

G-SIG FORUM #69

...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 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.



'German' was a Bad Word in 1861 *By Gerald Perschbacher*

The nation was splitting apart in 1861 shortly after Abraham Lincoln took the U.S. presidency in early March. Within days of his inauguration, southern states began setting their own course, and the Confederacy was formed. Missouri sympathetically leaned considerably toward the south.

The German element in St. Louis gained a mixed image in the first half of that horrific year. The greater metropolitan area had been influenced heavily by a steady stream of German settlers that trickled to town in the mid-1830s then swelled to river-like dimensions by 1860, almost as mighty as the Mississippi River itself. "Old society" -- whether rich or poor -- either sided "for" those "Dutchmen" or "agin 'em." If recently settled Germans took jobs away from St. Louisans and crowded their streets, the offended were against them. If Germans offered cheap labor or craftsmanship at a reasonable rate, businessmen liked them. Well, to a point -- since Germans clung to their Old World traditions and their language. That built barriers between old and new inhabitants

For quite some time thereafter, words against Germans were derogatory slurs spoken with ultimate disdain. If you had German ancestors who were in or near St. Louis and other points in the Midwest at that time, just imagine the tension they faced in that fearful time when the term "Damned Dutch" was shouted!

German; were not new to America. Some of the earliest coastal colonists in the 1600s were German. There had been later seeds planted "Up East" in Pennsylvania and in southern coastal states. A few stray seeds of Germanic families were cast wide and far in other states. In the early 1800s the first significant seeds of Germanic heritage were sown in the St. Louis area. But from the close of the Revolutionary War until the mid-1830s, the door of immigration to America was only pried open slightly for Germans. Not that there was anyone against them initially. Circumstances simply were not economically and politically "right" for the trip and settlement.

According to an 1869 study, Germans were the largest immigrant group in America by the time of the Civil War. More than 176,000 Union soldiers were born in Germany but were willing to fight to preserve the Union Cause.

For some, especially leaders of the failed 1848 revolution in Germany, it was a matter of personal freedom and dignity along with the abolition of slavery. For other Germans the survival of the Union was paramount for a good future – THEIR future! They had given up much to move to America and risked life and limb to start from scratch. Not many knew English. Not many knew really what to expect when they came here. Not many knew the climate, how to obtain land, even how to work it well. Not many had much hope of advancement, a good income, or land ownership in Germany. But America was the land of hope and realized dreams. To many it was quite simply their ONLY hope. They were prone to defending that ideal!

In checking the service lists of Civil War soldiers, there is a marked number that served for the Union and a noticeable absence of any significant number that stood for States' Rights and served for the Confederacy. Some of those German names have continued in the greater St. Louis area to the present era.

What made the Germans stand firmly against secession?

Germany was not a unified land even as late as 1861. Significant territories, small enclaves owned by noble families, and a select number of self-ruled cities made a patchwork map of German lands. Those borders readily changed due to treaties, marriages, deaths, the advance of trade unions, and skirmishes. To a German in America, the movement for States' Rights probably seemed a step toward the old disunity that commonly marked Germanic history. Germans didn't want that, by and large.

Then there were the "Forty-Eighters." This was a group of men who fomented unrest in open revolt in 1848. Initially centered around Frankfurt-on-the-Main (River), it rippled through much of the Rheinland and beyond. It was the younger generation's attempt to forge a golden future. But don't think the middle-age and older men (plus women) were totally against that idea.

What is intriguing is that after some of the key leaders of the failed revolt escaped to America, they sided with the Union Cause in the Civil War. They became some of the loudest voices for preservation. That's right: the revolutionaries became preservationists!

This mixture of German ideals and the willingness to stand up for democracy and the Union made Missouri life tenuous in 1861. The mood against Germans was as strong if not stronger than the anti-German sentiments in either of the two World Wars which were then yet to come. It may even have been considerably stronger than that of both World Wars combined!

You can read about this in various books and articles, and I encourage you to dig around for some factual gems and a deeper understanding of your ancestral heritage. You can check online by doing a search. Specifically, there is <http://civilwarroster.com/cw/cw-mo.html> where lists of soldiers can be accessed. Details can also be viewed at this fine website: <http://home.usmo.com/~momollus/Mocwlink.htm>; and also examine this one: <http://www.militaryindexes.com/civilwar/>.

