

G-SIG FORUM #88

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. (check the site at www.gahs-stlouis.org). This forum is for genealogical, educational, and historical information with fresh insights plus ideas on German traditions and ancestry. Dr. Gerald Perschbacher (LL.D.) is *FORUM* compiler and coordinator.

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Good Tools for German Research

By Fred Held, Librarian *St. Louis North Family History Center (Hazelwood)*

RootsWeb Surname List

In the mid 1990s a couple of the Rand Corporation employees convinced their management to allow the Rand Genealogy Club to host a genealogy related database titled RootsWeb Surname List (RSL) on the company computers. The database grew until Rand Corporation would no longer agree to support it. The couple then moved the database to another set of computers and accepted contributions to support the system. They merged with other databases and created what is now RootsWeb.

[Http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com](http://www.rootsweb.ancestry.com)

A few years ago contributions were no longer sufficient and they agreed to be supported by Ancestry.com, but stipulated that the RootsWeb data bases are to remain free to the public.

RootsWeb now consists of many databases: RSL, WorldConnect (submitted family Trees), Mailing Lists, Message Boards, FreeBMD (Index to England's BMD registration starting in 1836), and several other databases. (Note: WorldConnect, Mailing Lists, and Message Boards will be subjects of future "Tools for German Research.")

RSL is a relatively unknown tool that can be very useful. RSL consists of a database of surnames submitted by individuals. Part of the information is where the family resided and in what years. The user supplies as much personal information that they feel comfortable with so they may be contacted.

<http://rsl.rootsweb.ancestry.com>

Knowing the region the family is from will potentially give you a lead. However an additional part of the database will also give the user those other

surnames that that same person is researching. If you can match several surnames from one submitter, the possibility that they are researching your family is high. A number of similar data stores of surnames exist, but most of them are regional and usually unknown. This is one that is for all regions of the world with a flexible user interface for searching. IMO, the regional data stores would be better served by merging their data into the RootsWeb Surname List database.

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Perhaps a Bit Late...but Not Forgotten

By Dr. Gerald Perschbacher (LL.D.)

History has a special way of being forgotten. People who live through extreme events remember them. But several generations later, those events become less important. Example: Armistice Day (marking the end of the First World War) became Veteran's Day mainly because the impact of the First World War was not as impactful as the remembrance of soldiers who fought for the U.S. in succeeding wars, notably the Second World War, the Korean War (originally a conflict), the Vietnam War, and others.

Another example: My material great-great grandmother (I called her Granny) vividly recalled the national reaction to the assassination of President McKinley. It was similar to those who remember the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and (I would conclude) those who recalled the assassination of President Lincoln. As Granny's generation passed into history, so did the hurt and impact of the McKinley assassination.

On a lighter noted, in 1983 came the establishment of German American Day, but some official sources were a bit late in accepting it. After all, German heritage is so much a part of American culture today that it seems ingrained even though many people with such heritage do not realize their benefits in lineage.

Take a moment and absorb the careful wording of the following resolution:

2011 Assembly Joint Resolution 70 ENROLLED JOINT RESOLUTION

Relating to: recognizing October 6 as German-American Day.

Whereas, October 6, 2012, is the 329th anniversary of the day that 13 families landed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, after an oversea journey from Krefeld, Germany; and

Whereas, the 13 families, 33 people in all, of Mennonite and Quaker descent, under the leadership of legal scholar Franz Daniel Pastorius, founded Germantown six miles north of Philadelphia; and

Whereas, Germantown, Pennsylvania, is recognized as the first permanent settlement of immigrants from Germany in the original 13 American colonies; and

Whereas, German immigrants supplied America with a workforce that helped shape and embody the American dream; and

Whereas, according to a study done by the 1979 United States Census Bureau, more Americans trace their lineage back to Germany than to any other nation; and

Whereas, in 1983, President Ronald Reagan proclaimed the first German-American Day for the 300th anniversary of the arrival of the first German settlers in America; and

Whereas, in 1987, Congress approved Senate Joint Resolution 108, designating October 6, 1987, as German-American Day, and the joint resolution was signed into law later that year; and

Whereas, in 2009, President Barack Obama proclaimed October 6 as German-American Day to celebrate German Americans for their remarkable role in our nation's development; and

Whereas, German-American Day is a widely renowned holiday often accompanied by Oktoberfests, Steuben Parades, and many other special festivities; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the assembly, the senate concurring, That in recognition of the importance of the contribution of German-American citizens to the United States of America, the members of the Wisconsin legislature do hereby proclaim October 6, 2012, to be German-American Day and encourage citizens to learn more about the countless German-American contributions to society and to show their pride in appropriate celebrations.

<http://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2011/related/enrolled/ajr70>

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More Tools for Research By Fred Held

LDS FamilySearch

The LDS (Mormon) church has been a great source of genealogical data for many years. The LDS Family History Library in Salt Lake City is by far the largest genealogy library in the world and for years was the destination for anybody serious in doing extended family research. The LDS Family History Centers are branch libraries where some of the FHL microfilmed documents may be viewed.

A few years ago the FHL supported an internet webpage called FamilySearch, where they posted several electronic databases containing indices to information. Some of this information was based on solid documentation and some

were patron submitted and were of questionable accuracy. They included the Ancestral Files and Pedigree Resource Files that contained patron submitted family trees. Another database was the IGI (International Genealogical Index) that contained both extracted and patron submitted BMD data. There were also indices of several 1880 era censuses, the Social Security Death Index, and some other vital record indices. Because of the inaccuracies in the patron submitted data, many people felt all the information was unreliable. Actually much of the data were indices based on documentable data: the censuses, the SSDI, the vital record indices, and part of the IGI (clearly identifiable).

