October 2024 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 see.

German Research Discussion Group

Review of the July 2024 Meeting:

It seems that the in-person sessions are returning to their previous strength, steadily growing as they were a few years ago. If registration numbers continue to increase, we can arrange the tables differently to better facilitate group discussions.

A few important announcements:

The In-Person Quarterly Meeting will **not** take place in October. The Zoom session is scheduled for Sunday, October 20, 2024, at 2:00 PM, as usual.

German Special Interest Group (Zoom)
Sunday, October 20 | 2:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Start planning for the **December Holiday Edition 2024**! This in-person event will be on **December 6, 2024.** Our special guest will be Andrea, an MCPL librarian who was born and raised in Germany.

Be ready to share stories and memories, as much or as little as you like. Feel free to bring any Christmas decorations or share your family's special holiday recipes with others.

Many thank you calendars for January 18, 2025! The German SIG will meet in person on Saturday. We'll have Mike B. as our guest speaker, who will share his personal research journey. Mike is a thorough researcher who has reached out to German parishes and archives. Come hear his presentation and insights.

LEARN MORE

What's Happening?

At the last session, we heard several introductory family stories. One was from Bruce, whose ancestors came from Alsace, France. After the session, he sent me photos from his 2017 visit to Alsace. We'll be featuring these photos in upcoming newsletters, as he has graciously given us permission to use them. Thank you, Bruce!

Germany's only national holiday is German Unity Day (Tag der Deutschen Einheit), celebrated annually on October 3. Each year, a different city hosts the national festivities. Note: Other holidays are determined by individual states.

We also can't forget to mention Oktoberfest, which began in 1810 as a public celebration of the wedding of Crown Prince Ludwig of Bavaria and Princess Therese Charlotte Louise of Saxony-Hildburghausen. Following the wedding, the anniversary was celebrated annually, lasting for three weeks (from mid-September to the first week of October). Many American cities have established these festivities, organizing their own popular Oktoberfest celebrations. Be sure to check if there's one in your area—it's definitely worth a visit!

Featured Resources

Midwest Genealogy Center Periodicals

Pennsylvania Heritage, Summer 2024

Come to MGC and dive into the fascinating articles featured in this issue. Take a look at an image of one of the earliest gravestones preserved in Tulpehocken Valley. You'll find unique tombstones with intricately carved letters, symbols, and even special images like the crown and ring. Dare to decipher the text yourself! The article, titled "Carved in Stone, Revealed in Nee Light: Early Gravestone Carvers and Funerary Folk Culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch," is by F. J. Dorenkoper and M. B. Emery.

Another must-read is "Founding Economy" by S. J. Buffington. If you've ever heard of the Harmony Society, come explore a fresh perspective on this group of German immigrants, led by preacher George Rapp (1757-1847).

PERIODICALS

Featured Books

German Home Towns, Community, State, and General Estate 1648-1871, by Mack Walker, 1971

Come to MGC and explore the history of German towns from the 17th century onward. Learn about the functioning of cities and guilds, the reasons for emigration, life in the 1800s, and how entire communities have evolved over time.

This book is reserved exclusively for on-site use at the Midwest Genealogy Center.

Eighteen Century Emigrants From the Northern Alsace to America, by Annette K. Burgert

The Alsace Emigration Book, Vol. I. & Vol. II., by Cornelia Schrader-Ruggenthale

Why are these books important? They list the last residence in Europe! Specifically, for those in Alsace, a former territory of the German Empire. This is a crucial piece of information for researching German ancestors because records are not centralized. You'll need to consult the civil records and parish books in the locations (last residences) listed, such as those found in these books.

This book is reserved exclusively for on-site use at the Midwest Genealogy Center.

Research Tips

Online Resource Tip – A Helpful Tool for Deciphering Old German Text

Ready to tackle the challenge of reading old German handwriting? Visit this website to take a test and improve your skills:
[EKU German Handwriting Test](#)

As mentioned before, Genealogy.net —the largest German genealogy website—deserves frequent attention. This time, we're highlighting the **Name Distribution Map**. The map was created using war records: WWI casualty lists and the 1996 Telephone Book. The information was transformed into a valuable database that can help trace the origins of specific surnames. The residence of fallen soldiers, many born around 1890, provides a snapshot of where families were located, as people often stayed in the same place for centuries. By comparing data from 1996, you can see how surname distribution has shifted over the course of 100 years.

