

# G-SIG FORUM #8

**This is the eighth 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.**

This communication is 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, 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. We reserve the privilege to shorten and edit. Send your *EXCHANGE!* submission to [germansig@stlgs.org](mailto:germansig@stlgs.org).

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## GERMANS & JAMESTOWN

According to Gary Carl Grassl, Germans were among the early settlers at Jamestown. He notes there is a bronze plaque at the former Virginia colony, marking the 1607 founding. Among those first English settlers were “Eight Dutchmen and Poles.” He wondered if this meant they were Germans, since the two terms could have been used interchangeably over the years.

Mr. Grassl researched the question. He discovered that among the first English settlers was Wilhelm Waldi, who appears to have been a German-Swiss prospector. Then Germans joined the colony in April and October 1608, Grassl adds. In this regard, Germans were present at some of the earliest recorded events of the New World.

Johannes Fleischer the Younger was a medical doctor with a Ph.D. from Breslau, Silesia. He came to America in April of 1608 to find healing plants. Grassl concludes that Fleischer was most likely the most educated person at Jamestown in its first century. **“..the most educated person...”**

Among the “Dutchmen” were two glassmen who apparently were from the Grossalmerode area, near Hesse-Kassel. There were also three wainscot sawyers. In 1620, four sawmill wrights (who remained nameless in documents) arrived from Hamburg, Germany. German miners also came to Virginia.

In reviewing Mr. Grassl’s comments, here is an additional note. Why did early settlers come to America? The reasons that prevailed in the 1600s were much the same in the 1700s and 1800s. German miners, craftsmen, and farmers came to America for a better future. Land was available. No noble families lorded over citizens in subservient towns and villages. Wars were not common, although American Indians raised a

perceived threat at various times. The land was rich with game that equated to profits in pelts and other products. Precious metals were sought by miners.

Sometimes Germans settled in America with a different trade than what they had when they departed their homeland. Farming was popular in Germany. Therefore, many who were leaving simply declared this as their livelihood. Once in the New World, some switched to shoemaking or some other line of work.

Why? Money was an issue. It didn't take long to spend cash reserves during the "crossing" to America and on subsequent living quarters. A farmer needed land to farm. But if he was short on cash, then he needed to secure a job to save funds and realize his dream of being a landowner. Since Germans tended to be among pioneers, they often settled in booming cities, switching their trade in order to raise funds. German farmers came to St. Louis in the early 1800s when the city was a bustling center of westward expansion. Many decided to make shoes, since St. Louis was among the last "civilized" sites before crossing into the Great Plains. Travelers were wise if they stocked up an extra pair of shoes or boots.

**"...often settled in booming cities..."**

Germans in Jamestown did not make a major impact because they were a small percentage of the whole. Yet, the influence grew. A rising wave of German settlers followed. According to official statistics, the trend was clear. More people came to America from Germany than any other country!

Mr. Grassl is among those who wonder how the approaching 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of settlers in America will salute German heritage.

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## **MORE SMARTS!**

Travel to Germany, and it probably won't take long for you to realize that automobiles with a Mercedes-Benz connection cover a wide range of forms and sizes. Among the very smallest is the Smart.

The Smart is a basic two-person conveyance. Four small tires and an economical engine make the little car a handy vehicle for congested areas. According to one report, the Mercedes-Benz Passenger Cars & Smart Division "is the world's leading manufacturer of premium passenger cars. Its products attract customers through innovative engineering, safety, comfort, emotional appeal and pioneering design. The brand recognition is high; in 2000 the Interbrand rating agency named Mercedes-Benz as the top premium automobile brand worldwide." So reports the company.

To some, the Smart makes the Mini-Cooper look like a spacious car. Officials at Mercedes-Benz note, "The Smart brand stands for a highly emotive, individual and unique product that has already established itself as market leader in the microcar segment in several European countries."

Mercedes-Benz vehicles account for more than a million annual sales. It claims to be "the world's leading premium brand with an unchanged global market share of 2.5 percent."

The Smart hit Germany's funny bone. When it was launched a few years ago, the Smart was cute, intriguing, and frugal. It quickly was adopted by companies as rolling

advertising units. Some creative owners had their Smarts painted like ladybugs, bees, or other critters. Hardly has such interest surfaced since the popularity of the VW Beetle.

In 2003, the Smart had accumulated 123,500 sales globally. Germany held the top spot with 41,300 deliveries. Italy was next with 32,100. The United Kingdom had 13,000, and France recorded 9,500 sales.

Now the Smart appears to be coming to the St. Louis area as never before. Importers are upgrading Smarts to local standards in emissions and safety, then intend to corner a nice portion of the minicar market. The Smart “Forfour” utility vehicle can help.

