

G-SIG FORUM #29

...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. (www.gahs-stlouis.org).

This communication is a forum for genealogical, educational, and historical 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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Recent Tips Can Benefit Researchers

Doesn't matter if it comes from a Yahoo Group Site, by phone, through the mail, or at a meeting. Information is information, period. What G-SIG offers is the chance for questions to surface, advice to be given, and ideas to be shared.

See if YOU can benefit from some of the tips and suggestions.

Want to check an old census for surnames? Copies of census reports are available from 1850 on up, at the St. Louis County Library on Lindbergh, just south of Clayton Road. If you want to copy a page, be ready to deposit 20 cents for up to an 11 inch by 17-inch photocopy. It's a little tricky to find the special collections area for genealogy, but ask when you get to the library.

You will need to deposit your coat, purse, and certain other items before you enter that area. Come with some pocket change for a locker, too.

Some researchers try to spread their subjects. "If I'm looking for Schmidlap in the census, I might as well look for Kadinckler, too, since both are in my lineage," you might reason. Yes, that could work. But where does it stop? If you trace your mother's line and your father's family, then back through their parents, then grandparents, soon you will be tracing eight or more names. That might overextend your energy and time. It may be better to stick with one line and

take it as far back as possible, then go to another. After all, you can always come back and revise your early findings.

This process reminds me of something a professor told his class in college. The subject was Biblical archaeology. Sometime early in the 20th century, several top layers of the Holy Land city of Megiddo were entirely removed in excavation. Sounded like a fine way to do the work and uncover the past in a panoramic manner. But problems with that type of work became evident. As the old way of digging and recording gave way to more scientific methods, the entire top layers were lost to those (and future) techniques. Today even the soil can be examined for ancient pollen, which tells scientists what dominant crops were growing at that time. Wisely, a “dig” is kept to a shaft or marked section in one particular area, then gleaned for all it’s worth. The rest is saved for the future, in order to do a better job.

Apply that to your research. Learn what you can on one, maybe two, surnames, then when you’ve taken that as far as possible, jump to two other surnames. Study techniques you learned on the first two surnames may bring greater results on the next two. OK, so it’s not exactly compared to the Megiddo situation, but the idea is clear. Save some work for the future, when you “are better at it.” **Here are more tips:**

+ By checking the census files, you cover a family’s progress decade by decade. As one G-SIGer said, “Fill in with other records.”

+ Once you know the county in which your ancestor had lived, then look for books on that county’s history. You might be surprised to find your surname mentioned in such books!

+ Produce a half-piece of paper that lists your basic questions and information you have found. Don’t be too detailed. Print your name, address, e-mail address, and phone number(s). When you attend a genealogical event, conference, or library, have a few copies of your sheet handy to give to individuals who might help.

+ Catholic Web provides free resources at www.catholicweb.com .

+ German place names are in the gazetteer, "*Meyers Orts"-und Verkehrs - Lexihon des Deutschen Reichs*. The book lists information on the city, post office, churches, railroad, and more. Large libraries (including the St. Louis County Library) have a copy in special collections.

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Americans Can Travel to Wittenberg, but... ...what do you do if research is one of your goals? Can you simply walk in unannounced? Yes, you could—but don't expect a warm welcome.

In truth, Wittenberg is in the former East German sector, which is still recovering from the Cold War mentality. Citizens are not as willing to be helpful or as cheerful as other Germans.

If you are heading to THE Wittenberg of Reformation fame, you will see the name "**Lutherstadt,**" which means an officially recognized city with a connection to **Martin Luther.** Wittenberg is still a depressed community except for the tourist area around the Castle Church and other sites down the main street.

There is a visitor's center in Wittenberg, across from the Castle Church. Upstairs in that center is an office that schedules Lutheran pastors to spend a few weeks in Wittenberg, preaching and teaching American tourists. Someone in that office may be able to offer suggestions. I am not sure if this project runs throughout the year, but it is possible. Ask at the visitor's center. *By all means, make contact before you go to Europe.* It could maximize your time and experience.

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Did you Hear? Pat von zur Muehlen recently commented: “You have more than once mentioned the fact that folks in Germany are as interested in finding connections with descendants of relatives who emigrated to the U.S.A. as we here are in locating kin in Germany. I came across a **good example** of this. It's the Web site of a young German man who lists genealogical research as one of his hobbies.

His Web site contains lists of names of emigrants from Westphalia and gives the areas where they settled. St. Louis and nearby cities appear frequently.

Here is the link:”

http://www.westphalia-emigration.de/Me_and_family/me_and_family.html

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A Little Digging can Take You Far!

Without spilling all the beans, I've got news for about two friends that might help you, too. Let's call my friends Loren & Joyce. Let's say their last name is Landergut. They have barely begun to study their lineage. Loren jokes about finding some scoundrel in his family's past. He doesn't base it on family legend—just his idea. Well, after a tiny bit of research in old church files and online, these are my results.