As for books, I highly recommend *Gen. Nathaniel Lyon and Missouri in 1861* written by James Peckham, American News Company, New York, Publishers; 1866. This is available in printed form at several online sources and as a download at www.archive.org/details/gennathaniellyon01peck. Author Peckham lived through many of the events in St. Louis and Missouri in 1861 and had firsthand knowledge of insider dealings. He was a Lt. Col. In the 8th Infantry, Missouri Volunteers.

What did those early German American soldiers face in St. Louis in 1861? Read about the Camp Jackson Affair that heightened in the days leading up to May 10, whereby a pro-secession body of volunteer soldiers less than a thousand strong was formed, camped out, and trained for about a week on the outskirts of St. Louis. The behind-the-scenes maneuvers were legion and fast paced. Let it suffice for the sake of brevity that the confrontation was between pro-Union forces and pro-secession (plus States' Right) advocates. Capt. Nathaniel Lyon (soon to be general) obtained retroactive support from President Lincoln and Congressman Frank P. Blair, Jr., (who would be a vice presidential candidate in 1868). In order to quickly build a volunteer army, a couple thousand young German men were enlisted for a three-month hitch.

Peckham recalled, "The Fifth Regiment of the U.S. Reserve Corp" under Col. Stifel "had just been mustered in by Capt. Lyon" on Friday, May 10. They and other Germans faced off against the men at Camp Jackson and, without a shot being fired, the camp capitulated. While being escorted to the Arsenal, a riotous crowd fomented military action and as many as 90 people were injured, about a third of those dying.

The next day was extremely tense and citizens were fleeing town or locking down for protection. Bands of pro-South men created street skirmishes. St. Louis was smack-dab in a quandary. On Saturday afternoon, May 11, the mainly German and pro-Union volunteer infantry units proceeded to their barracks. As for Stifel's unit, "It was attacked by a mob on the corner of Walnut and Fifth streets. For some time the regiment continued to march along, unheeding the violent abuse and filthy epithets applied to the soldiers by ruffians in the crowd." He added that people in "the mob were emboldened by the seeming indifference of the troops, and the yelling, and cursing, and opprobrious epithets were followed by a shower of stones and brickbats, hurled at the Union

soldiers. This was soon after succeeded by the firing of revolvers from the crowd, and the soldiers becoming exasperated, began an indiscriminate firing into the mob. So completely bewildered by excitement and passion were many of the troops, that they fired wildly, some shooting into the air, others into the eaves of the surrounding buildings, and some in opposite directions from their assailants. The crowd fled panic-stricken....” Solders were composed into ranks by their officers. Seven persons died in the encounter. Some soldiers were severely hurt. “One or two (were) wounded by pistol balls.”

This was a worsening condition that resulted in the evening thugging of other Germans who were seemingly minding their own business on the streets when groups of ruffians “scuffed them up.” Some died, too. This “aroused the whole German population, and as they were armed and organized, they began themselves to threaten that they would retaliate.”

If you suspect one of your ancestors lived through those events or served in the military at that time, pause to reflect, then heartily research and study all that you can. Be thankful that because those old Germans stood their ground for the Union, that Missouri never successfully joined the Confederacy. But it was truly a very close call!



Names to be Found on the Civil War lists, 1861

Here is a generous sampling of surnames that can be found in Civil War Union soldiers' lists for units originating in St. Louis in 1861:

Schofield, Tiemeyer, Welker, Boernstein, Sigel, Schaeffer, Laibold, Anselm, Heinrichs, Engert, Haussler, Ludwig, Hemle, Roemer, Cramer, Weistney, Zeis, Fries, Mettmaun, Demde, Hartmann, Heckenlaner, Hackman, Danner, Tehl, Busche, Krebe, Friedlein, Mannhardt, Klostermann, Menmann, Schuster, Henck, Homburg, Beck, Dahmer, Rehman, Schuddig, Hasfurthem, Berg, Dening, Hubbel, Weber, Cronenbold, Gerlach, Meisner, Melcher, Gottschalk, Wachter, Beng, Veme, Mehl, Nehrig, Schneider, Stark, Weiss, Bauer, Spiegelhalter, Brimmers, Waldschmidt, Lensler, Traber, Kochler, Gutgesell, Hahn, Eichele, and Lantenseklager.

There are many more names. These were unit leaders. Privates constituted a list several times long and most were of German origin. So you may have an ancestor listed among the soldiers...the pertinent information is likely “out there” somewhere, and you may be the one to find it!