The Smart is a far cry from the cart and horse your German ancestors might have used on a daily basis. Yet, it reflects a German frugality that is evident in the lifestyles of many German Americans.

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## **TRANSLATING THOSE OLD TEXTS...**

When Birgit Hoffmann (e-mail: [kontakt@birgithoffmann.de](mailto:kontakt@birgithoffmann.de)) was in America, she discovered people very interested in their German roots. “When I lived in Minnesota a few years ago, people of German descent asked me to decipher old letters or documents.” Now she wonders if individuals involved with the German Special Interest Group (G-SIG) have similar requests.

Birgit was born in 1965 and is a German linguist with a Ph.D. from the University of Southern Denmark.

Many people over the past half-century have strayed from books and documents using the old style. But the old German style was taught to Birgit at the age of eight. She “was lucky to have an old-fashioned primary school teacher who, outside of all curricula requirements, thought her students might have use for this knowledge someday and they need not look at an old German text as if it were a foreign language.”

There are various translators now offering their services to G-SIG participants. Often there is a cost factor, which is understandable. With a strong demand for translating, a person can quickly go into overload and take valuable time and energy from other endeavors. So receiving an income for services rendered can be good for both parties. The person requesting the translation can get right to the point and keep their documents to a minimum. The translator can receive the incentive to complete the task in a reasonable time in order to be paid.

Whether you contact Birgit or some other source, provide details about the amount of work to be done. This may require scanning the document and sending it overseas, then waiting for an estimate on the job. Once accepted (perhaps even paid in advance), the assignment will get underway. Rates may be set by length of a document.

G-SIG, its leadership, and its parent organizations make no promise or guarantee on the quality or accuracy of translations from anyone who is offering their services. As with any product or service, it is up to the buyer (or user) to be wise and careful.

You may reach Birgit by writing: Birgit Hoffmann Sprach-Consulting  
Ernst-Thaelmann-Str. 1  
D - 15831 Mahlow Germany



**TIP:** Citizens of the former East Germany may be less likely to speak English. But this is not so much the case among young people who started school after 1990 when Communism was collapsing in Europe. At that time, learning English became a handy investment for future commerce and tourism. In areas formerly known as West Germany, many people understand a degree of English. This is especially true for areas near major military bases staffed by English and American troops. In areas bordering France, Germans often learned French in school.

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## WHEN IS A GERMAN A GERMAN?

Are Germany and Austria really “one”?

Some people will become vehement over the idea. Austria is Austria—a separate country with its own set of nobility and leadership rules for centuries apart from Germany. Yet, German influence was a dominant force, sociologically and culturally.

**Austria also was a military power**, as recent as the First World War. So as Bismarck grew in political stature, he believed war with Austria was inevitable. His policy from 1863 to 1866 accepted the idea as fact.

Bismarck had made sure that Russia would not intervene when he sympathized with Russia in crushing the Polish revolution of 1863. In fact, Russia and Germany would continue to think they could enter and claim Polish territory as late as 1939. It was due to the invasion of Poland by those two nations that World War 2 technically began.

While Austria isn’t “German,” it is Germanic. While only about 25 percent of the population claim this heritage, the German language is the tongue of choice. Austrians would probably add that **their version of the language**—much as their taste in classical music—is more refined and noteworthy.

Regardless of your slant, just because you trace your roots to Austria does not mean your family was necessarily Germanic. Check the etymology of your family name(s) and see if there is a clear Germanic influence or if it reflects an Eastern European (even Slavic) origin. Some German names may sound like they from some other heritage, but it may be a simple matter of a different culture adapting the German name and adding its own elements in spelling.

Similarly, some people who are not Germanic in lineage may have been given German sounding names by German nobility or town officials. Perhaps their names were derived from nicknames or occupations that were expressed in German. You might find out more than you think by tracing the meaning of a surname and its local connections.

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**TIP:** Carl Schurz (born in Cologne, Germany, March 2, 1829), studied at the University of Bonn where he joined in radical politics. Schurz took part in the foiled 1848 German Revolution. As a result, he was forced to flee to Switzerland.

Schurz lived in France and England before emigrating to the United States in 1852. Schurz and his wife lived in New York for a while before buying a farm in Watertown, Wisconsin. In 1856 Margarethe Schurz was founder of the first kindergarten in America. A strong supporter of universal suffrage, Schurz wrote: "Our ideals resemble the stars, which illuminate the night. No one will ever be able

to touch them. But the men who, like the sailors on the ocean, take them for guides, will undoubtedly reach their goal."

