

G-SIG FORUM #4

This is the fourth communication from the German Special Interest Group. G-SIG is a collaborative effort of the St. Louis Genealogical Society and the German American Heritage Society both based in the St. Louis area.

The purpose of this communication is to provide a forum for educational, historical and genealogical information with fresh insights and ideas to help your research or enjoyment of 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 for help, please submit your information in condensed form for the *EXCHANGE!* section which appears at the end (limit 50 words). *EXCHANGE!* notices run only once, but you may freshen the notice and resubmit. If the number of submissions is high, then adjustments may be made due to space constraints. Send your *EXCHANGE!* submission to germansig@stlgs.org.

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BEFORE THE GERMAN REVOLUTION OF 1848

If your ancestors left Germany in (or shortly after) 1848, they could have been escaping the troubles of rebellion and social unrest. But that wasn't the only rebellion that struck the German territories in the first half of the 1800s.

Commonly called “Forty-eighters,” Germans headed for American freedom because many had become active in civil unrest in their homeland. Some were being hunted by authorities, others felt there was little hope remaining in Germany, still others wanted a solid future. Land use was heavily regulated, noble families maintained control over much of the land, and a growing population created pressures that educated and adept young men and women preferred not to face in Germany.

Many university students and educated citizens were not quiet about the poor conditions for a rising working class making ends meet through jobs based on industrialization. If your ancestors were weavers in Silesia in 1844, they might have joined the foment over wages that were keeping them at the level of starvation. Bluntly stated, some officials told the hungry to eat grass! It was not unusual for husband, wife, even children, to work 15 hours just to barely scratch out an existence.

**IT WAS NOT UNUSUAL
TO WORK 15 HOURS...
JUST TO BARELY
SCRATCH OUT AN
EXISTENCE.**

The Prussian army reacted to the discontent by putting down rebellions as they arose. Early in 1848, Germany was kindling for a rebellion. Discontent had resulted in a series of resolutions for human rights in Mannheim, Württemberg, Hessen-Darmstadt, Nassau, and other locations. For a time, liberals entered governmental posts.

Even the power broker Chancellor Metternich in Austria left his country in 1848 for England. Soon after in Germany, celebrations of freedom resulted in exuberant crowds and fear among gun-wielding soldiers. Shots came quickly. Panic ruled. Many Germans had tasted freedom and chose to emigrate rather than face reversals. The tide of emigrants reached a peak of about 252,000 in 1854.

Yes, many have studied that troubled year of 1848. But fewer have studied the rebellions of the early 1830s.

The French pursued their own revolution in July 1830, deposing King Charles X and putting a “citizen king” into power. **Through trade, war, and politics some portions of Germany had become closely connected to situations in France. Rebellion and unrest were brewing in Hesse, Saxony, Bavaria, and other areas.** In fact, rebellion was becoming widespread in much of Europe. The Poles had rebelled against Russia and trade unions were causing their own type of unrest due to trade restrictions.

It was in May of 1832 that about 30,000 individuals stood up for liberalization of restrictions. They also longed for a unified Germany. The movement took place near Hambach Castle, not far from Neustadt an der Weinstrasse near the Rhine. Yes, for those of you with ancestry from the Rhineland-Palatinate, take note: this happened in your ancestor’s area which was, at the time, part of the Kingdom of Bavaria.

Swings took place from liberalization to organized control of the rebellion. Arrests followed. Then, in April of 1833, the unrest spread to Frankfurt on the Main, where there was an effort by students to force the local police to release political detainees. Counter-efforts grew, resulting in many young Germans being placed on a blacklist. They became political targets.

If your family was in or near that area of the Rhine, they faced grave uncertainty. This was coupled with poor crop yields from land that was, in some cases, approaching its limit in production as the soil lost its richness after centuries of plowing.

What remained for many agitators in 1832 and 1833 was a boat ride to America. They could escape the turmoil of Germany. They could opt out of the class system. They planned to be landowners, which for many was hardly possible in the Old Country where nobility and the wealthy still dominated.

The history of the greater St. Louis area is replete with casual comments about German gentlemen farmers who came to the area in the first major wave of German immigrants to settle this portion of the Midwest in the 1830s. They truly saw America as the Land of Opportunity. If you have the chance, read some histories of area counties, which often mention some of those Germans who became prominent citizens because of the unrest of the 1830s.

Coinciding with their arrival is an interesting fact: In 1832 the last Indian War fought east of the Mississippi was concluded. It was the Blackhawk War, and in the wake of its conclusion some new land opened for purchase in Illinois—just the thing to attract settlers from Germany!

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TAKE INVENTORY OF YOUR ANCESTORS

Take note of your ancestors by preparing an inventory of their backgrounds, accomplishments, and abilities. I'm not talking about listing who-begat-whom, when, and where they lived. I'm talking about their "life setting."

