April 2026 German Schrift

Welcome to the newest edition of the German Genealogy Quarterly eNewsletter—the German Schrift! This newsletter will highlight the German Special Interest Group (SIG), featured German resources, research tips, and interesting places to visit.

German Special Interest Group

Review of the January 2026 Meeting:

Weather, weather, weather—you can probably guess what the issue was. Our in-person session was affected by the snowy conditions. Traveling would have been risky for our customers, and the libraries closed early that day.

Our planned presenter, Jerry G., has been rescheduled for April, so you still have a chance to come to MGC and hear his presentation. For those who did not receive the previous *Schrift*, Jerry, the current president of the local chapter of WYGIR, visited Germany in the 1960s and will share his photos and memories.

The virtual session went well—no major driving issues on my way to work, and the roads were manageable. Did I mention that I don't snow? I also love winter sports and tried to watch at least some of the events from the 2026 Olympic Winter Games in Milan, Italy, on TV.

The April SIG meeting will be on Saturday, April 18 at 2:00 PM (in person, Jerry - presenter), see the text above

The virtual session will be on Sunday, April 19 at 2:00 PM

LEARN MORE

What's Happening?

Branches & Bytes:
Exploring AI in Genealogy with Steve Little and Mark Thompson

April 18, 2026 | 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Artificial intelligence tools like ChatGPT are transforming genealogy, but where do you start?

Join Mark Thompson and Steve Little, co-hosts of the *Family History At Home* podcast, for an engaging seminar that cuts through the confusion and shows you how to use AI tools to become a better researcher and storyteller.

No technical background required. Just bring your curiosity and leave with confidence!

Sessions Include:
Introduction to AI for Genealogists
Turn Family Facts into Stories with AI
Supercharge Your Genealogy Research with AI
Unlock Hidden Details in Your Family Photos

Tickets are $40 which include a continental breakfast and lunch buffet.

LEARN MORE

Featured Resources

Midwest Genealogy Center Archives

A recent addition to the MGC archives is a German publication from the 1920s titled *Archiv für Sippenforschung und alle verwandten Gebiete*.

This journal, which was published in Germany, contains numerous articles on genealogy research as well as various resources for researchers, such as indexes of last names. Although the MGC archives contain many issues published between 1928 and 1930, the journal itself continued to be published in Germany through 1992.

MGC ARCHIVES

Midwest Genealogy Center Periodicals

The Report, A Journal of German-American History. Published by the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland. Baltimore.

MGC holds several issues—Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, 40, and 45. These include a variety of interesting articles, such as one on the indentured servant system. What makes this journal stand out is the rich historical content it provides, including information on German emigrants traveling from Bremen to Baltimore in 1854, along with their places of origin.

Some articles immerse readers in key historical events and explore the experiences of the first German settlers in Maryland and Virginia.

PERIODICALS

Featured Books

German Immigrants, Lists of Passengers bound from Bremen to NY, from 1847 to 1871, by Gary Zimmerman

The original lists of emigrants leaving Bremen were destroyed during World War II. However, this work is based on passenger lists of vessels arriving at New York, now in the custody of the National Archives. Not all Bremen passengers of the 1847-1854 period are included—only those for whom a specific place of origin is given, about 20,000 immigrants.The immigrants' names are arranged in alphabetical order, and family members are grouped together, usually under the head of household. Details concerning age, date of arrival, and the name of the ship are provided, as are specific citations to the original source material.

Research Tips

1. Use the cluster method when searching for your ancestor. If you cannot identify their place of origin, keep in mind that they often wrote letters back to their homeland, which sparked the interest of others—including people from neighboring villages—to emigrate. Research those who lived nearby, traveled with them, or acted as witnesses.
2. As mentioned before, if there is a suffix "-in" after a surname, it indicates a female. It refers to the same family, not a different one—just the feminine form of the name, regardless of whether she was married. For example, Schneider is the male form, and Schneiderin is the female form. Be careful when reading the full record, as Schneider can also refer to an occupation (a tailor). Typically, the surname appears first and the occupation second. For example: Heinrich Schneider, Müller (surname: Schneider; occupation: Müller).

Online Resource Tip:

Pennsylvania German Pioneers, Vol. II by Strassburger & Hinke was originally published in 1934 and is available on the Internet Archive. One unique feature of this resource is that it includes facsimile signatures—exact copies of the signatures of individuals who were able to sign their names. Since a signature can also refer to an occupation (a tailor). Typically, the surname appears first and the occupation second. For example: Heinrich Schneider, Müller (surname: Schneider; occupation: Müller).

https://archive.org/details/pennsylvaniagerm04strarich/page/n7/mode/2up

The 1975 edition, which MGC owns, includes variations in name spellings. For example, the surname Wetzel appears with several alternate spellings, including Wetzel, Wetzell, Wetsel, and Witsel (*PA German Pioneers*, Vol. II, Index of Pioneers, p. 685).