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## Searching from the 'Other Side'

Americans aren't the only ones who like to research their lineage.

"One of our ancient family members (August Blasig). immigrated in 1880 to U.S....with his wife (first name unknown), two children and other members of his wife settling in the area of Cheltenham, working in a silver-mine. The two of his children died in Cheltenham, another child was born in Cheltenham (name Ella Blasig b. 1884 ? or 1887 ?). She, her father, August, and her mother returned to Germany where his son Paul was born near to the former Wroclaw. After this he returned without his wife and daughter to America and then after some years returned to Germany where he died. Some family members of August's wife must still be a life in the USA."

So says DR. Volker M. Jung, M. D., Am Park 14, 97714, Oerlenbach, Germany  
E-mail : [Volkermjung@AOL.com](mailto:Volkermjung@AOL.com) .

Many Germans are intensely interested in their ancestors who came to America.

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## INTERESTING NEW BOOK...

MISSOURI'S GERMAN HERITAGE, edited by Don Heinrich Tolzmann, Little Miami Publishing Co., P.O. Box 588, Milford, Ohio 45150-0588 ;2004; softbound, 153 pages. \$15.95 plus \$3.00 mailing (Ohio residents add \$1.12 sales tax)

ISBN 1-932250-22-0 [www.littlemiamibooks.com](http://www.littlemiamibooks.com)

Dr. Tolzmann provides an excellent study on the German-American immigration history from the nineteenth century up to its continued impact on the present. Explore the early German history of Missouri through the translated and edited writings of Gustav Koerner. Learn about the German pioneers, Gottfried Duden and Friedrich Muench through the writings of Dorris Keeven Franke and Siegmur Muehl. Read the words of the Catawba Wine Song and Wine Song by Friedrich Muench. Many sources are provided for additional study.

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## NAPOLEON & WESTPHALIA

### *Did you know...*

...Napoleon placed **his family in key positions around 1800**. Jerome, his brother, was in charge of a large section of the Rhineland and adjoining territories.

...**About 2 million people** lived in **Westphalia** at that time. **600,000** were draft age. There were **about 25,000 troops** the territory provided at a given time. By the end of their service with Napoleon, about 38,000 were killed or lost abroad. The cost to maintain this body of soldiers was 50 million Francs per year!

...The **army was modernized**. There was **more pay** for a Westphalian—or any other type of German. Rank was **not based on social status**, so serving in the army was a means for **advancement**. Among Westphalians, more than 8,000 served in Spain and 7,200 were lost. That was a **“loss rate” of 90%!**

...In the **Russian Campaign of 1812-1813, 16,000 served from Westphalia, and 14,000 of them were lost**. That was a loss rate of more than **87%!** The land tax under the French rose to 25% of total income per year.

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## Discover Germany

There are many ways to discover Germany: take a tour, read a book, buy a DVD or video, or talk to a former German citizen. You can also examine German communities in America, some of which are interspersed throughout the Midwest. Cole Camp, Mo., is one of those areas (recently featured in the magazine *German Life*). It has a markedly Saxon heritage. So do several towns in eastern Perry County, Mo. The old Saxon way of life is preserved in historical sites, displays, and events. Altenberg, Mo., is little more than 100 miles from St. Louis and has a new museum on the subject. Check and you will find many other sites in Missouri and Illinois where German heritage and history abound.

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

+Robert C. Remmert: e-mail: [nremm10335@aol.com](mailto:nremm10335@aol.com) , is Looking for records of Grandmother and Great-Grandfather (Emma Baus, born Feb. 17, 1881, and Ernst Baus, born July 3, 1852). Both were born in Grube, Schleswig-Holstein; emigrated from Hamburg, on March 29, 1883, to New York on Ship Cimbria.

+ German School Association: Affordable German classes for children and adults, beginners to advanced levels, Saturdays 9 a.m. to Noon. New semester starts Sept. 9. Call: (314) 544-3990, or e-mail: [gsa\\_stlmo@yahoo.com](mailto:gsa_stlmo@yahoo.com) (also visit the Web site: [www.germanstl.org/germanschool](http://www.germanstl.org/germanschool) .

+ The DVD presentation “ A German Saga...” will not be offered by the St. Louis Genealogical Society. The DVD is the remade presentation of the first G-SIG gathering. It traces the history of Germans from the Roman era to modern times.

+ German tutoring by native German speaker -- All ages, all levels including preparation for the “German Certificate”. Call Carmen Freeman in Webster Groves: (314) 963-9534 )( [CarmenKFreeman@aol.com](mailto:CarmenKFreeman@aol.com) ).

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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.**

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