

G-SIG FORUM #89

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. (check the site at www.gahs-stlouis.org). This forum is for genealogical, educational, and historical information with fresh insights plus ideas on German traditions and ancestry. Dr. Gerald Perschbacher (LL.D.) is *FORUM* compiler and coordinator.

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Dynamite Map! Watch Europe 'Explode'!

By Gerald Perschbacher (LL.D.)

G-SIG's Fred Held was among the first in our bunch to discover the intriguing "advance" of European borders by watching history unfold at this site:

http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=f54_1337075813

More than a thousand years of border changes are shown in color with a bit of music to boot! That's right--the site begins with the year 1000 A.D. and moves forward. Individuals in Clusters have been fascinated by the on-screen antics (so to speak) of national endeavors that rose, then crumbled. At various times, Latvia was a powerhouse and Poland was a continental superpower. Colors really pop when the Holy Roman Empire (of the Germans) flashes its inner borders representing literally hundreds of noble lands.

Maps can reveal a wealth of knowledge, so don't grow tired of searching for good maps. And don't think that one map serves all your purposes. Here is what I suggest, having been won over by maps for a long time.

1) Find an outstanding and relatively current map book (intended for travel purposes). Nicely indexed, it could tell you the main roads of Germany and provide detailed information on major cities. Although you may have no intention of using it on a trip to Germany, you can appreciate your ancestral sites by becoming familiar with them in light of other population centers and towns. Also, realize that many of Europe's main roads were once ancient paths. Some of those were used by early Germanic tribes between the years 400 and 600 A.D. Others were built by Romans as trade routes. Some are even ultra-ancient such as mountain passes or valley routes that stretch to Stone Age times. Case in point: When General George Patton traversed the German countryside in the waning weeks of the Second World War, he aimed for the flat lands, which (by historical precedent) took him across the Rhein River and up to Frankfurt. That was an ancient route due to terrain.

2) **Find a walking/hiking map.** Phenomenal details usually are included, right down to elevation lines, tree types, and pathways that seldom ever appear on road maps since they are foot paths. Some of those paths may have been the walking routes of your ancestors and never developed into roads!

3) **Grab one or two historical atlases** on Germany and Western Europe. Go online or ask your book store about William R. Shepherd's historical atlas, which was reprinted in several editions for the American market (in English). A little research indicated that some of the excellent color maps in his book came from Germany. One comment stated that the original printer's plates were destroyed due to war, but that a set had been made for the American market. So what you likely will see are maps by Germans who strove for accuracy. See what I mean at: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shepherd-c-076.jpg> -- a prime example. albeit of France). If you search online, try to find free pictures of maps. But owning the entire book could provide hours of interesting research for you. I really recommend it, if maps are to your liking.

Bringing this article full circle, the site Fred Held suggested at the beginning does not show the years as time passes with border changes. Therefore, using your historical atlas can fill that void!

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Heading to the Revolution

G-SIG's Pat von zur Muehlen (patvonzurm@msn.com) recently pursued some online searching for "Muhlenburg County" and "saw that there is a discrepancy between the YouTube spelling and the Wikipedia entry, namely YouTube reads "Muhlenburg" and Wikipedia says "Muhlenberg." Wikipedia states that Muhlenberg County, Kentucky, is named after a Lutheran minister whose parents were immigrants

(See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhlenberg_County,_Kentucky).

The Wikipedia article began:

"John Peter Gabriel Muhlenberg (October 1, 1746 – October 1, 1807) was an [American clergyman](#), [Continental Army](#) soldier during the [American Revolutionary War](#), and political figure in the newly-independent United States. A [Lutheran](#) minister, he served in the [United States House of Representatives](#) and [United States Senate](#) from [Pennsylvania](#)."

She found more at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Peter_Muhlenberg.

"Peter Muhlenberg's biography is amazing," said Pat. "The entire Wikipedia article is quite extensive. Then I wondered if Gerry Perschbacher knew about this

man because he served as a Lutheran minister, even though he was ordained in the Anglican Church."

So, Dr. Perschbacher put on his thinking hat and replied: "Indeed, Pat...the Peter Muhlenberg you referenced (and his brother – both were Lutheran pastors) are representative of the earlier efforts of William Penn and associates in successfully enticing Germans along the Rhein to come to Pennsylvania and other settlement points in the colonies. This included Peter's ancestors. When Germans moved to America, pastors usually came with them. Faith was very important to the people and spiritual support (along with schooling) was a must in their lives. If pastors did not come along, then new pastors were educated to meet the need. Sending young men back to Germany for that education was still in vogue in the 1800s.

"To help America stand on its own feet in our area (religiously speaking) Lutheran and Protestant (Reformed) seminaries were established by 1850 in St. Louis (Concordia Seminary & Eden Seminary)."

The information made a Revolutionary War reference, also.

"The connection with Lafayette's command at Yorktown is interesting, since I have made an apparent ancestral connection of mine (Braxmeier) to one of the German troops from Hessen-Darmstadt who fought among the Deux Ponts (Zweibruecken) troops who served WITH Washington and Lafayette at Yorktown. Yes, there were Hessen troops on both sides of that revolution," Gerry responded.

"The Anglican connection is logical since the entire church in England was offered to Martin Luther by Henry VIII (in the 1500s) when he abolished the Catholic Church holdings from his kingdom. All Luther had to do was sanctify Henry's new marriage. Luther said it was not a proper union in the eyes of God and declined. Hence, the Anglican church arose – fashioned after Luther's pattern during the Reformation. Even today, there are strong similarities between Lutherans and Anglicans."

