



Der Kurier

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Benefits of a MAGS Membership: A Case Study and User's Guide

By Debra A. Hoffman

Resources abound on the Internet for conducting German genealogical research. As a MAGS member, one of those important sites is the *Members* section of the website. To demonstrate its usefulness, let's walk through an example.

I am researching a small town in Hesse-Darmstadt called Wahlen.

My ancestral Weber family – including the 7-year-old boy William H. Weaver – left there in the 1830s to emigrate to the United States. The MAGS website has the following information on Hesse-Darmstadt.

1. There is a quick fact sheet available for Hesse-Darmstadt. When starting any research in a new location, it is beneficial to learn about the area. The quick fact sheets can help you do just that. They provide useful terminology like Grand Duchy in German is *Großherzogtum*. The sheet provides a timeline, so you can

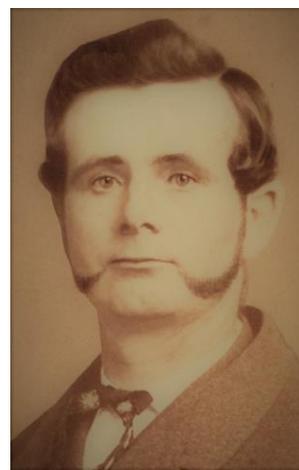
understand the important events that impacted Hesse-

Darmstadt. For instance, from 1806 to 1815, it became part of the Confederation of the Rhine.

The Grand Duchy had three provinces and Wahlen was located in the

Starkenbourg province. In 1834 when my Weber/Weaver ancestors emigrated to America, there is no indication of what push factors may have motivated them.

2. There is also a guide for “Using the Despatches from the American Consulate
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William H. Weaver

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MID-ATLANTIC GERMANIC SOCIETY

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Our mission: To stimulate and facilitate research on Germanic genealogy and heritage in the mid-Atlantic region

The Mid-Atlantic Germanic Society (MAGS) is a non-profit genealogical society founded in July 1982. Annual dues are only \$15 (individual) or \$20 (family). Add \$5 if you desire a printed copy of **Der Kurier** each quarter. Membership is open to all interested persons without regard to place of residence, nationality, or ethnicity. A membership application appears on the back cover and on our website. Benefits include:

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Benefits of a MAGS Membership: A Case Study and User's Guide

(Continued from cover)

to the Grand Duchy of Hesse-Darmstadt for Family History, 1835-1869." As MAGS President Kenneth Heger notes in the guide, the "records of American consulates hold great value for family historians [and] were a key component in American foreign policy." The guide demonstrates how you can document life in Hesse-Darmstadt. It provides information on population, religious affiliation, which was predominantly Lutheran; and occupations. It also provides information on emigration and states that, "every native of Hesse-Darmstadt is allowed to emigrate, provided he is free from debt and exempt from military service." There is also information on the protection of American interests, passports, and marriage contracts. Of special note is that there is an index to the Quarterly Statement of Fees, which includes more than 500 searchable names and is part of the MAGS databases that are online and accessible through the website. While the guide itself is available in the *Members* section of the website, it provides detailed information on accessing the original records at the National Archives.

However, do not despair if Hesse-Darmstadt is not the area you are researching. There are also guides available on the following areas:

- Hesse-Cassel
- Hesse-Homburg
- Nassau
- Oldenburg
- Luxemburg
- Schwerin
- Weimar

Another area to check out on the website is the MAGS Database search engine, which located 275 results for my ancestral name of Weber. Sadly, none of the results were for my ancestor. But that is okay because now that I have studied the



Palace of the Grand Duke in Darmstadt.

information on the MAGS website, I have a better understanding of Hesse-Darmstadt and have new sources to research!

Also available in the Members section are an abundance of links for conducting German research. There is information on the following topics:

- Germany, 1803-1919
- Germany, 1871-1919
- Germany, 1919-1945
- Germany, After 1945
- German-Speaking Countries
- Consulate Research Guides
- Language
- Maps
- Other Sources

If you like pictures, there is also an *Image Library* with 55 images. One of the images is of the Darmstadt Central Rail Station.