Note: My family had not passed along the information that any of our ancestors were in the army during the Civil War. But after a modest search, fours ancestors surfaced! Federal records revealed more information, as did several online searches.

So often genealogical researchers keep wanting to trace back in a continuous (unbroken) line. They stall when the lineage gets hazy and stop before the Civil War. *My suggestion:* check the Civil War files and see if ANY soldier looks he could be your ancestor. Then track from that point forward in names of spouse and children, and perhaps you can make a match much easier than trying to move back in one direction!



Jumping for Joy with Online Options

You probably heard two German words used by researchers: *Familienbuch* and *Ortssippenbucher*. But do you know what they mean and how these resources can help? (Thanks to Karl & Shirley Dauble for insights.)

The *Familienbuch* is all about a particular family or surname. Find out more by going to: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Familienbuch>. Not all German family books are widely available. Some Germans will not even ship them outside the country. The reason: security, pride, and protecting the integrity of the information. Sometimes you will find a *Heimatbuch* (homeland book) printed by a German town. This type of book often lists various family entries which can advance your genealogical studies.

The *Ortssippenbuch* is all about a town or place where all the families are presented. Find out more at this site: <http://germana.com/Ortssippenbuch.html>. The German word *Ortssippenbuch* means place (*Orts*) + genealogy (*Sippen*) + book (*Buch* or the plural *Bücher*). Families may be traced for a few hundred years in relation to a certain village. Relationships are shown. It taps resources such as church records regarding births, marriages, and deaths. Information from civil sources may appear. It is not unusual for a single village to have a list more than 1,000 pages long.

As the Daubels trace references and sites online, they came up with: https://wiki.familysearch.org/en/German_Research_Websites and encourage G-SIGers to use it. And if your computer does not have a program to open PDF documents so you can read or print them, there is a FREE program to do this. Here is the link to the Adobe web site where you can download and install that program, Adobe Reader: <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

Finally, here is the link to a Handbook of German Research which is about 80 plus pages long. It is in PDF format. Save it for reading at your leisure: http://www.familysearch.org/eng/search/RG/images/Ger_BMD_RefDoc_HandbookGermanResearch.pdf.



A good historical atlas goes a long way to help your appreciation for your ancestral situations. Find a copy of *HISTORICAL ATLAS* by William R. Shepherd, C.S. Hammond & Company, The Colonial Offset Co., Inc., Pikesville,

Maryland; (I use the 8th Edition, 1956). Some of the maps were based on old German versions but are in English.



Exchange! G-SIG Comments, ideas, and requests

You may share your discovery or offer ideas for others in this section (limit 150 words). We reserve the privilege to shorten and edit. Send your *EXCHANGE!* submission to:

persch3@hotmail.com.

+ Karl Daubel offer; some ideas: A new website is a genealogy search engine: <http://www.mocavo.com/>. Interested? Then read more about it at: http://blog.eogn.com/eastmans_online_genealogy/2011/03/mocavocom-a-genealogy-search-engine.html. "It has potential to be a helpful site. Give it a couple tries with things you already know about to see what the results are." He also passes along some sources mentioned at a G-SIG presentation by Carol Whitton and reinforced in an e-mail from Fred Held. It is in German and an English translation: <http://matricula-online.eu/pages/en/about-matricula.php>
<http://matricula-online.eu/pages/en.php?lang=EN>
<http://matricula-online.eu/pages/intro.php>.

"This site also leads a person to an EVA web site with a listing of towns and villages with records. In looking through the web site I found that there are various fees for different services. I also came across this paragraph. 'Requests for genealogical searches can be accepted only to a very limited extent. In general, one must personally conduct one's research in our Reading Room. Of course, the staff of our Parish Register Repository is available to advise and support you in your research. Material in writing supplied by our personnel is for all applicants subject to fees.'"

+ Learn what your ancestors ate! Look for old German recipe books and try your hand at a few dishes. To season in the "old manner," you could read *Lore and Legend of the Culinary Herbs and Spices* by Mary A. Gamble and Marie Schmitz, The St. Louis Herb Society (third printing was in 1987). If it isn't available, check: <http://www.stlouisherbssociety.com/publications.aspx>.

+ The American legal system has been heavily influenced by old Germanic laws. Books on the subject are still printed for law students. You might be amazed by reading *The Laws of the Salian Franks*, translated by Katherine Fischer Drew, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1991; there also are books on ancient Burgundian laws and early Gothic laws.



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