

G-SIG FORUM#23

...from the German Special Interest Group. G-SIG is an effort of the St. Louis Genealogical Society and the German American Heritage Society, St. Louis, Mo.

This communication is a forum for educational, historical and genealogical information with fresh insights and ideas on German traditions and ancestry. Gerald Perschbacher, Group Leader for G-SIG, 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 germansig@stlgs.org .



FUN WITH THE PHONE 'BOOK'

By Gerald Perschbacher

You owe it to yourself to get serious and have some fun. You can do both by playing with results from the German phonebook online at *Das Telephonbuch* (<http://www.dastelefonbuch.de/>).

I plowed a variety of surnames into the site with some fascinating results. For "Perschbacher," there were 88 telephone listings representing 234 persons living in 27 counties or towns. The areas with the highest numbers were listed in descending order (9 in Darmstadt-Dieberg down to 3 in Limburg-Weilburg). A colorized map of present-day Germany coded the areas by reason of "Perschbacher density." The rating ran from yellow (for 1 to 9), up to red (for more than 40). Each *Kreis* (county) was shown, with colors appropriately selected and placed.

After I entered a few other surnames relating to my lineage, I added some from my wife's genealogy. The name "Maschmeier indicated 139

listings representing 370 persons in 38 areas, from 24 in Minden-Lubbecke to 3 in Grafschaft-Bentheim.

I began entering the names of people I have known for many years. When the name “Schmidt” was entered, as you may have predicted, nearly all of Germany was in red. There are 204,634 listings in the phonebook, representing 545,690 persons. Heaviest concentration is in Hamburg (3,648), then Munich (2,303), next Cologne (1,840), and Frankfurt on the Main (1,575).

More information was included about “Schmidt.” It was noted that the name generally was Smede before 1300, Smid around 1306, Schmit by 1491, Smidt around 1500, Schmidt by 1588, and that other versions are Schmidtke, Schmiedel, Schmitz, and Schmittat.

“Maier” with 38,031 phone listings (representing 104,416 persons) is heavily concentrated in southern Germany (Bavaria and surrounding territories) and along the Rhine. Variations include Meyger, Meiger, and Meyer. So I then entered “Meyer.” Interestingly, there are 89,897 listings representing 239,725 persons. Nearly all of Germany was in red!

Nearly as red as “Meyer” was the map showing “Hoffmann” (76,815 telephone listings for 204,840 persons, with the greatest concentration in Berlin with 3,513).

Some names I entered were extremely low. “Braxmeier” scored 76 listings for 202 persons. If you want an even lower response, try “Wittbracht.”

The fun part was seeing initial results. The serious part followed with some thought.

In my case, Perschbachers tended to stay near their area of origin. I would guess this holds for many surnames in the areas of former West Germany, since it was more stable than the eastern portion. If this is true, then we could see some patterns on the maps relating to points of origin.

If a map has one *Kreis* (county) in red and others in lesser colors surrounding it, then it is logical that the surname had its origin in that red *Kreis*. It is a fun undertaking with a purpose. For researchers, it can begin to reduce the field of concentration to a manageable size.

That is, except for popular names like Maier, Meyer, Schmidt, and Hoffmann. Oh, well....

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Can you help...? From: NRemm10335@aol.com:

“I am looking for information about Wilhelm Vogel. He controlled immigration from Borgholzhausen to American in the mid 1800s.”

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EVEN MORE FUN WITH HISTORY!

Between 1815 and 1866, Germans debated over the nature and form of government and administration. It was an intellectual controversy that erupted into political conflict at various times. Among uprisings were the widely known rebellion of 1848 and the lesser uprising of 1832. As a result, many of our ancestors left for the New World.

Should Central Europe be organized as a confederation of sovereign states or as one German nation-state? That was a major point of contention during that time. Neighboring nations seriously considered the impact either formation would have had on their security and economy.

There was a second question: What about popular participation in the government of different German states or even a united German nation-state? Should a government be authoritarian and absolutist in character? Or was it better to be parliamentary and constitutional in nature?

A third issue related to what was called the emancipation of the Jews. This included equal rights, the nature of citizenship, and participation in government.

This and much more information can be discovered at the German Federal Archive, now online with tens of thousands of documents and items of history. Information about 150 years of Germanic history is included. There are thousands of photos, too. It's free online, at the touch of a computer button. "The history of the German Democratic Republic is especially well documented by the holdings of the former East German wire service, the *Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst*. Images from the federal government's press and information office also provide a comprehensive documentation of West German history," says an official.

Search functions can locate photographs by keyword, source, location, and date. Photos can be stored for later use. Anyone can search for photographs and view thumbnails or watermarked copies. However, downloads cost a fee.

