German Schrift: Special Holiday Edition

Welcome to a special 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 Research Discussion Group

Thank you to everyone who attended and made the special December 6th event so special and unforgettable! It was emotional, beautiful, and full of cherished memories—just the way it should be.

The event took place on St. Nicholas Day, December 6, one of the most significant days of the holiday season. Andrea, our special guest from another MCPL branch, added a unique touch by sharing heartfelt stories of her childhood holidays in Northern Germany.

Here are a few photos from the event:

Featured Resources

Midwest Genealogy Center Periodicals

German Life, December 2024 – January 2025

The December/January 2025 issue of *German Life* is the perfect way to close out 2024, offering insights into cherished German traditions, festive holiday recipes, and cultural reflections that inspire a fresh start to the new year. Dive into stories that celebrate the rich heritage and contemporary charm of Germany, from winter travel destinations to timeless customs.

PERIODICALS

Featured Books

The Secret History of Christmas Baking, by Linda Raedisch, 2023

This book takes you on a journey to the historical origins of gingerbread spices like cinnamon, cardamom, and ginger, as well as baking ingredients such as honey and sugar. Travel through India, Italy, and Germany as you explore the fascinating history. After a few chapters, you might even feel inspired to try baking some of the included recipes!

Fröhliche Weihnachten, by Linda Ravenhorst, 2007.

This book is designed for children to learn alongside adults about traditional German customs and traditions. Each section includes German text and the lyrics to well-known Christmas songs, allowing readers to sing along. A CD with narration and songs is also included. For those who love baking, the book features recipes for *Lebkuchen* (gingerbread cookies), *Zimtsterne* (cinnamon stars), and *Bratapfel* (baked apples).

Even More Titles:

Christmas in Germany by Jack Manning (2014)

Culture and Customs of Germany by Eckhard Bernstein (2004) - See an excerpt in the "Little Pearls from the Books" section.

MCPL also offers access to German Christmas songs online at ***AlexanderStreet.com***.

Research Tips

On December 6, 2024, the Holiday Edition event brought the spirit of German traditions to life. The program offered a delightful glimpse into the holiday season in Germany, complete with a presentation, fascinating stories, and resources to explore further. Here's a recap of the highlights:

Holiday Preparations

The holiday season in Germany begins well before Christmas with thorough household cleaning and festive baking. Popular treats include:

- *Lebkuchen* (honey-spiced cookies)
- *Aachener Printen* (specialty *Lebkuchen* unique to Aachen, PhD-certified)
- *Christstollen* (fruit-filled bread, famously made in Dresden) Learn more: Dresden Stollen
- *Lübeck Marzipan* – featured in *Schrift* January 2013: Carstens Marzipan

St. Nicholas Day (Der Nikolaustag) – December 6

On the evening of December 5, children place their shoes on windowsills or near doors. By morning, they find treats like fruits, nuts, and sweets. St. Nicholas, often accompanied by *Krampus* or *Knecht Ruprecht* (depending on the region), visits households dressed in bishop attire, delivering small gifts to children. Learn more: St. Nicholas Day

Christmas Eve (December 24)

Traditionally, families decorate the Christmas tree on Christmas Eve morning. The evening feast features dishes like goose, fish, potato salad, and desserts (*stollen*). Gifts are brought by the *Christkind*, with presents opened in the evening after the bells ring. The song *Stille Nacht* (*Silent Night*) celebrated its 200th anniversary in 2018. It was first performed on December 24, 1818, in Oberndorf, Austria, and traditionally, it is not sung before Christmas Eve.

Christmas Days (December 25-26)

- **First Christmas Day (Erster Weihnachtstag)** – A public holiday spent with family.
- **Second Christmas Day (Zweiter Weihnachtstag)** – Visits with extended family and friends, sharing desserts and admiring Christmas trees.

New Year's Eve (Silvester – December 31)

The holiday concludes with fireworks, champagne, and lively celebrations. A traditional New Year's speech by Germany's leader and the *Neujahrsansprungen* ski jumping event in Garmisch-Partenkirchen are holiday highlights. Watch the event: Neujahrsskispringen

Epiphany (January 6)

Known as Three Kings' Day, this marks the end of the Christmas season when tree ornaments are taken down.

Diving Deeper into German Traditions

The Holiday Edition presentation provided valuable resources to explore.

