

G-SIG FORUM #64

...from the German Special Interest Group. G-SIG is an effort of the St. Louis Genealogical Society (www.stlgs.org/) & the German American Heritage Society, St. Louis, Mo. (gahs-stl@att.net).

This **FORUM** is for genealogical, educational, and historical information with fresh insights and ideas on German traditions and ancestry. Gerald Perschbacher is **FORUM** compiler and coordinator.

You may submit a notice or request **EXCHANGE!** section (limit 50 words). **EXCHANGE!** notices run only once, but you may resubmit, within reason. We reserve the privilege to shorten and edit. Send your **EXCHANGE!** submission to persch3@hotmail.com.

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What does it say

Karen Sansone (rehmkm@sbcglobal.net) faces a quandary which many researchers share. She's having trouble deciphering an old handwritten entry tracing her ancestry. Determined to find the answer, she has widened her circle of helpers...which now includes you!

Let's let Karen explain: "I have been researching my great-great-grandmother Johanna Augusta Emelie (Amalie) Kutter who immigrated to America through the port of New Orleans in 1857 and came to live in St Louis. She was married in an Evangelical church in St Louis, later buried with her second husband in Saint Paul's Lutheran Cemetery in Des Peres, Mo. It's her marriage record to my great-great-grandfather Heine that holds the best chance of determining where she was born because it has recorded her birth date and city in Frei Sachsen from which she came. The problem, however, is that I don't know anyone that can determine the origin of the town. It appears to be more Polish than German, the first letter appearing to have a diacritic L. I'm writing to you, hoping that you have someone in mind to whom you can point me to for further guidance. I'm hoping to find someone that can recognize the town and provide me with a greater deal of its history so that I can possibly locate her birth/baptism record and her parent's names, etc. "

There's more. Karen explains that an acquaintance of hers is a professional translator who concluded that the word looked like "Lejbella." The person further concluded that this sounded Polish. "It could be that this town was part of the Kingdom of Saxony at the time, but is now in Poland or the Czech Republic. That would explain the non-German-sounding name." Specifically, Karen says the couple's marriage took place at St. John's Church UCC, St Louis, on Nov. 26, 1862. The groom's name is Wilhelm August Ferdinand Heine, from Buckow, Berlin, born Dec. 23, 1830. The bride's name was Johanna Augusta Emilie Kutter, born Nov. 15, 1844.

I can't provide all the answers, but I included this situation in the *FORUM* since a similar challenge may cross your path, too. If and when it does, here are some tips to consider: (1) Pastors who made church-book entries were not always concise with spelling. Some spelled words phonetically (however they sounded). (2) Yes, the names of towns and cities may have changed over the decades; some municipalities were absorbed into larger communities and thereby lost their original names; (3) Sometimes names were changed based upon the occupying authority (example: The German town of Buchweiler was in Alsace, but when the French took over that province, the town became Bouxwiller). (4) The degree of success in deciphering the spelling of a name or town is directly related to the clarity of handwriting by the person making the entry; one way to safely interpret the words is to find familiar words in the same document done by the same hand and compare the letters individually. (5) Seek advice from several good sources. (6) Check old maps.

I went online to translate "Lejbella" and found several references in what appear to be Polish entries. However, when I used an online translating service, the word did not translate into English. I tried to translate it as a Slovak name with no success. Seems as though there might be some headway with the name as a derivative from French...but I still agree with the expert who advised Karen. The word likely has a Slavic heritage, if it is being deciphered correctly.

That does not mean the people who lived in a town were Polish or Slovak just because of the town's name. There are many German surnames that end with "—nick," "—ske," or other Slavic tones. The indications are that such

names were from areas where there was commerce being done with Slavic communities.