Peter and his brother are revered less as early Lutheran influences and more as patriots even in the eyes of Lutherans. "What many historians forget is that America was heavily Protestant in its formative years since many religious groups left the oppression of Church and State in Europe and carved out their futures from the forests of America."

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More about Duden's Followers

In the previous edition we addressed the travel of German immigrants to the Midwest and what their trip entailed. Now we examine their settling down.

The letters of Hermann Steines are intriguing as slices of the past. On December 16, 1833, he wrote this from his new home in St. Louis. "All of us except two of our children suffered from seasickness, but when we left the ship we were in better health than when we started on our journey."

The trip by sea wasn't altogether boring. "We had a great deal of diversion on the boat." Music was supplied by musicians. Preachers spoke almost on the satirical side. There were "jests of all sorts" on the ship as the past was left behind.

The Germans trekked across land to the Ohio River. Due to low water level, small boats were the only type to use successfully. So some immigrants broke off from large groups and boated their way to the destination. Others waited until the water level was higher. Many went by way of Pittsburgh.

It was October 6 when the Steines group arrived in St. Louis. Hermann called the movement of Germans in late 1833 as a "rush" to Missouri. The book by Gottfried Duden was the cause. His positive encouragement for settlement in Missouri became a best seller, especially up and down the Rhein River.

Farmers did not have it easy unless they bought land already partially developed -- which meant trees were cleared for planting and at least one dwelling had been constructed. "Efficient carpenters, blacksmiths, shoemakers and tailors do a flourishing business, as does also a baker if he chances to locate in a good neighborhood."

Food seemed reasonable if you negotiated. Two hind quarters of venison could be obtained for 25 cents which calculates in buying power to about \$7 today. A large wild turkey cost as much. "Hunting and fishing are absolutely free," he noted -- something that was no longer true in German lands. Catfish were plentiful as river critters went, and Hermann caught a 50 pounder! In effect, free fish!

What was St. Louis like? It was "only in its infancy. At present (1833) it has a population of 12,000 souls, but it has no street illumination, nor regular sidewalks. Cows, swine and horses are allowed to run at large." We can imagine what odors prevailed when animals died in the street!

The land around St. Louis was "being bought up quickly," and little wonder since the city marked the farthest westward big city and was a jump-off point.

Communications was challenging and "ignorance of the English language is the greatest difficulty and hindrance an immigrant has to contend with."

In a postscript, Hermann Steines added that "all of us who emigrated from Bremen are getting along well in the New World, in fact we are doing better than in Germany." Still, a period he termed "misery" came to most during the first year. It was worth it, though, since "America can afford more pleasures than Germany."

He cautioned friends and relatives back in Germany to be honest with future travelers. Hermann believed no one should have left Germany without \$500 to \$1,000 in his pocket. Every dollar in 1833 had the buying power of 28 dollars today, so that meant (comparatively speaking) that a settler should have the equivalent of \$14,000 to \$28,000 to get set up and weather the hardships and financial costs of the first year!

By the way, William G. Bek translated the Steines letters in the first half of the 20th century, opening the eyes of researchers as never before!

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RootsWeb Message Boards

By Fred Held, Librarian *St. Louis North Family History Center (Hazelwood)*

A part of the RootsWeb group of resources are their support of mailing lists and message boards, two different ways of posting queries and getting information about the families you are researching, sometimes from a cousin. These systems are not German specific, but are useful for research anywhere in the world. This tract deals with the message board system.

Electronic message boards are likened to posting a message on a message board anywhere: you post the message and anyone who happens along may read it and respond. The RootsWeb Message Boards are divided into several groups, but the most important ones to researchers are surname oriented and regional oriented. The regional message boards may be for a country or a specific city. The researcher can quickly find if the surname or region under study being researched already has a message board by clicking on the "Message Boards" tab on any RootsWeb webpage and following the information.

boards.rootsweb.com

If you find one doesn't exist for your subject, the researcher may apply for one to be created. It should be noted that if the researcher requests a new one, they will automatically be the moderator for that board.

If one already exists, the researcher has a couple things to do. First they should search the messages already there to see if their family or region is already

discussed, regardless of when. (Many of these Message Boards were started in the late 1990s.) If they find a message of interest, they can attach a reply to the message. If the original poster had checked a certain box, an email message will be sent to them that someone has attached a reply to their post. If the message the researcher is replying to is several years old, the original poster may have a stale email address and may not receive the message.

Finding no relative messages previously posted, the researcher can post a new query. It is recommended that the subject line be a special format: **Given name SURNAME: Date: Place**. Messages with subjects like "Help" or "Family Genealogy" are many times ignored by experienced researchers. Do not post queries like "looking for Muellers in Bavaria." The researcher's query should post sufficient information that the specific family might be found: full names, dates, places, religion, spouses, parents, and children. It is also recommended that the first time the surname is used it should be in all caps. Regional queries should be restrained to that region. If a response is made, do not assume they are a family member of yours, but simply researchers that are willing to help.

If you are new to the RootsWeb Message Board system, the system will request that you register (free). Registration is primarily to maintain a current email address for you in the system, but also includes the option of posting a profile, if you wish to include one. If you maintain a current registration and change your email, the new email address will be automatically associated with all your old postings.

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SHARE the G-SIG FORUM! That's right -- if you know of someone who would be interested in reading this edition, why not FORWARD it to them? It only takes a moment to do and you may be praised by your friend or relative! This could open a new door of opportunity for others.

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