

G-SIG FORUM #41

...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 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 persch3@hotmail.com.

+++++

Thanks to Charlemagne...

By Gerald Perschbacher

“Genealogy is a component part of history and biography, to which it is a help or a hindrance in proportion as the historical evidence is followed or ignored.” So said Marcellus Donald R. von Redlich in the preface to Volume #1 of *Pedigrees of Some of the Emperor Charlemagne’s Descendants*, 1972 edition, Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., Baltimore.

He continued: “We must understand that the science of genealogy is not simply the tracing of a line of descent; it points the direction of our heredity. Just as a name or title is transmitted, so also are most of the physical and mental characteristics capable of being transmitted, handed down.”

Enlarge the scope. In effect, each of us is a walking, talking, and breathing representation of our ancestors. Some of this is downright hereditary through genes. Other traits are learned, passed to us through a previous generation or two and affirmed by our familial contemporaries. This may also include our way of thinking, working, and playing; our moral approach and beliefs; our likes and

dislikes; and our preferred means of expression (via art, music, the written word, the spoken word, etc.).

Hopefully, the sum of these parts combine into a winsome, positive, well-functioning whole – the person you are!

Author von Redlich compiled hundreds of pages on the descendants of Charlemagne (Carl or Charles the Great, to those who prefer the German name over the French). I examined select sections dealing with German connections. Here are some observations.

Frederick V (born 1596), Duke of Bavaria, Elector Palatine of the Rhine, and King of Bohemia was a descendant. Later came Francis I (Stephen), Emperor of Germany in 1748.

Charlemagne had descendants with Saxon connections. Some included Henry II, King of England around the year 1100; Henry the Long, Duke of Saxony (born 1170); Louis II, Duke of Bavaria and Elector of the Palatine of the Rhine (born 1229); Maximilian I, First Elector of Bavaria (born 1573); and John, King of Saxony (born 1801).

Queen Victoria of Great Britain and Ireland married Prince Francis Albert Augustus Charles Emanuel of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. He was descended from Charlemagne. There was a Charlemagne connection established in the marriage of Frederick William II (born 1744), King of Prussia, with his second wife, Frederica Louisa, Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt, daughter of Louis IX, Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt.

It becomes evident that most of European royalty traced their lineage to Charlemagne.

We could go on. There seem to be countless descendants of Charlemagne, and your family line may be among them. Presidents Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt were numbered among the lucky, although the fact seemed not to surface in their campaigns (talk about “American Royalty!”).

A bit of Charlemagne might still linger in his descendants. If you are among them, look at yourself in the mirror. Maybe a portion of your smile or the twinkle in your left eye came from him!

Apply this to your ancestors, regardless of pedigree. You are the sum of your ancestral parts. That’s an added dimension in our enjoyment of history and genealogy.



Liz in Scotland is Making Progress

Liz Allan in Scotland (elizabethallan721@btinternet.com) recently made contact with G-SIG participants via our very own germanspecialinterest@yahogroups.com. Here are some interesting comments gleaned from her initial communication:

“Your sources of information/research will be different from in the United Kingdom (U.K.), but to date I have found nothing helpful in the U.K. concerning tracing German ancestors....

“All the family information I had about...my paternal great-grandfather Lewis Mitchell came from my late mother who told me he had been born in Frankfurt am Main...I was also told that his German name had been Louis ‘Meeshler’ -- that is how she pronounced it. I never saw it written. During my fruitless searches I had tried Miechler, Mieschler, Meichler, Meischler (I have no knowledge of the German language).

“My first confirmation that Lewis Mitchell was born in Germany was when I researched his son, my grandfather, and also Lewis Mitchell, born in Glasgow, Scotland. The censuses gave Germany as his father's place of birth. Also when I later found my great-grandfather's death registration.

Eventually I found my great-grandfather's marriage registration in Glasgow in 1855 when he was 22 years old, which states ‘born and registered in Frankfurt, Germany’ -- the date: 12 July 1833. He married under the name of Lewis Mitchell, his bride an Irish girl, Mary Dougherty, born in Cork, Ireland. Both his parents were deceased by 1855. I was disappointed to see that their names sounded British: Peter Mitchell and Catherine Smith. I had hoped for German names. Lewis married in a Wesleyan Church in Scotland rather than a Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

“I did find him and his family on the 1861 census under the name Louis Mitchile. I wondered if he perhaps had a German accent and the enumerator wrote it as it sounded. Also, I found all of his children's birth registrations and noticed that in the earlier ones he did not sign his name, but ‘his mark’ as X. Yet on later birth registrations he has signed his name. This suggested that rather than being illiterate, in the earlier years after marriage in Scotland he was unfamiliar with the English language.

“On the marriage registration the father Peter Mitchell’s employment is given as ‘barber.’ However, on the death registration of Lewis registered by his wife Mary, she had given Peter’s employment as ‘army surgeon.’ I realized it was highly unlikely that Peter had been a qualified medical surgeon. In earlier times barbers in the army often carried out medical duties and certain surgeries and were known as ‘barber-surgeons.’”

Now a few observations.