At this point, I lean toward a Slovakian (Bohemian) background, based on the church denomination where the marriage took place. St. John's was formed in 1838 and, like other Evangelical Protestant churches back then, may have been about 70% Lutheran and 30% Reformed. Many areas of Slovakia that bordered along Germany tended to be Protestant. However, Roman Catholicism is much more prevalent among the Polish. If that has any bearing in this case, then Karen may have a lead!

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Request from Ireland...

Regina Donlon (REGINA.M.DONLON@nuim.ie) is a doctoral history candidate at the National University of Ireland in Maynooth. But she has a question about German heritage that relates to the St. Louis area! Her message made its first stop at the German American Heritage Society and was shared with Hermann Eisele. She explains: "My research topic centres around a comparison of German and Irish immigrant groups in three locations in the Midwest, namely, St. Louis, Toledo, Ohio, and Fort Wayne, Ind., from 1850-1900.

"Currently my research is focusing on St. Louis, and particularly German communities therein. I have been attempting to locate popular German neighbourhoods within their respective enumeration districts allocated for the completion of the 1880 Federal Census. However, from the information that appears to be available on the Internet this task is proving difficult. I am aware that the south side of the city was popular with German immigrants, yet as to the names of these neighbourhoods and their location within enumeration districts, I can find little agreement among existing scholarship.

"Was there perhaps a location that became synonymous with German immigrants in the same way as the Kerry Patch was for Irish immigrants? I am aware of a region known as 'Little Paderhorn' although I am finding it difficult to place this within an enumeration district. I was wondering, if perhaps you or any member of your group could maybe shed some light in this?"

Hermann got right to work and distributed the request to several people. He provided online links: <http://stlouis.missouri.org/soulard/> for what became the German Soulard area, <http://stlouis.missouri.org/lafayettesquare/> for Lafayette Square (which, as many St. Louisans know, became less French and more German as time progressed), and offered information on Dogtown, The Hill, and other communities.

Next, I added some comments: “The southern part of the City of St. Louis was called the South St. Louis Dutch area (or Scrubby Dutch) because of the large number of Germans who lived there as early as 1840. There are still a good number of Germans in that area and into the southern and western suburbs as the population has moved to the outskirts of the area. You might contact <http://www.lutheranhistory.org/> for information on the heavy influx of German Lutherans into St. Louis, including Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Ohio. That’s the site for Concordia Historical Institute which is the Department of Archives for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. You may also wish to contact an author who has studied the subject of St. Louis history and wrote two books on it – one of which is deeply representative of German influence in St. Louis. He is Fred Hodes who may be reached at fhodes@msn.com. Another author has compiled recollections by residents of South St. Louis. His book was recently published. Check with JMerkel@yourjournal.com.”

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Go to the Man Who Married Them

Walter Meyer (meyerw@missouri.edu) was tracking down one of his ancestors when he struck upon an idea: “I found the correct marriage church by using the name of the priest who signed the St. Louis civil record and then tracing the churches this priest...served.”

G-SIG’s Kathy Wurth jumped into the subject. “I found a pair of my German great-grandparents...in the St. Louis marriage index.” She found out who married her ancestors, then check the city directory to see where he was a pastor. This worked in Kathy’s case: “Lo and behold, the church record told where they came from. Always, check those church records!

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Wolfgang Menzel wrote his heart out when he completed a massive work in 1848: The History of Germany: From the Earliest Period to the Present Time. You can appreciate the scope of the book by searching online or checking with a library. That work, long in the Public Domain, has some quotable segments that may be pertinent to your understanding of the ancient people who became the Germans. Herewith, the quotes:

“THOSE tribes which, at a later period, were classed under the general name of ‘Germans,’ were formerly known under separate names, and it is now impossible to distinguish them exactly from each other.... According to the earliest accounts of the Greeks, the Scythians, a simple-mannered and brave people, divided into several tribes, dwelt to the north of the Black Sea. It has been supposed, that their name signifies ‘marksmen,’ and that they were, if not all, at least partly, Germans. Neither the Persian kings, nor Alexander the Great, were able to subdue them. The Greeks named the northern nations, on the other side of the great chain of mountains extending from Caucasus, by Haemus, to the Alps, and dividing the south from the north of Europe, Hyperboreans, i. e. people who dwelt beyond the abode of Boreas (the north wind). They also regarded them as ‘the most long-lived, and the most just among mankind.’”