It's impressive. You may want to try it yourself:
[Learn More About German History through the German Historical Institute's Online Project: "German History in Documents and Images"](#)

Also see: <http://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/>
or [German Federal Archive – Online Image Database](#)



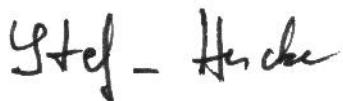
WHEN HOLY GHOST U.C.C. CLOSED ITS DOORS...

As soon as Lansing Hecker of the German American Heritage Society told me about the closure of a small congregation in south St. Louis in August of 2007, I took immediate note since my great-great-grandfather and others from his village in Hessen-Darmstadt had founded the congregation upon their arrival in late 1833. This was the first German congregation in St. Louis, marking the first major influx of Germans to this area. News of the closure reverberated to Germany, and the following letter was generated. I presented it preceding the last service of the congregation. Here are key excerpts from that letter:

“As pastors, elders, and board of the protestant parish of Schaafheim, we send you hearty greetings.... The history of Your parish goes back even to 1833 and the records about the wedding of the two Schaafheimers Christian Zimmermann and Barbara Trippel in January 1834, witnessed by Johann Michael Perschbacher. Since these times we have a common history of German-American relationships. For long times at least prayers have been a spiritual bridge between our parishes and especially the family-members, departed in the New and the Old World. Lacking the modern ways of electronic communication, this bridge may sometimes have been the only way of being together in one mind.

“We are sorry that today the last worship takes place at your church. By this a long history of a place of Christian faith comes to an end. But as the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 11:1-5, in the spiritual world of God there is no final end without a new chance of a new start. Rooms and churches, cultures and songs, even the kind of praying or translating the Bible may change, but the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ will never change and never end.

“So it may comfort you in the last hours of using your church, that we are together in this right moment, praying for the growth of your faith....”



Pastor Stefan Hucke

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WHAT MAKES 'A GERMAN'? By Gerald Perschbacher

If “clothes make the man,” then what makes a German?
Something he wears or eats, drinks or smokes?
Something he says, remembers or jokes?
Something he hears, or places he goes?
Something he wants, or small things he stows?

A German is woman or man or a child,
The size does not count, neither frown nor a smile,
For Germans are Germans wherever they are
In plane, train, or lifeboat, and, yes, in a car.
Germans are Germans whatever they do,
Even saluting the Red-White-and-Blue.

Ingrained in traditions and sensible, too,
The German works hard, is reliable, true
To family and friends and co-workers, for sure,
Fun-loving, yet stoic, and hopefully pure
From vices that lessen his senses and might
And draw him from pathways that lead far from right.

If “good makes a man,” then what makes a German?
It’s in what he thinks, how he lives, and determines
To make his life count, working hard, amid struggles--
Sometimes succeeding, then conquering troubles,
Sometimes in laughter, and dancing, and song,
Sometimes in tears, that he sheds the day long—
But always a German, with faith, hope, and love
For those he adores and his God high above.



PLAN AHEAD!

As the months progress, have you progressed in your understanding of German history, the language, geography, or research aids that are available? What will you do with your immediate future—wait for answers to drop in your lap, or will you actively seek them? Success might be closer than you think—reach for it!



EXCHANGE! Comments, ideas, and requests from those in G-SIG:

+ **Art Schlegel** [vonschleg@sbcglobal.net] seeks information about:

name	relationship	birth	age	birthplace
Schlegel Ernst	H	March 1858	42	Germany
Schlegel Amelia	W	Oct. 1860	39	Germany
Schlegel Lizzie	D	March 1883	17	Germany
Schlegel Ida	D	April 1884	16	Germany
Schlegel Otto	S	Sept. 1885	14	Missouri

They may have arrived in New Orleans from Germany in the 1880s

+ **Marlene Olson** [genealogy800@yahoo.com] says, "I have traced the father of Letter A. Lawrence Shook to naturalizing in 1770 in Lancaster, Penn. His residence was Frederick Co, Md. Residency was 7 yrs. This puts him, immigrating at 1763 to North America. Naturalization was under Charles II of Great Britain, France, & Scotland. He would have become a British Subject or perhaps a Loyalist. He was of Moravian religion." More information is requested.

+ **Wanted:** "The German Church on the American Frontier 1840-1866" (printed in 1939) by Carl E. Schneider; contact Gerald Perschbacher at persch3@hotmail.com or call (314) 849-5249.

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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.

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Have some great ideas for the G-SIG FORUM? Any topics to suggest?
Want to share your findings in order to help others in their search?

Then submit your material to germansig@stlgs.org

or mail it to:

StLGS, Attn: G-SIG; #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140; St. Louis, MO 63143

