July 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 April 2026 Meeting [Jerry's Journey to Germany in 1964]

As promised, Jerry S., the current president of the local chapter of AHSGR, attended our meeting and gave a fascinating look at Germany in 1964. We saw the photos he took along the way to document his journey. In Jerry's words, today he could take a thousand images and sort through them later, deleting the ones he didn't want. Back then, however, he was limited by the amount of film he could carry.

He documented his trip exceptionally well. We traveled with him from his home in Kansas to the port in New York, then by the *Aurelia* to Southampton, England, and on to the Port of Le Havre in France. From there, we walked the Champs-Élysées in Paris, visited the Musée du Louvre and its famous masterpieces—including the *Mona Lisa*, which wasn't protected the way it is today—and eventually arrived in Plorzheim, Germany. Through Jerry's photos, we also visited Munich, Berlin in West Germany, and even East Berlin behind the Berlin Wall.

It was an interesting and powerful presentation! I only wish more people had been able to attend. However, we had strong competition in the adjacent Community Hall, where the MGC Annual Spring Seminar was taking place that same day.

What's Happening?

The July SIG meeting sessions are slightly different this quarter. The virtual session will be on Saturday, while the in-person session will be in Sunday.

German Special Interest Group (Zoom)
Saturday, July 18 at 2:00 p.m.

German Special Interest Group
Sunday, July 19 at 2:00 p.m.

LEARN MORE

We are pleased to welcome Sheri V. from MGC as our presenter. Sheri created the presentation for the Hidden Treasures event, *Map Guide to German Parish Registers*, and it deserves to be shared again with our loyal audience. She will present on both Saturday and Sunday.

We featured the *Map Guides*... series as a valuable research resource in one of our very first *Schrift* issues - (see page 3). At that time, there were 10 Swiss volumes available in 2015. Are you curious how many German volumes are available now, in 2026? There's only one way to find out—join us for the July session! It's one you won't want to miss.

After Sheri's presentations, both sessions will be open for discussion. We look forward to your questions, hearing about where you may be stuck in your ancestral research, and learning about your latest discoveries. If you plan to attend, you can register here. If you would like to give a short presentation at a future meeting, please email mgc@mymcpl.org with "German SIG" in the subject line, or call and leave a message for Iveta.

Featured Resources

Midwest Genealogy Center Periodicals

Krefeld Immigrants and Their Descendants. Call No. Ref. 929.308931 KR71 v.1 (1984).

Take a look at the article **"The Founders of Germantown."** Read the opening pages to learn how the first 13 families from the small Rhineland town of Krefeld, near the Dutch border, arrived on October 6, 1683. They were all closely related by blood or marriage and belonged to a religious sect closely related to the English Quakers (p. 3). You'll also find the names of these early travelers, many of whom were linen weavers.

They were not the first Germans to arrive. In August of that same year, Daniel Pastorius and nine other German settlers reached Pennsylvania. Pastorius's full name was Francis Daniel Pastorius (born Francis Daniel Scigers). Born in 1651 in Sommerhausen, Franconia, he attended four universities and became a leader of the Frankfurt Pietists. When he arrived in Philadelphia, he first lived in a cave overlooking the Delaware River. Before establishing Germantown, he built himself a small house with windows made of oiled paper because glass was so scarce (p. 3).

PERIODICALS

Featured Books

Lists of Germans from the Palatinate Who Came to England in 1709, compiled by John Tribbeko and George Ruppelt (1990).

This small but valuable reference book includes the names of emigrants, along with their ages, family relationships, and church affiliations. It is shelved in the Passenger List area as Book No. 136.

The book may be especially helpful for those whose ancestors settled in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and other colonies and trace their lineage to the so-called Palatine settlers. The original list is preserved in the British Museum Library in London, England.

Research Tips

Online Resource Tip:

In May 2026, Matricula added the Catholic church records for the Diocese of Aachen to its website. One parish in particular caught my attention: **St. John Baptist Church in Krefeld**. I hope you've already had an "aha!" moment because you've heard of Krefeld before—or perhaps you read the Periodicals section above.

As a reminder, the 13 families from Krefeld (formerly spelled Crefeld) traveled on the ship *Concord* and joined Francis Pastorius, who had arrived six weeks earlier on the ship *America*. Together, they established Germantown, now part of Philadelphia, in 1683.

Although the newly added church records are much more recent than those covereganus 17th-century settlers, you can explore them to see whether those same family names remained common in the area. You can also search records from other parishes in the Diocese of Aachen here.

Matricula Online is a free resource for Catholic church records and is one of the most valuable and continually growing resources for German genealogical research. Because church records often provide the best documentation for tracing ancestors who lived centuries ago, they are an essential research tool. For earlier records, you can also search the FamilySearch Catalog for Krefeld here.