“The Greeks never distinguished the German tribes from their neighbours by any particular name, and it was not until after the birth of Christ that they are mentioned under the new name of Germani by the Romans. The Latin word *Germanus* means, brother, but the word may also be a German one, and signify, a warrior....”

“The German tribes may with great justice be compared to a swarm of bees. The mere love of fighting occasioned continual wars between them, either on the pretext of defending their frontiers from the aggressions of their neighbours, or for the purpose of extending them; and they had the custom of sending the young men, wherever the population became too numerous for the soil, annually forth to seek an existence in foreign lands, so that the surplus of their warlike population was unceasingly pouring across the frontiers. The earliest and numerous migratory hordes, travelling from north to south, were apparently also German adventurers....”

“Fifty years B. C, when Julius Caesar for the first time led his legions to the Rhine, he found the western Germans...under great apprehension on account of the numerical superiority of their eastern neighbours, the Suevi. From them he learnt that they were divided into a hundred districts, each of which annually sent forth a thousand warriors, who migrated in one vast horde. A century later, Tacitus mentions these hundred districts, but says that the Semnones, the most ancient and the most considerable tribe of the Suevi, was the only one so divided, exclusively of the numerous other Suevian tribes....”

“THE Istavones were the Franks on the Rhine ; the Ingavones, the Saxons on the North Sea; they always remained in their ancient dwelling-places, although they also sent forth immense hordes, which some centuries before Christ, under the name of Cimbri and Teutones, spread terror throughout Italy, and at a later period, re peopled France and England....”

Did you catch the importance of all this? OK, some of us have trouble jumping back very far in ancestry. It's precious to be able to trace back 10 or more generations. But at a certain point, the records will no longer exist. However, if there is no question about your TRIBAL connection, and if that tribe was mentioned in ancient records (generally compiled by the Romans), then you can take a giant leap back to ancient days. It's fun to theorize that your family may have been among those who sacked Rome or fought off the Celts or stood against Attila the Hun...but it could very well have been the truth.

Menzel's book may not contain all the answers (and some of his comments or conclusions may be questioned in a "Revisionist" way) but I consider it right on target when it mentions the Franks and Saxons "remained in their ancient dwelling-places." They did not move as did the Visigoths and Ostrogoths and a host of other tribes. Neither did the Franks and Saxons lose their identities. If you can connect with a tribe like these, you may very well have made an ancient connection with your lineage! Then, to round off your excitement, study the history of that ancient tribe, following it in lineal progression to find

out what your successive ancestors may have faced...how they lived...how they worshipped...what they ate...and how they approached life.

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Exchange! G-SIG Comments, ideas, and requests

+ **Piece of Information:** John Maurath (maurath1@juno.com) says that 15th Missouri Infantry in the Civil War was an all-German unit. Its 3,000-mile campaign ended in Texas at the end of war. He adds that the 11th Corps of the Army was almost entirely German.

+ **Entertainer Tim McGraw**, featured on NBC's *Who do You Think You are?*, was super-surprised when he discovered that his ancestors rubbed shoulders with a young George Washington (who stayed at their house) and the Presley family (when the ancestors of Elvis were on the same boat heading to America in the 1700s). What the program didn't investigate onscreen was the German connection. So I checked online at the program's site. McGraw is traced to Johann Jost Heydt who lived in Strasbourg! McGraw's family was among the Palatines who came to America in 1748.

+ **Carol Schlueter** (c.schlueter@yahoo.com) asks if anyone is researching the surnames Ritzler, Sum, and Wissmath. "Sum was a pharmacist, Wissmath a physician."

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