Recently the familySearch group started a concerted effort to digitize all the microfilms in the FHL files. They also called for volunteers to help index these data. At about the same time they started revamping the FamilySearch website and separated all documentable information from the patron submitted data. In addition, they added many videos and other aids to doing research. The current website (www.FamilySearch.org) contains a great number of documentable databases and images, family trees, the FHL catalog, and access to many digitized books.

A list of the documentable databases can be seen by scrolling down to the bottom of the front page where you will be given the opportunity to “Browse by Location.” You may select a region of the world or look at all the databases (over 1300). If you select “Continental Europe” you will find 275 databases. You may further select “Germany” where you will be shown 33 databases. Many of the databases have not yet been indexed, but you are given the opportunity to browse the digitized images of those databases.

The “Germany, Births and Baptisms, 1558-1898” database is constantly being updated and currently contains 37,703,414 records (26 Mar 2012). The “Germany, Marriages, 1558-1929” contains 8,521,370 (22 Mar 2012). These are data reliably extracted from the German church and civil records. Note that they have imposed the strict Germany secrecy laws to the modern end of these data, because many of the actual microfilmed church books contain much later information (sometimes into the 1950s).

When you find one of your ancestors in these databases, there are two additional important pieces of information: the microfilm number where the data were found and a Batch Number. The microfilm number can be used to rent that microfilm where the index came from at your local FHC or participating library. The Batch Number can be a powerful tool for further research (the subject of a future “Tools for German Research”).

Coming Over: the 1800s By Gerald Perschbacher (LL.D)

Hermann Steines did us a favor. He recorded his initial thoughts, hopes, and challenges in series of letters and comments. Most intriguing is the fact that he came to America in 1833. His detailed comments would have applied well into the middle of the 1800s, so if your ancestors came to the New World during that time, take heed to the words of Mr. Steines!

William G. Bek took those comments a giant step farther by translating them in a series of article that appeared in the first half of the 20th century in *The Missouri Historical Review*, mainly volumes 14-18. The series was titled, "The Followers of Duden," since the Steines brothers used Duden's book.

Hermann and brother Frederick Steines were from Rhenish Prussia and eventually settled in Franklin County, Mo. Hermann came over first. Frederick followed in 1834.

On May 17, 1833, Hermann wrote, "We are now in the new harbor of the city of Bremen, a region which the city has bought from Hanover. It is called Bremerhaven. It is about a mile (1/4 *Stunden*) long, and not quite as broad as the Ruhr River, but very deep. At present ten large ships are here...."

"The steerage (compartment) is just high enough for me to stand erect...contains 28 beds, giving accommodations for 140 persons...on board of our ship are people from Muenster, Hanover, Wuerttemberg, Hestia and Prussia. There are many fine people among them."

Preserved among the letters of H. Steines was a contract with the ship owners regarding the trip to America. "The rate of steerage passage to Baltimore, New York, or Philadelphia is the following per individual: Persons over 12 years of age = 40 Thaler in gold. Children from 8 to 12 years = 30 Thaler in gold...from 4 to 8 years = 20 Thaler in gold...from one to four years = 10 Thaler in gold...under one year of age = 5 Thaler in gold." Indeed, gold was the method of payment since it was stable and could be converted into the currency of whatever realm was chosen. But there were other stipulations.

One dealt with the load aboard ship. "According to an American law, only a certain number of passengers may be transported on each steamer (for every five tons of the ships displacement only two passengers)." Children were counted as adults in this matter, which caused some consternation. "Only one child is allowed with three adults. If there are more children than can be apportioned...additional payment must be made. Families will therefore do well to combine with other adult persons whose fare is uniformly 40 Thaler." The ship's captain promised to apportion children with other adults on board, even if there was no blood relationship. This was an entry process, not hinting at baby sitting or any other obligatory aspects between other passengers and children so apportioned.

The children's birth certificates had to be presented "and every passenger must be provided with a passport to the foreign country." If arriving in New York or Philadelphia, "the government demands a poor-tax (*Armen-Taxe*) of immigrants upon their arrival. This amounts to a sum ranging from one to four Spanish Thaler or 1 1/2 to 5 Thaler in gold....all passengers sailing to any of these points must deposit this amount at the time they pay their fare."

More in the next FORUM!

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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 submission to persch3@hotmail.com.

+ **Discover your ancestors' place in German-American history at:**

<http://www.germany.travel/en/ms/german-originality/heritage/timeline/timeline.html> .

+ **Enjoy old pictures?** See the "way it was" when your German ancestors may have been relatively fresh to the American scene. These are taken from old glass negatives. Go to:

<http://www.usgennet.org/usa/mo/county/stlouis/kemland/glassplate.htm>

+ **G-SIG's Karl Daubel** encouraged researchers to check out this fine website that is rich in history and genealogical insights:

German Genealogy - German Emigration Records

http://www.genealoger.com/german/ger_emigration_records.htm

+ **Westfalen research** is reaching from Germany to America and you can access the details

at: www.amerikanetz.de

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SHARE the G-SIG FORUM! That's right -- if you know of someone who would be interested in reading this edition, why not FORWARD it to them? It only takes a moment to do and you may be praised by your friend or relative! This could open a new door of opportunity for others.

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