Handy Tips for Traveling to Germany

Before you go, be sure to check the websites of any museums and archives you plan to visit. Pay special attention to the opening hours of local district archives, as they often differ from larger institutions. Many close earlier than expected—especially on Fridays or during lunch hours—so planning ahead can save you a wasted trip.

Places to Visit

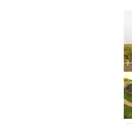
Dyersville, Iowa

Watch the German heritage video on YouTube.

While you're there, visit the basilica to admire its beautiful frescoes and paintings, created by European-trained artisans, especially Alphonse and Clotilda Breitmaier of Wisconsin. Be sure to see the "Luxembourger Window," which was donated by immigrants from the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

If you're looking for a great meal during your trip to this part of Iowa, drive about 20 miles northeast to Balltown and stop at **Breitbach's Country Dining**. Established in 1852 by German emmigrant Jacob Breitbach, it is the oldest continuously operating restaurant in Iowa. Today, it is still run by the sixth generation of the Breitbach family.

On the way from Dyersville to Balltown, you'll pass through New Vienna, a community originally settled by five German-speaking Catholic families. The town was named in honor of Austrian Emperor Francis I, who supported American Catholic missions. While there, visit **St. Boniface Catholic Church**, known for its beautifully hand-carved altars and the renowned Schoeller Tracker Organ. Be sure to admire the magnificent organ pipes, and watch this video to hear the organ in action.



If **Iowa feels too close to home**, consider visiting **Krefeld, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany**!

Known as the **Velvet and Silk City** (*Samt- und Seidenstadt*), Krefeld has a special place in German-American history. As mentioned elsewhere in this *Schrift*, Krefeld was the hometown of some of the first German emigrants to America. If you have the opportunity, it's well worth a visit. Many of these early settlers were linen weavers who continued their trade after settling in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania was named for William Penn, the English Quaker who traveled to Germany in the 17th century. Francis Daniel Pastorius, a lawyer by profession, served as Penn's agent in recruiting German settlers.

Given Krefeld's rich textile history, it's no surprise that the city is home to the **German Textile Museum**. Even if you aren't able to visit in person, it's worth exploring the museum online. Because historic textiles are sensitive to light, exhibits are rotated regularly, with individual pieces displayed only for limited periods.

While you're in the area—or exploring from home—read about nearby **Linn Castle**, whose origins date back to the 12th century.

Earlier, we mentioned the organ in New Vienna, Iowa. In Krefeld, Germany—the featured location in this issue—we also find a connection to organ building through A. August Gruters, an organ builder who lived and worked there in the 19th century.

Fun and Learning

Little Pearls from the Books

This time, an excerpt from the periodical *Krefeld Immigrants and Their Descendants*, Vol. 11, Spring 1994. Article: "Papermaking...in Rittenhouse Town 300 Years Ago."

"In 1688 WILLIAM RITTENHOUSE and his NICHOLAS arrived from Europe by personal invitation of William PENN and established what was the first, and for a time the only source of paper made in the colonies. In the following years, several new buildings were constructed on the banks of Monoshone branch of the Wissahickon Creek; one of them was a paper mill. . . In colonial times, paper was made in the same slow fashion as shoes, candles and other articles, one sheet every minute or so, by hand."

". . . Pulpmaking comes first. You put bits of rags and cloth (of natural fiber) into vats of water...you dip a screened-in wooden mold deep into a vat and very carefully bring the mold into view just under the surface of the water. . .you turn your newly made piece of paper from the screen onto a square of pressed felt. Later, additional moisture is squeezed out in a hydraulic press."

Also open the book Krefeld und die Pennsylvanien, by Strunz, *Auf Manno Simmons Spuren*, Germany, 1983 (in German, p. 45). See the chapter **"Die Auswanderung nach Amerika"** and the image of **Franz Daniel Pastorius als Führer und Betreuer der 13 Krefelder Familien**—a bronze cast based on a monument design by O. Schweizer.

In this issue: Now Let's Practice Something Different – A Little Test Like an encyclopedia, an online search, or this *Schrift* to find the answers:

1. What is the name of the place where the first group of Germans came from?
2. What is the name of William Penn's German agent?
3. What is the name of the ship on which the Krefelders traveled across the Atlantic Ocean?
4. Do you know the name of the ship on which Francis Daniel Pastorius traveled?
5. What is the website for browsing free online German Catholic records (not all records are available yet, but it is a growing database)?

Answers:

1. Krefeld (previously Crefeld)
2. Francis Daniel Pastorius
3. *Concord*
4. *Amerika*
5. Matricula Online

Proverb:
"Das billige ist immer das teuerste" literally means: **"The cheapest is always the most expensive."**

The meaning behind this saying is that inexpensive items may end up costing us more in the long run. It is a reminder to invest in quality rather than choosing something based only on the lowest price.

Perhaps the closest English equivalent would be: **"If you buy cheaply, you pay dearly."**

Thank you. Danke schön.

Iveta B.

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