. The idea of fraud was quickly nixed.

Death and birth certificates were included in the file, such was the depth of its intensity.

**As I read the pile of photocopied documents**, three sheets stood out from the rest. One described the two Freds: The first mentioned was 21 years older at the time of enlistment (late 1861). He was 5 feet, 11  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches tall with fair complexion, brown eyes, black hair, and was a farmer born in St. Clair County. The other Fred was 19, five feet and 6  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches tall, with fair complexion, blue eyes, and brown hair. He was a blacksmith born in Belleville. The same document lists three variants on surname spellings, all recorded in error: Pearspear, Parchiker, and Perschbesker.

The second most important document was blunt when it indicated a fourth derivation on spelling: Pierschbacher. The truth had to be told since that Declaration for Pension was a legal petition which meant misinformation could be subject to perjury; hence, the statements and details can be reliably established. The page mentioned that the younger of the Freds had served in Company G, 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri Infantry (under Col. Sigel), enlisting on April 22, 1861, for a three-month stint. Upon discharge later than expected (Sept. 4), he immediately joined the 43<sup>rd</sup> Illinois in its formative stage. That's when the confusion mounted since the other Frederick G. Perschbacher was in the 43<sup>rd</sup>.

What made matters worse for the younger “Fritz” in his advanced age in the 1890s was the fact that his service paperwork was not processed as normal for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri and the 43<sup>rd</sup> Illinois. Lists showed ONE Fred only. He was not listed as a private, even though he served. There is a telltale reference to him not worrying over the matter when he was young, for he told more than one

witness that he signed up to serve his country, not intending to receive a pension. That was a statement he regretted when his health took a dive.

**The final important document** traced his physical maladies during the war. Younger Fritz lost part of his left big toe in a pre-war work-related accident with heavy equipment. But while serving in the 43<sup>rd</sup> his toe developed a health problem and was amputated at the foot. He also had sustained a shot in the right leg and had various scratches attributed to the war. Fortunately, the bullet did not make contact with his leg bone, otherwise he most likely would have had the leg amputated. He contracted severe digestive difficulties while serving in Little Rock, Arkansas, and complained of eye problems in later life.

Two men with the same name in the same company during the same war -- imagine the confusion! What is especially intriguing is that they were both related as Perschbachers, which in itself is a rare name, and both were close enough in age to fight side by side.

But, where...?



## FINDING THE BATTLES...

Following the review of pension papers, I began a campaign to discover the engagements and significant battles in which both ancestors fought. In the process, I discovered one more Perschbacher served, but he was in Wisconsin. I discounted him from present research (he'll wait for a later day).

Searching online for the activities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri, it became clear I had to initially concentrate on the major Battle of Wilson's Creek (near Springfield, Missouri), one of the largest Western engagements of the war's early years.

**Three books became handy references:** a reprint of the 1883 book *An Account of the Battle of Wilson's Creek or Oak Hills*, written and authenticated by Holcombe & Adams (printed by The Green County Historical Society); *The Battle of Wilson's Creek* by Edwin C. Bearss (George Washington Carver Birthplace District Association, 1975), and *Wilson's Creek: The Second Battle of the Civil War and the Men Who Fought It* by William Garrett Piston and Richard W. Hatcher III (University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

Indeed, the younger Fritz signed up for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri at a recruitment rally held that day in downtown St. Louis, which was attended by a good number of German American young men from St. Clair County. Augmenting this with a touch of Internet savvy, I learned about Captain Dengler who rallied the German boys to join, himself being from the Belleville area. When he completed his stint with the 3<sup>rd</sup>, he immediately signed on with the 43<sup>rd</sup> Illinois on Sept. 4, the date of being mustered out of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Younger Fred did the same,

which matches what one book stated, that Dengler took some of the German soldiers with him from the Missouri unit.

**What is the point to all this information?** You, too, can dig into history with help from the pension records available through the federal government. Once you know the dates of enlistment and the movements of the unit in which your ancestor served, you can trace his steps from battle to battle, march to march, challenge to challenge. It makes for intriguing contemplation!



**WHEN I CONTACTED** the official librarian at the Wilson's Creek National Battlefield (part of the National Park Service), I was asked to scan and forward a few pertinent copies of pages from my ancestor's service record. Subsequently I was informed that he is one of two individuals discovered in the past 20 years that had been missing from their files. The "forgotten soldier" was finally remembered -- and just in time for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemoration (and reenactment) of the infamous battle. This additional information now upgrades all prior lists and (in a certain respect) obsoletes previous lists of soldiers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Missouri. That's the power of research! GP



**CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION** *by Gerald Perschbacher*

That's what the St. Louis Genealogical Society presented to Karl Daubel and Shirley Daubel, with fond wishes for each of them because of the many valuable and significant contributions they have made in the advancement of genealogy on a one-to-one basis. It's a treasured moment that will "keep giving," because it will warm the hearts of Karl and Shirley each time they realize how they are appreciated for their individual achievements in something they love to do creatively.

If you are a genealogical achiever, perhaps one day you will receive an unexpected degree of honor for your ongoing efforts. Or perhaps you know of a researcher who is an unsung hero but who would delight in a beam of limelight. Perhaps you can be the encourager of recognition.

How? As good as a special certificate can be, sometimes the little words of thanks and honest appreciation carry a lot farther when they are delivered in person. Kindergarten teachers of old didn't teach to impress parents. Those teachers taught in order to make a positive impact on younger generations. Little children honored their instructors with each enlightened expression and every smile displayed for each little success.