In a church entry in America, reference was made to Landergut's home village. "The town's name is Burgoberbach, near Ansbach in Bavaria. There is a Web site printed in English, which you may want to investigate:

http://64.233.179.104/translate_c?hl=en&u=http://www.burgoberbach.de/&prev=/search%3Fq%3Dburgoberbach%26hl%3Den%26rlz%3D1T4ADBF_enUS232US237%26sa%3DX

"It might be fun to see if anyone with your surname still lives in that area. A simple question in English would probably bring a reply. Germans like to know where "their people" went in America.

"Loren, I don't think you have to worry about your first Americanized ancestor being a cast out from Germany or a horse thief (Ha!). I know you have joked about this, but the time when your ancestor came to America was in the early 1840s, from what I can tell. At that time, many emigrants had to settle with their community, pay all debts, and dole out extra for whatever the community determined their loss was worth. In other words, the community levied the payment as to the potential if the person had stayed in Germany. Your ancestor evidently paid the bill, so to speak, and left with all the proper documents and approvals necessary. If it had happened differently, he would not have been allowed to leave. Or, he would have changed his name when he came to America, to escape being traced. He would have taken a very common name such as Meyer, Acker, Huber, or Schmidt. So you might have some fun toying with the Web site and fishing for information.

"A lot of times old church record books still exist in villages. This could be the case with Burgoberbach. If so, you may find more ancestors than what you could imagine! If you ask through the Web site, you might be amazed at the findings."

Time will tell.

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Which Scheske?

Thanks to Carl Scheske for sharing the following information. He's searching for his great-grandfather August Scheske. What he shows is much more than facts about one person. He shows what can be uncovered to enhance research.

Here goes: Per Microfilm 929.173 United States National Passenger Lists of Vessels, Reel 500 National Archive. Passenger list Dec 1, 1860 - Mar 31, 1866, Box #50, Record #382 for the ship Schlosser. Passenger #26 was A. Scheske, 28 years old. Country of birth – Prussia. Last legal residence – Chlebowo. Country claiming allegiance – Prussia. Occupation – farmer -- (He arrived on Dec. 27, 1860). He reports that he put Chlebowo, Prussia, into Google and got interesting results.

You can play around with village and town names and strike pay dirt, too. It takes patience, a little effort, and some serious thinking.

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German Pole or Prussian?

Let's keep on this subject. Joseph made a good point via the Web site POSEN-L@rootsweb.com. The subject was German Poles in Chlebowo

Joseph says, "In my 35 years of research, those people I have seen who identified themselves as 'German Pole' almost always came from what was Prussia where German was spoken. That part of the continent can be identified with appropriate maps." He adds that the Catholic Archdiocese of Gniezno/Poznan covered a major section of Prussia that, many years ago, was called Provinz Posen. Joseph located three towns with the name Chlebowo (as noted in the Catholic directory of the Archdiocese of Gniezno/Poznan dated 1888.) He says, "There is an extremely high probability that these three towns existed in 1897 -- only nine years later."

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Little Gifts for Germans 'Over There'

Heading to Germany? Sending a thank-you box to a friend who helped with research? Then consider some options.

+ If your German friend can read English, give books on German-American history. + Find topical German books printed in America (select a subject to their liking; these can be found at used book stores or sales).

+ Old hymnals (in good shape!) make a nice gift. + Make copies of documents relating to their German emigrants who settled in the U.S.A.

- + Consider books dealing with their people in the New World (even genealogical books with lists). + Lapel pins are prized by some Germans.
- + Items made by German immigrants in the New World are liked, too.
- + Very simply send some current maps of the area where your ancestor settled (reference material).

If you are hosted for a week or two, surprise your host family with a little something every day or every other day. Germans are not necessarily collectors nor do they crave to own like many Americans, but they adore the spirit of receiving.

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

+ **Charles Willman** (winemake@verizon.net) wants to research the land records in the Landesarchiv NRW Staatsarchiv in Munster. Before he proceeds, he would like to talk to someone who has researched these land records and wonders if these list owners in chronological order.

+**Request: Gloria Cingano** (gcingano@sbcglobal.net) is researching Jacob Keller and Marie/Mary (Neff/Nef/Naef) Keller of Switzerland; has a lot of St. Louis information, but no exact point of origin. How can she narrow her Swiss search? Were there immigrant organizations that kept records of origin regarding Swiss immigrants?

+ **Help John Maurath** (maurath1@juno.com) **identify a Civil War soldier playing a zither.** View photographs at <http://www.zither.us/?q=node/13> .

+ **Idea from Pat von zur Muehlen:** learn about Francis Daniel Pastorius:

<http://www.ushistory.org/germantown/people/pastorius.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Daniel_Pastorius

He was born in Sommerhausen, Franconia, now in modern Bavaria. Read more at this link: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franconia>

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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. *Not yet on the e-mail list for the G-SIG FORUM? Write to patvonzurm@msn.com .* ***(Note: All copyright privileges for this FORUM are reserved by the compiler; no item is to be duplicated or distributed without permission.)***

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Have great idea for the G-SIG FORUM? Submit your material to germansig@stlgs.org or mail it to: StLGS, Attn: G-SIG, #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140, St. Louis, MO 63143.