The pronunciation of old surnames is tricky, at best, because it depended on the dialects, sub-cultures, the era, and the person speaking (or writing). It might seem far-fetched, but the Mitchell surname in some cases (possibly not this one) may have been an offshoot of the name Michael which in more recent centuries has often been pronounced “MISH-I-el.”

Liz is “right on” with the reference to barber. In German “der Barbier” was an individual who handled simple medical procedures (such as shaving the heads of monks, lancing boils, applying special remedies, attending to minor wounds, and so on. Our term barber is directly derived. The red twist in the barber pole is said to refer to the act of blood-letting to purify a person’s system, or to any other medical process that drew blood. Der Barbier was not trained at a medical university, but he may have been instructed by a physician as an assistant. That’s the way many jobs were handled in old Germany in the 1600s through 1800s. An educated professional was expected to teach others in order to multiply the benefits.

Liz is on a detailed search. We hope she makes grand progress. GP

+++++

Hermann Had a Good Idea

When Laura Stadelman (pricebyte@sbcglobal.net) asked the following, she was in a quandary: “On the 1880 U.S. Federal Census for Illinois, St. Clair County, the birthplace for my husband’s ancestor was given as ‘Gor For Estreun’ and the parents birthplace were given as ‘Estreich, Ger.’ I have searched the internet, have bought maps, but have not been able to find the above. I am thinking that either these towns no longer exist or the census taker spelled them out phonetically. This is the only piece of knowledge I have for a location of birth.”

Hermann Eisele of G-SIG replied: “The birthplace ‘Estreich, Ger.’ appears to be a phonetic spelling for ‘Österreich’ (Austria), Germany, but probably referred to ‘Österreich-ungarn’ (Austria-Hungary) or more properly the ‘Österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie’ (Austro-Hungarian Monarchy), which was populated in certain areas by many people whose ancestors originated from Germany. I would venture there is a good possibility they came from the area which later became Yugoslavia and Romania.”

+++++

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

+ **Mike** (shamale@hotmail.com) says his relatives originated in Crimmitschau, Kingdom of Saxony (Sachsen), based on an old passport that survived more than 150 years. He seeks advice on where to look in Crimmitschau to search for family records. "I was interested in finding out if there are any special 'rules' for looking at old records in Germany."

+ **John Angstadt** (jangstadt@earthlink.net) seeks information on Johannes Weiser, born in Baden, 10 May, 1830. Needs location of his birth, ancestry & details of immigration to U.S. about October 1848. "Fifteen years of research have been unproductive, although I have all details on his life in the U.S.," John says.

+ **John Maurath** (maurath1@juno.com) notes: Tim Kimball (thr0back@yahoo.com) has been actively doing research about Germans in the Mexican-American War for a good while. Specifically, he's researching Germans from Missouri in this war. This might lead to the publication of a book on this subject. If you have information that might help, please contact Tim.

+ **For those who have old documents** that need translating, try this link: <http://www.suetterlinschrift.de/Lese/Kanzlei1.htm> . The link shows old German script varieties, a lot more varieties than most of the on-line samples.

+ **If you can handle German**, you might wish to connect with the Sachsen-L mailing list: <http://list.genealogy.net/mailman/listinfo/sachsen-l> .

+ **Stuck** in your studies? Wonder where the answers are? Want ideas shared in English? Try G-SIG's Yahoo group: [germanspecialinterest](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/germanspecialinterest). Sign up at this link:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/search?query=germanspecialinterest>

+ **A group** involved with the Gustave Koerner House in Belleville is looking for volunteer translators. If you know of someone who is interested, contact Jack LeChien jlechien@sbcglobal.net .

+++++

+ **G-SIG Clusters** are "where the action is"! Meet and communicate with others who have similar aims in research and information. Learn from them. Share your successes. For details on existing Clusters, or to explore the formation of a new Cluster, contact

Lisa at lmclaughlin@polsinelli.com) or
Kathy at kathyinwashington@hotmail.com).



Germany, Germany, Germany...

If your family lived in Germany in 1800, it was called the Holy Roman Empire. It was not run by the Pope but by the Emperor (also called Kaiser). There were nearly 300 states of varying sizes, linked culturally to a degree, but mainly independent. Consider it similar to the Confederate States of America, only run by nobles. Alliances were struck, then quickly dissolved in favor of another. Countless tolls and currencies abounded. These restricted outside trade. Guilds controlled many economies.

When Napoleon took control of that empire, he forced many changes for the better, but it was a shock to the majority of Germans. Then, when Prussia defeated Austria in the 1866 Austro-Prussian War, Otto von Bismarck, the head of Prussia, organized states north of the Main River into a new confederation led by an expanding Prussia. Initially that union was economic. This laid the groundwork for the modern nation of Germany.



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 germansig@stlgs.org . (Note: All copyright privileges for this FORUM are reserved by the compiler; no item is to be duplicated or distributed without permission.)



Have great ideas for the G-SIG FORUM? Submit your material to persch3@hotmail.com or mail it to: StLGS, Attn: G-SIG; #4 Sunnen Dr., Suite 140; St. Louis, MO 63143.