## HOW TO BE SHARP AS A TACK! by Gerald Perschbacher

Researching has its strengths and weaknesses. Research provides engagement as we immerse ourselves in a subject. But this often takes time precious time from our schedules. Hours may be spent finding one major bit of information such as an ancestral birth, death or illness.

Research can be expensive. Local research can be equated with the dollar sign for such a simple thing as gasoline for the car. Computer equipment and programs can be helpful but, alas, not always affordable. Many researchers stick with the heavy side of Internet usage and only occasionally study books.

Relatives may complain about the time and cost researchers are putting into genealogical and historical research. That discouraging word may be justified to a point, but if the researcher's passion is in high mode, it can be a psychological downer to have a loved one or friend douse that flame.

My advice: be sharp as a tack. Don't be slow toward opportunities and miss the chance to build up personal relationships that will enrich your association with family and friends. Encourage others in their work. Delight in their finds. Assist with ideas. Provide a few "how-to" ideas to ease them along.

Stay sharp in your search for information and facts that will flesh out your findings. But don't do it at the cost of lost human relationships. If you do, you may be short-changing your experiences. If your life is "out of round," you may not fully appreciate the life struggles of your ancestors.

Consider winning over the "special persons" in your life by enticing them into genealogical research. Help them with their early steps. Guide them along. Cheer them through the correction of supposed facts.



## TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

It is reported that Karen Ridgeway of G-SIG visited the Special Collections at the main country library (in Frontenac) and singled out books she believes are great as starting points when looking for ancestors in Germany:

*Beginners's Guide to Germanic Genealogy* by Lois Hemmeter Edwards STLCL # 929.1 E26B

*German – English Genealogical Dictionary* by Ernest Thode STLCL # 929.1 T449C  
*Decipher Germanic Records* by Edna M. Bentz STLCL # R943 B4791

*How to Read & Understand Meyers Orts-und Verkehrs-Lexikon des Deutschen Reichs* by Wendy K. Uncapher STLCL # 943 M613

*Meyers Orts- und Verkehrs-Lexikon* by Dr. E. Uetredht STLCL # 943 M613 v.1, 2, 3

*Germanic Genealogy* by Brandt, Bellingham, Cutkomp, Frye Lowe and Sternberg STLCL # 92.1 G373

*The German Research Companion* by Riemer, Minert, and Anderson STLCL # 929.1 R556G.

*Lands of the German Empire and Before* by Wendy K. Uncapher STLCL # 943.083 U54L

*Maps of the German Empire of 1871* by Jensen Publications STLCL # 943.083 J54M

*German Maps & Facts for Genealogy* by Uncaper & Herrick STLCL # 943 U54G



## WHAT'S THE SECRET TO DNA TESTING?

Newscasts and television series about murder mysteries often bring up the point of DNA testing. DNA (*Deoxyribonucleic Acid*) can verify the presence of a specific person involved in a murder scene or...from our perspective...can be utilized to trace the human ancestral code from generation to generation.

A television news report years ago showed how DNA was extracted from the bones of a long-gone 15,000 year-old man in Great Britain. DNA testing was done on local present-day inhabitants of the town near the discovery of the remains. Of all the people tested, one man was a match. Imagine, his ancestry jumped back thousands of years in that area!

In a subsequent television special on ancestry, I recall hearing how all the Jewish people in Europe were derived from three or four Jewish women, thanks to the tracing capability of DNA.

**G-SIG participants** tell me that *Trace Your Roots with DNA* by Megan Smolenyak and Ann Turner is helpful in understanding the subject. Some years ago, Turner gave a talk in St. Louis on DNA. The subject is close to her since she works with the government to establish DNA connections body identification of military personnel. It's common practice now for a soldier to have a DNA sample taken when he or she enters a service.

Karen Ridgeway recently recounted the tale of a child's shoe from the Titanic. DNA testing has now indicated the identity of the child!

Nancy von Behren says more details can be obtained from

[http://www.terry-family-historian.com/TerryDNAProject/Terry\\_Lineage\\_Group\\_1.htm](http://www.terry-family-historian.com/TerryDNAProject/Terry_Lineage_Group_1.htm)

and that a “lot of good information” is revealed about her “cousin James or Jim Terry...T16 our ancestor is Gideon Terry.

More information may be found at: <http://www.familytreedna.com>

“This is the best one to have your DNA done by. They are part of the National Geographic DNA testing all over the world,” says Nancy.



## 90% OF GENEALOGISTS CHOOSE FAMILY TREE DNA

Since April of 2000, Family Tree has become the leader in Genetic Genealogy. Why? The organization has been studious in advancing the science that enables genealogists around the globe to advance their scientific research into families. Family Tree DNA is guided by a scientific advisory board and experts at the University of Arizona Research Labs. The Arizona Research labs are led by Dr. Michael Hammer, one of the world's leading authorities in the field of Genetics.



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

+ **Higginson Books** (<http://www.higginsonbooks.com/>) Don't miss the opportunity to catch some discounts or obtain copies of old out-of-print books on order. The company offers a wealth of books from the 1800s and early 1900s, professionally reprinted (many are hardbound) and rendered in archival, long-lasting products. This supplier to libraries has a fine track record. Check their site for further details, or call (978) 745-7170. This company carries a long line of family histories, county and state histories, regional books, maps, and German-related topics (such as books Germans in the Revolutionary War). Prices are very attractive. Allow a few weeks for printing and delivery. *Mention you heard it from G-SIG!*



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