

G-SIG FORUM #27

...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 .

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ONLINE ANSWERS

Helen Schneider (hersnyder@mchsi.com) is ecstatic over discoveries online at www.stenvorde.de . Her research took a step forward via [Auswanderungen im 19. Jahrhundert](#) .

The site is in German and English, thus maximizing its impact.

What Helen discovered might await you, too. If you find the village or town of your ancestors, check for a Web site. Simply do a search under the name of the location. If you do not know the name of the location, but have a general idea of the region or territory, play around with the names of various towns. Check their sites. You might find the names you want. Of course, these may not be part of your direct family, but this may be a start in the right direction. By contacting some Germans carrying the name you are researching, you might strike a vein of information on your line.

Helen is searching. Are you?

If you cannot research online, find someone who can help do it. Ask them to print off the pertinent information for you and then carry on your research.

If you can go online, click on the sites shown above. Trace the facts and information. See what is possible online. The experience could help you understand your own lineage and how to dig it up.

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G-SIG AND THE 'Yahoo! Group Site'

Reminder: Have you checked the G-SIG Yahoo! Group site? Through it, you can correspond with other members who have signed up to participate in this online GermanSpecialInterest group. You may find someone researching in your hometown or a family historian seeking ancestors with the same surnames that are on your family tree. Also, if you are new at German research, it's a great place to ask a question. This online group will increase in usefulness and value as more sign up to participate.

To join, click on the link below:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/GermanSpecialinterest/>

Then click on the "Join This Group" button and fill in the required fields. If the above link does not work, just go to www.yahoo.com. Next click on "Groups" (in the list on the left of the screen). Then under "Find a Yahoo! Group," enter *germanspecialinterest* (all one word) and click "Search." When the page appears, click the "Join This Group" button. Now follow the prompts to complete the registration process. Good luck!

There are no fees involved. Once you have registered, you may post messages, ask questions, send in a link to a neat Web site, or connect with a fellow researcher. Questions? kathyinwashington@hotmail.com

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HIDDEN DETAILS IN THE NAME...?

Serious research involves the study of German names. For months I wrestled with the meaning of family last names, places, and changes over the centuries. My progress was aided by several books. That's still the case when I wonder about "new" names that surface. Foremost of these helps is the *Dictionary of German Names* (published by the Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies). It's a hardcover book by [Hans Bahlow](#) and translated by [Edda Gentry](#).

What is especially noteworthy is how entries list areas of Germany where a name frequently was used, and the early dates of usage.

Pat von zur Muehlen states that a librarian referred her to Max Kade Institute, saying it was “perhaps the most highly regarded organization for German American studies.”

No argument there.

Herr Kade was born in Schwabisch Hall, Baden Württemberg. If you want to know more about Max Kade and his accomplishments, and if you know enough German to work your way through the sites, you may wish to do your own exploring at:

+ http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Max_Kade

+ [Literatur von und über Max Kade](#) im Katalog der [Deutschen Nationalbibliothek](#)

+ [Max-Kade-Häuser](#) in Deutschland und Österreich

For genealogical references, spend some time exploring:

<http://csumc.wisc.edu/mki/Genealogy/1.GenealogyFrames.htm>

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SEND THE RIGHT CARD

Charles Almstedt (cralmstedt@yahoo.com) enjoys the FORUM. He resonates strongly with one recent point: not treating German researchers as "disposable."

He says: “I had good fortune with a man I found in Germany who was retired and had the time for research (for a very fair fee). He lives in Hildesheim and went to Everode, where my folks were from, to meet with a banker who served as the ‘town Genealogist.’ He wound up sending copies of Almstedt and Strottmann family histories from 1670.”

Charles also sent a letter to the Rathaus (town hall) of Almstedt. His request was answered “with an offer to send the hardbound *850 years... ALMSTEDT...1151-2001* anniversary book.”

Charles had “a bunch of old German” translated. “The point of all this is that I go to Hallmark in November and get enough GERMAN LANGUAGE Christmas cards to send to my friends. It's a once-a-year tribute to them, and I know they enjoy the thought.”

Good point, indeed! With the advancement of Internet options, I would think there is also the possibility of sending an e-card in German. Either way, it's a nice way to say, “Hallo,” as the Germans say. GP

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CONVERSING WITH GERMANS

The first time I went to a bank in Germany, I wasn't sure the teller would understand English or that I would understand sufficient German to make the transaction. The task was simple enough. I just wanted to convert dollars into Euros.

In German, I asked if the teller understood English. He nodded, then we began to converse. He was cordial. The experience was pleasant.

On my second trip to the same bank, two years later, the identical gentleman seemed less able—or willing—to communicate in English. If I see him a third time, a few more years down the road, what will he recall about his use of English?