For example, discover what you can about your great-great grandfather. Inventory his jobs (plus years of work). If he worked in our area at a brewery or brickyard, then perhaps he was exercising a similar type of work he held in Germany. Or perhaps he apprenticed under another relative, by bloodline or by marriage. Check immigrant lists for occupational shifts. Some Germans may have departed Germany as farmers, yet settled in America as shoemakers. You might think these two jobs are unrelated. However, a little studying will reveal that many shoemakers in Germany were originally farmers. They had the raw material for shoes-leather from their animals. In the winter they had disposable time to make shoes and repair plows. Historians note that shoemakers in Germany often arose from the farming class.

If carpentry runs in your family, see if it is traced back to your ancestors of three or more generations ago.

When coming to America with little money, it would be logical to find a good paying shoemaking job in a well-traveled city such as St. Louis. The Gateway to the West was the final big stop before frontiersmen headed westward from basic civilization. Once sufficient funds were saved toward the purchase of farmland, the former German could relocate and return to farming.

Also take inventory of any report about your ancestor's physical ability (sports awards, etc.), time of military duty, and other facts that bring out the human element.

Once you have your list developed, you can glean many insights as to the challenges of your ancestor and the successes that were realized.

+++++ WAS CHARLEMAGNE FRENCH OR GERMAN?

For whatever reason, Americans call the First Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire "Charlemagne." That's a French name. But was he really French?

It depends on your perspective. A Frenchman would say yes. A German would have a different opinion. What's the truth?

In Germany, Charlemagne is Karl der Grosse (or Carl der Grosse, or Charles the Great). "Charlemagne" is merely the French way of saying Charles the Great. In Germany, that French name is not known as well as the German version. And for good reason. He was, after all, a German.

OK, here is where the French and Germans might begin to argue. Technically, Charlemagne was of the tribe of the Franks. The French may make much of this, and that's OK, since their nation is derived from the old Frankish Kingdom. However, Germany also traces its roots to the same kingdom!

The Franks gained importance in Western history during the waning days of the Roman Empire. As a major Germanic tribe, they settled around the mouth of the Rhine River and continued their expansion, notably southward. The Franks eventually changed from being an enemy tribe against the Romans and formed an alliance. This was a tribe

that maintained its territory and did not move around as did the Goths, Burgundians, Lombards, or Saxons, all of whom are widely considered German tribes. By 400 A.D., the Franks had expanded southward and included the Hessen (Hessians) as one of the major sub-tribes.

It was the Franks who were among the vanguard in the defeat of Attila the Hun. By the last half of the 5th century, Clovis (Clodwig; translated as Louis in French) became the first King of the Franks. He and his people succeeded in rulership over much of what had been held by Rome along the Rhine, and eastward and westward into what are now Germany and France.

**CLOVIS (LOUIS)
BECAME THE
FIRST KING OF
THE FRANKS.**

As the Carolingian family rose to power, Carl der Grosse became their foremost leader. Upon his death shortly after 800 A.D., his kingdom was divided. What resulted over time were West Franconia and East Franconia. One became France, the other Germany. The West Side tended to be more Latinized due to the strong Roman influences that still lingered among its learned men. The East Side leaned more toward the Germanic manner of life and language.

So France and Germany share a common history—and a common figure in history, Carl der Grosse, a Frank.

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MUCH MORE THAN COINS...

Gordon Seyffert (gordonseyffert@mac.com) in Kansas City recently replied to the previous G-SIG FORUM article about German coins. He's excited about a book he obtained at a sale: "I use (it) as my primary history guide, and I highly recommend it: William D. Craig, *Germanic Coinages: Charlemagne through Wilhelm II*, Mountain View, Calif. (self-published, 1954), 242 pages. + 16 page supplement, loosely inserted. [Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 54-12763]."

He adds, "The first 27 pages are devoted to simple heraldry and German armorial devices (25 pages.). The heart of the book, 182 pages, is a veritable encyclopedia of German states, cities, noble families, etc. Where applicable, the names and years of rule are given for the various sovereigns. There follow relatively brief chapters on German monetary history, mints and mintmarks, a glossary of monetary units and terms, an appendix of rulers' monograms (with 158 illustrations), an appendix naming patron saints by city or other jurisdiction, and certain other appendices providing translations or explanations relating to coinage (including four pages of place names found on German coins). The supplement merely adds further information to these various sections, but does include four pages of drawings of the most important coins--the only drawings of actual coins to be found in this work! ...Which underlines the fact that this book contains much more history than numismatics! Within reason, I can provide look-up services to fellow G-SIG members; contact me at: gordonseyffert@mac.com."

I'm familiar with the book, and it is everything Gordon says. There are other books of a similar nature. Check with coin stores or the library to see what exists. If you want to learn more about the history of different territories, these books often offer a synopsis that can prove helpful!

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BADEN--CASE IN POINT!

Here's more about the coin subject. The following is the type of information you can glean from a book on German coinage.