Take the opportunity to explore our website! You will be pleasantly surprised by the wealth of information available to help you research your German ancestors. The Board is working hard to continue to add valuable content regularly.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

By Dr. Kenneth Heger

What to Expect in 2017 ...

I'm delighted to report that 2016 ends on a good note for our Society. Let me begin by touting our successes. Our conferences and workshops attracted regionally and nationally known speakers, and focused on innovative topics; they were all well-received. Our website grew in size and utility. We added new Quick Fact Sheets and other guides to help you find information among original sources. We added hundreds of new names to existing databases.

Hopefully you also noticed that we posted two new databases, one indexing hundreds of names involved in settling estate cases through four consulates in Germany, and a second indexing thousands of names of people filing appeals before the federal Bureau of Pensions. These two new databases demonstrate the Board's commitment to making MAGS a nationally known organization. Join me in thanking our web committee (Bob Greiner, Carol Carmen and Roy Shiflet) for their excellent work on the website. Gunter Schanzenbacher, our membership chair, reported this all resulted in a 5 percent increase in membership; that's a good start.

The coming year looks to be even more successful for MAGS. We have several exciting conferences lined up for you. Keep your eyes open for updates on our website. In addition, we are instituting our first midyear workshop. Back by popular demand, Bob Greiner will reprise his very successful workshop on German script. Jim Beidler, our editor, reports that he has numerous thought-provoking articles in the queue for *Der Kurier*. Take special notice of Debra Hoffman's article on sources available through MAGS relating to Hesse-Darmstadt and Bob Greiner's article on consular estate case files in this issue.

Plans to expand the content on our website are proceeding at a good pace. Here are a few highlights of what we are working on for 2017:

- MAGS Board member Debra Hoffman is working on an index to the names of students who attended the Columbia Institution for the Deaf in Washington, DC; it will contain the names of hundreds of people from throughout the United States and provide references as to where to find additional information on them.
- MAGS Board member Gunter Schanzenbacher and Scott Harkless (a student at the University of Maryland) will expand our index of names of overseas pensioners adding documents for the years 1907 -1917; as a companion we will have an index of names of pensioners living overseas included in the 1883 Pension Bureau Annual Report.
- MAGS member Cindy Scharf is working on an index to unpublished appeals case files among the records of the Pension Bureau for service between the War of 1812 and the Spanish-American War.
- MAGS member Klaus Hein is working on an index to World War II conscientious objector files. These records are filled with information on tens of thousands of German Americans nationwide, e.g. Amish, Mennonite, Dunkards, and Brethren.
- MAGS Board members Bob Greiner, Carol Carmen and Roy Shiflet will continue to populate the website with visual images of Germany, Switzerland, and the Austrian Empire
- I have several projects in the pipeline. First, there are guides to additional State Department records relating to Hesse-Darmstadt to expand those we already have online. Later in the year I hope to have completed similar guides to help you find information relating to the Grand Duchy of Baden, the

Bavarian Palatinate, and *Reichsland* Alsace-Lorraine. When done, you will have information on thousands of people and documentation of marriages, deaths, births, passports, estate cases, whereabouts of relatives of American citizens, protection of American citizens overseas, and pensioners living aboard. These products will consist of Quick Fact Sheets, guides to records, lists of names, visual images, and new databases to provide a searchable aspect to the research guides.

Finally, I cannot close without reporting that MAGS's work is beginning to attract national attention. Board member John Frank represents our Society on a new international organization, the International German Genealogy Partnership. This group consists of societies from around the world. He reports that it will hold its first conference next July in Minneapolis. I'm happy to inform you that MAGS is fortunate enough to have four members as invited speakers at that conference: Jim Beidler, Debra Hoffman, Fritz Juengling, and myself. What a great opportunity to reach a wider audience and extoll the values of a MAGS membership.

This all means that MAGS has made great progress and has a bright future. How can you help? First you can keep your membership current. A lapse in membership will result in loss of access to our ever-expanding website. Second, spread the work about MAGS; as Debra points out in her article in this issue of *Der Kurier*, you don't need to live in the Mid-Atlantic or even attend every conference or workshop to benefit from membership. Third, we always have opportunities for volunteers to help us with web content, social media, publicity and outreach. Please consider helping MAGS in any or all of these three areas.