As with any language, its good use comes from practice.

I understand there is less of an American military presence in Germany today. Military personnel became the greatest encouragement for Germans to speak English. Why? It was a matter of trade, income, and business.

Many residents in former West Germany still know English. Some speak it well, others know it casually. What will happen as the American influence wanes? Will Germans who once knew English become lax in its use? Will English fade as a favored language in Germany?

Perhaps. This is why I enjoy conversing and writing in English. It's good for my friends "over there." It gives them an opportunity to keep their minds sharp on English sentence patterns and word usage. In a certain respect, I suppose I am doing them a favor.

However, I enjoy tossing in some German words and sentences to let them feel more comfortable around me, and to help me learn my family's former tongue. Makes me feel I am in touch with my ancestry.

So, don't apologize for not writing or conversing in German. You may be helping a German remember English! GP



THREE DOLLARS WELL SPENT

I can't recall the book sale, but a short time ago I bought a \$3 used book on "Beautiful Germany." Published by Bassermann in 1995, it is a hardbound, 256-page book with a wonderful compilation of color photographs and captions.

Not only is it a fine representation of Germany, but it offers something beyond most books. The captions are printed in three languages: German, English, and French. There is a lot of history mentioned, too.

Now, those of us who know French and English have a double opportunity to enjoy such a book and to improve our German in the process. Truly, having a short text printed in German and English allows for us to comprehend words and thought patterns.

If you visit a used bookstore or book dealer, ask about German books. You might find a similar \$3 bargain!

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TIMES WERE CHANGING...

by Gerald Perschbacher

...in Germany in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Political unrest grew in many parts of Europe. There was a rebellion in Frankfurt-on-the-Main in 1832 involving artisans and craftsmen, and this "put down" by authorities carried repercussions elsewhere.

For malcontents, America offered open land and promises for success. The last Indian War east of the Mississippi ended in 1832 and land was up for purchase. St. Clair County in Illinois and the St. Louis area in Missouri became prime destinations for settlers, considered pioneers prior to 1850.

It was not cheap to travel to America. Communities placed a value on each emigrant. That amount was based on current and potential usefulness to the community, plus any debts that existed.

In the 1800s, the wave of German settlers increased yearly from 1830 onward. Most claimed modest wealth or had saved sufficient funds to leave Germany. The sale of land and belongings brought more cash for the journey. Still, settlers knew there would be added costs in America. Land was not free. Neither were basic tools and necessities, such as a home and clothing. A high number of settlers would initially find a place to stay with family or friends who had preceded them to the New World. Others could stay in a hotel or boarding house. Work was not a certainty, so a good number became craftsmen. St. Louis needed cobblers (shoe makers) to supply transients on their westward journey. Bakers were needed to meet the food demand.

Early newcomers came by sail. Later, steam-powered boats with auxiliary sails traversed the Atlantic. The journey across the ocean could take many days, even weeks. Even so, there was a rush to America.

Germany had become poor and open to conflict. Overpopulation made it so. Military confrontations added to the stress. From 1825 to 1835, there were about 50,000 (German) emigrants going to America. And from 1836 to 1845 that number rose to 200,000. In 1854 this figure was achieved

in a single year. (source: *200 years of German-American Relations*, Thomas Piltz, general editor, Heinz Moos Verlag, Munich, 1976).

As the number of travelers increased, passage became harder. "The passage was an ordeal," says the same book, "at least for the great majority, who could not afford cabin class. All that remained for them was steerage, a space without light or air between hold and upper deck, which had only been sketchily converted for the accommodation of human beings."

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EXCHANGE! G-SIG *comments, ideas, & requests:*

+ **Idea:** Check antique malls and shops for old German recipe books. You might enjoy cooking and eating like your ancestors!

+ **Idea:** Rent a DVD of a German movie with a German soundtrack. Watch the subtitles as the people speak German. It's an interesting way in learning more about the language.

+ **Pat von zur Muehlen** shares information about a book on life in old Germany. The title: *The Bürgermeister's Daughter*, by Steven Ozment (dealing with a scandal in the 16th century in Germany). Published by St. Martin's, 1996. For details, check this interesting location on the Web: <http://www.writersreps.com/book.cfm?BookID=283> or check with your local library of bookstore. You may also check the commentary at this site: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9C0CE6DB1039F931A15756C0A960958260> .

+ **Christel Handel** (ckhandel@mac.com) knows how you can brush up on German or become a beginner in the language. Ask her about classes at St. Louis Community College in Forest Park, including sessions and costs. Classes can be for credit or audit. "We have a lot of fun with culture, German food, artifacts in the Art Museum, and ...do serious learning." Christel may be reached by phone at (636) 537-2977.

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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