Also worth checking out is **Emigrants from Thuringia!**

Handy Tips for Traveling to Germany

Are you worried about being lonely while traveling—and how to get around? Don't worry! Germany is organized, and almost every community has a red and found office (*Fundbüro*), usually located at the *Rathaus* (town or city hall). Railroad and bus stations often have their own lost and found offices as well.

You can check these offices in person or search their online databases. Lost or forgotten items are typically stored for a few weeks, while valuable items may be kept for several months. If the items are not claimed, the local municipality will decide how to handle them, such as selling them at auction or donating them to charity.

Places to Visit

St. Louis, Missouri!

St. Louis, Missouri, and its historic German neighborhoods are worth exploring. As we feature the *Kirchenverein des Westens* in this issue, it's a great time to highlight St. Louis. Neighborhoods such as Gravois Park, Dutchtown ("Dutch" from Deutsch), and Hofmöller played an important role for German immigrants in the 19th century. Although their demographics have changed, you can still stroll through these areas and see historic brick buildings, churches, and landmarks that reflect the city's strong German heritage.

German newspapers, schools, and social organizations—such as the Turnverein (gymnastics and social clubs)—were all part of St. Louis's 19th-century cultural landscape. Today, the city and its surroundings continue to showcase this history through monuments, libraries, and museums.

Don't forget to visit the Genealogy Library, which has an excellent collection of DFB/DSB resources: https://www.slcl.org/research-learn/genealogy. And while you're there, be sure to try some German-inspired cuisine at local restaurants in the area.

More info can be found here.

If **St. Louis feels too close to home**, consider visiting **Leipzig, Saxony, Germany**!

A very important city during the time of the German Empire, Leipzig has long been synonymous with trade, publishing, and banking. Located in Saxony, it was the second-largest city in the former East Germany (GDR). The name Leipzig is derived from the Slavic word *lipa* (linden tree), earning it the nickname *Stadt der Linden*—the "City of Linden Trees." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe even referred to it as "Little Paris."

Leipzig has a rich history of book publishing dating back to medieval times. This legacy is preserved at the German Museum of Books and Writing (*Deutsches Buch- und Schriftmuseum*), founded in 1884 and now connected to the German National Library. As someone interested in books and their history, this museum would be a dream to visit. My parents have been to Leipzig—no, not yet.

Is classical music interests you (in addition to genealogy research), consider visiting the Bach Archive Leipzig, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), the renowned Baroque composer, is buried in Leipzig. In February 2026, it attended an organ concert—the Bach Organ Bowl Sonnig Organ Concert—where two recently discovered early works by Bach were performed by Ian Pracjek, a Grammy-nominated concert organist, pianist, and engaging speaker. It was truly a joy to experience live talent and feel uplift for connecting with the audience.

Fun and Learning

Little Pearls from the Books (or Periodicals)

The German Church on the American Frontier by Carl E. Schneider (1939). Call no. 285.876 Sch 57) is based on the history of the *Evangelischer Kirchenverein des Westens* (Evangelical Church Society of the West), covering the years 1840–1866.

One passage highlights the broader historical context:

"Thus we see that the Kirchenverein was founded not only at the time when European Lutheranism was establishing themselves in Missouri, but also when American Lutheranism was about to launch its most ambitious advance into the West." (p. 132)

Another emphasizes the cultural richness of German communities:

"Nevertheless, the most notable characteristic of German communities was the cultural interests and activities which developed particularly in urban centers. So the year 1840 there had been organized in St. Louis, the German Mutual Benefit Society (1837), the Academy (1837), the Sing Verein (1838), the Hotel's Debating Society (1839), and the Singing Academy (1840). Music was considered not merely a pastime but a means for refining the mind." (p. 29)

A particularly valuable feature of this book is the chart titled *The German-American Background for the Rise and Development of the Kirchenverein des Westens* (p. 11, not included in the online version). It illustrates key periods of religious development, tracing influences from figures such as John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli, through German Reformed and Lutheran traditions, to later movements including the Evangelical and Reformed Church, the Evangelical Church, the Salzburgers, and eventually the United Lutheran Church in America.

The book is also available online through the Archive.

What is this German word? Dust off their German dictionary from your shelf! More phrases you should know!

Zur E___e bes___et__et worden
(said to rest into the ground)

Im k___ch___n worden
(was buried)

K G ___ s t
(name-maker, cooper)

Sch___t___r___
(Mayor)

I___m m___ner
(Resident, dweller)

H e _ f g e _ ch _ ch t _
(Village story)

Proverb:
"Zwei Fliegen mit einer Klappe schlagen"

A very old proverb which means *to kill two birds with one stone*. Literally, to hit two flies with one hit.

Thank you. Danke schön.

Svetla B.