German Christmas Markets:

- *Dresden Striezelmarkt*: Over 500 years old and celebrating its 590th edition. Learn more
- *Nuremberg Christkindlesmarkt*: Famous for its rich history as the "Gingerbread Capital of the World." Learn more

Historical Artifacts:

Traditional *Printen* molds from the 17th century: Printenform examples

Continue Your Journey

For more insights into German holiday traditions and recipes, visit these featured links:

German Schrift (January 2012)
German Schrift (October 2021)

Thank you for joining us in celebrating the magic of the German holiday season. We hope this event brought joy and inspiration to your holiday traditions!

Bringing a Touch of German Christmas to Your Holiday Season

For those staying in the U.S. during the holidays, there are plenty of ways to infuse the season with *Heimat* (a sense of home) and *Gemütlichkeit* (coziness). One popular option is visiting Christkindlmarkets, which are held in various American towns.

Christkindlmarkets in the U.S.

Chicago

The most authentic Christkindlmarket in the U.S. is held in Chicago, organized by German American Events, LLC, a subsidiary of the German American Chamber of Commerce of the Midwest.
Visit the Christkindlmarket Website

Other German-Style Christkindlmarkets

Explore additional markets across the U.S. through these resources:

German Christmas Markets in the U.S. (Article)
Christmas Market Guides
Christmas Market Dates

Find a German Christmas Market Near You

Can you locate a German Christmas Market within a 100-mile radius of your location? If so, email us at mcpl@kcmo.org.

Gifts and Traditional Treats

For authentic gifts or famous Dresdner Stollen, check out stores like Vermont Country Store.

Tip: You can also bake your own stollen! I baked mine in a special stollen form purchased from a Scandinavian store in Independence, MO, where Midwest Genealogy Center is located.

Create a German Holiday Atmosphere

If you missed the holiday season at Midwest Genealogy Center, you can still bring a German touch to your holiday celebrations:

Rediscover Family Recipes and Traditions

Ask relatives for old recipes.
Look through inherited cookbooks or handwritten recipe notes. Find traditional recipes for treats like:
Springerle (anise biscuits) Recipe
Zimtsterne (cinnamon star cookies)
Vanillekipferl (crescent shaped vanilla walnut cookies)
Lebkuchen (gingerbread cookies)

Preserve Family Stories

Every family has a story connected to food. These stories and recipes are often passed down through generations, preserving cherished traditions.

Add a Musical Touch

Residents of Kansas City can enjoy performances by the local German band *Happy Wanderers*. They play traditional and modern songs from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Check out Happy Wanderers

If you're outside Kansas City, look for German bands or performances near you to add some musical charm to your holidays.

For a nostalgic finish, listen to this festive song, which we played as our closing piece at the Holiday SIG Meeting on December 6, 2024.

Watch on YouTube

Gingerbread Inspiration

Here's a glimpse of some gingerbread cookies from my own table and our Midwest Genealogy Center session in 2019.

Fun and Learning

Little Pearls from the Books

Customs and Culture of Germany, page 32: *"One of the strangest and very popular traditions is watching a 13-minute film on television, shot in black and white in 1963 and called "Dinner for One or the 90th Birthday." It has achieved cult status. It is in English, but every German seems to know by heart the dialogue exchanged by the nonagenarian Miss Miss Sophie and her butler James: "Same procedure as last year, Madam?" - "Same procedure as every year, James."*

What is this German word? Dust off that German dictionary from your shelf! Now, all the words start with 'E'.

W _ i h _ _ _ ch t _ _
Christmas

K _ _ p _ n
Candles

W _ _ _ n a ch _ _ b _ i e _ e r
Christmas carols

T _ _ _ n _ n _ _ a u m
Christmas tree

G _ _ sh _ k _ k e
Gifts

Ch r _ _ _ _ k t _ _ l m a _ _ t
Christmas market

Proverb:
"Fröhliche Weihnachten und Freues Neues Jahr!"

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Thank you. Danke schön.

Iveta B.

Note from the editor:

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for welcoming me to the German Special Interest Group on December 6. I really enjoyed learning more about German holiday traditions and was genuinely refreshed by seeing so many people come together to celebrate and appreciate the richness of German culture. It was a truly memorable experience—thank you for having me!

Hanna
Marketing Content Coordinator for Mid-Continent Public Library

Mid-Continent Public Library
15616 E. 24 Highway
Independence, MO 64050
mymcpl.org | Contact Us
Manage Subscriptions or Unsubscribe