BADEN—The ruling house known as Baden, which was positioned along the Rhine in southwestern Germany, traces its beginning to Hermann, the second son of Berthold the Bearded (died 1077). He started a series of descendents named Hermann. Then, in 1190, Hermann V and Heinrich I divided the kingdom (as was the old German practice). Heinrich's grandsons then divided their possessions in 1290 and two branches developed: Hachberg and Sausenberg. The first line of this branch became extinct in 1418 when Otto II died. Those lands reverted to Baden-Baden. The Sausenberg branch acquired Neuenburg through marriage in 1457. Philip, the final male in that line, died in 1503. His daughter Johanna married the Count of Neuenburg. After his death she ruled alone until 1543. Then most of Sausenberg (minus the area of Neuenburg) was incorporated into Baden-Baden.

What such entries tell us is that the future of many people was determined by the simple acts of marriage, death, and inheritance as territories changed leadership. It's hard to picture the northern half of Missouri suddenly becoming part of Illinois and the southern part joining Arkansas, overnight, due to inheritance. But so it was in Germany many years ago!

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++++ **THOUSANDS LEFT THE PALATINATE**

“Shiploads of German people, variously estimated from 2,000 to 32,000, arrived in London between May and November of 1709....As most...came from the Rhenish of Lower Palatinate, the name ‘Palatine’ was applied indiscriminately to the rest of the immigrants, although they came from the neighboring territories as well.” So said Walter Allen Knittle in his 1979 book, *Early Eighteenth Century Palatine Emigration*, printed by the Genealogical Publishing Company, Baltimore.

If your interest is in the Palatinate along the Rhine, then seek out the book. You'll find a wealth of information, including lists of names associated with the move to England, and then to America.

What made the move attractive was the unsettled nature of the Rhineland. From a German perspective, French troops seemed to be in and out of the area due to whatever reason or whim led their commanders. That portion of Germany was especially fractured into a wide variety of small states, ever changing due to war, marriage, death, and trades. Yes, if you were a nobleman who owned land, you could sell or trade it. When it happened, it usually related to small sections or little towns.

Imagine the uncertainty. Fear could well up quickly. Military service became a regular occurrence, generation after generation. Taxes could be increased at the word of the land's master. Where was the future?

Some Germans saw their future in America. That was in the early 1700s when most of the North American seacoast was still England's colonized territory. Even so, a good number of Germans chose to leave for the New World rather than stay in the

Palatinate. Some believed the Queen of England would compensate them. Others heard the promises of William Penn for cheap land. What they faced in America was a land still being settled, and still with its risks. Native tribes were not always friendly. Disease could wipe out settlements in a matter of days. Once in that far-off land, there was little hope of seeing or even writing to their families that stayed in Germany. Leaving Europe meant never returning, at least for the vast majority of Germans who spent all they had just to make the trip and settle in the New World.

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COMMON ABBREVIATIONS you may find in your research: Pfr. = Pfarrer minister); weil. = weiland (deceased); b.v.= beide von (both from); verh. = verheiratet (married); geb.= geboren (born); gest.= gestorben (died); verl.= verlobt (engaged); getr.= getraut (married); samt.= together with; S.d. or S.v.= Sohn des, Sohn von (son of); T.d.= Tochter des, der (daughter of); led.= ledig (single); Wwe.= Witwe (widow); Wwer.= Witwer (widower); v.= von (from); ehel.= ehelich (legitimate); spur.= illegitimate.

OTHER WORDS: Ahnen or Vorfahr= ancestor; Beruf= occupation; evangelisch= Potestant; Halbruder= half-brother; Hochzeit= wedding ceremony; Taufe= baptism; Waise= orphan; Zwilling= twin;

IF YOU ARE SERIOUS about your research but wrestle with German, obtain a quality German-English dictionary and become familiar in its use. Better yet, buy a relatively new one, then find an old used one from 30 or 50 (or more) years ago at a book sale. The language can shift and change, so more than one dictionary can be good.

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

+ LaVerne Boehmke, one of our G-SIG participants, announces that “to get a true translation of a German letter or page ask the volunteers at trans@genealogyienetz.de. They will also translate your English letter into German and it will be correct. This service is free for short pages.”

+Sue Eddens (seddens@charter.net) asks, “Is anyone doing research on Austria? My husband's mother's family is from a town call Unterbielden, between Vienna and Graz, and the father (of my mother-in-law) may or may not be from Hungary. I was wondering is anyone has some expertise in this area.” Looking for Mullner in eastern Austria and/or Hungary.

+ Sue Crawford (Amerfa767@comcast.net) is tracing the Joos, Bohne, and Gansner families (came to St. Louis area in 1850s) and says she will help G-SIG participants with Oregon research. Her cell phone is (773) 368-8321.

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G-SIG FORUM will be sent by e-mail. If you prefer a copy 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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