Handy Tips for Traveling to Germany

Did you know that Germans love their bread? Bread (Brot) is a staple, found on almost every table, and for many families, it's literally a daily ritual (täglicher Brot). You'll find an incredible variety of breads (and rolls—Brötchen), so be prepared to spend some time browsing in stores or bakeries before making a choice. Do your research! 😉

At MGC, we also have a book titled *Our Daily Bread*, which was featured in one of the early Schrifts. Although it's a fictional story, it offers a glimpse into daily life in Germany centuries ago. I even have my own copy!

Places to Visit

Weimar, Texas

Visit the Heritage Society Museum of Weimar! They recently announced on social media that they've acquired unique items for their collection—artifacts once owned by Paul von Hindenburg, who led the Imperial German Army in WWI and served as the second president of the Weimar Republic.

Also, don't miss St. Michael's Catholic Church in Weimar, Texas. Built by German and Bohemian settlers, the church features towering spires that resemble those in Europe. Take a self-guided tour and admire the craftsmanship. As their website notes, "The Gothic Revival architectural style reflects the central European heritage of the Czechoslovakian and German settlers."

Learn more here: **St. Michael's Catholic Church**.

Thuringia and Weimar, Germany

Visit Thuringia—the green heart of Germany! The Free State of Thuringia is one of the 16 states in Germany.

Plan your visit for the second weekend of October when the Weimar Onion Market takes place! This tradition dates back to 1653, when farmers from Hetzlesgrun would bring their onion harvest to the Weimar market, 30 miles away.

Weimar is also known for its Enlightenment period and as the home of famous composers like Goethe and Schiller. Later, it gave its name to the Weimar Republic (1919–1933), as the constitution was drafted and adopted here after Kaiser Wilhelm II's abdication at the end of WWI.

Visitors often stop at the Goethe-Schiller Monument (Goethe-Schiller-Denkmal), a bronze double statue of these two giants of German literature. It's one of the most beloved monuments in Germany. Four exact copies were made and installed in U.S. cities with large German-American populations: San Francisco, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and Syracuse.

Want to learn more about the fascinating resources Weimar has to offer? Check out their archives at this link:
Weimar Archives.

For further insights into life and politics during the Weimar era, explore this portal:
Weimar Republic Sources Portal.

If you'd like to fully immerse yourself in everything Weimar offers, consider exploring the **Klassik Stiftung Weimar**. Can you experience Weimar in one day? Yes! Find out how here:
Klassik Stiftung Weimar – One-Day Visit.

While you're there, take a coffee break at Samoza Café near the Duchess Anna Amalia Library. The library is worth a visit—don't miss the book horse! Learn more about Weimar online or in person. Still have energy? Explore all these places in one day, including the **Goethe and Schiller Archive**. Learn more here:
Klassik Stiftung Museums and Locations.

Fun and Learning

Little Pearls from the Books

In light of the Alsace pictures featured in this Schrift, we'll quote an excerpt from *Eighteenth Century Emigrants from Northern Alsace to America* by Annette K. Burgert (1992):

"The large number of Swiss families who moved into the area were Reformed, but they often settled in regions without a nearby Reformed parish, and their family names are not found in the Lutheran records. As the territories changed hands following the many wars that affected the region, the religious denominations also shifted." (Page 10)

"Canton Bern provided the majority of Swiss families to the Alsatian territories. In Hanau-Lichtenberg, over 1,100 Swiss families were identified, with 972 from Canton Bern, about 70 from Canton Zürich, and only a few from other Cantons. Several published works are available to assist with the study of Swiss migration to this area." (Helpful books listed on Page 11)

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

L e _ _ s e e i
Reading room

O _ t e r _ _ e e t ch _ _ t e
Place name (pastime)

L e _ e _ _ e r _ t
Microfilm/fiche reader

G e _ i t _ ! ch b _ _ t
Cozy environment or atmosphere, comfort

F _ _ s ch e n _
Research

E i n _ e _ _ n e g
Deposit

K a _ f b u ch _ _ _
Records of Purchases (Land Registry)

As more people travel to Germany, let's refresh a few common phrases:

Wie geht es Ihnen? Very common phrase – deserves to be remembered. *How are you? How everything's going with you?*

Möchten Sie deutschen? *Would you like to order?*

Ich verstehe nicht. *I don't understand.*

Es tut mir leid. *I am sorry.*

Sprechen Sie Englisch? *Do you speak English?*

Proverb:
Gehe nicht zu deinem Fürst, wenn du nicht gerufen wirst.

Literally: Don't go to your prince (master), unless you have been called. Now, the meaning might be as don't be proactive, wait until you are called, to possibly stay out of trouble.

Thank you, Danke schön.

Iveta S.