The Mid-Atlantic Germanic Society

USING THE DESPACHES¹ FROM THE AMERICAN CONSULATE IN WEIMAR FOR FAMILY HISTORY, 1893-1906

By Kenneth W. Heger

INTRODUCTION

This Guide is one in a series discussing a specific body of records. With the proliferation of quick on-line searches of the traditional sources for genealogists, such as Federal and State censuses, military service records, newspapers, etc., many family historians are seeking new sources of information. These Guides will help you find them.

The Guide's purpose is to present research notes for a discrete set of records. It will alert you to a potential new source of information and discuss how you might use the documents. Guides may focus on records of an office, a bureau, one individual, a consulate, etc., providing an overview of a larger set of records. Other Guides may focus on a small set of records exceptionally rich in documents, such as a single volume or file designation. Along the way, the Guide will suggest why the records are important, provide you with specific examples of documents that refer to

¹ This spelling of the word "despatch" is the official term of art the Department of State used. You should use that spelling when you cite the records.

individuals, and documents that provide you with insight into your ancestor's quality of life. It will also supply you with citations to access the files if you want to delve deeper into the records. The Mid-Atlantic Germanic Society (MAGS) will host these Guides on the members-only portion of the Society's website.

This Guide discusses the despatches from the American Consulate at Weimar.

CONSULAR DESPATCHES

Although they can be difficult to use, records of American consulates hold great value for family historians. Consulates were a key component in American foreign policy; they were the eyes and ears of the American government in localities throughout the world. American Foreign Service personnel operating out of these offices abroad kept the Department of State abreast of political and economic developments in the local area, supported American companies wanting to do business abroad, and cared for the well-being of American citizens. A critical part of this communication with the Department of State in Washington, DC came in the form of documents called despatches.

Consular despatches are generally formal documents. They read like reports, and can contain statistical data. Although they rarely include extensive references to individual Americans, they provide valuable information that illustrates what life was like in the consular district. For people writing a biography of a particular branch of the family or even a broader history of their family, this type of information provides the necessary background details.

CONSULATE IN THE GRAND DUCHY OF SAXE-WEIMAR

The city of Weimar was the capital city of the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar, one of the Thuringian States. Between 1815 and 1866 Saxe-Weimar was a member state of the German Confederation. When the German Confederation ceased to exist in the aftermath of the Seven Weeks War, Saxe-Weimar became a member state of the new Prussian-dominated North German Confederation. In 1871 it became a member state of the German Empire.

Although small, the Grand Duchy of Saxe-Weimar had a vibrant and diversified economy. Its chief industries were industrial glass making (e.g., for thermometers and optical products), textiles, toy production, and potash mining. Because American companies imported many of the goods produced in the area, the Department of State decided it would be helpful to American businessmen to establish a Commercial Agency in the Grand Duchy's capital. The fact that Weimar was also the capital of a constituent state of the German Empire sealed the deal.

In 1893, the Department of State established a commercial agency in Weimar, and six years later elevated the post to the rank of a consulate to reflect growing American commercial interests in that part of Germany. The consulate remained open for approximately another seven years. By 1906 American trade with Weimar area had decreased to the point that the Department of State left the post vacant when the consul transferred to the Consulate at Boma in the Congo Free State (the Belgian Congo). In 1908, the Department of State closed scores of foreign services posts

throughout the world to streamline its operations; Weimar was among them. The post at Weimar officially closed in June 1908.

AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE PERSONNEL IN WEIMAR

- Thomas Ewing Moore of the District of Columbia Appointed Commercial Agent – 19 August 1893
- Thomas Ewing Moore Elevated to the Rank of Consul – 6 January 1899
- Clarence Rice Slocum of New York Appointed Consul – 8 March 1905
- Will L. Lowrie of Illinois Appointed Consul – 21 September 1906

THE DESPATCHES FROM WEIMAR

LITTLE CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION

Unlike many despatches American foreign service personnel sent, those the Commercial Agent to Weimar sent do not contain a wide range of topics. There is virtually no information about local political, economic, social and religious conditions. The despatches relating to the Agency's administration are equally as disappointing. Rather than shedding light on how the Agency operated, most of the administrative despatches pertain to the Agency's supplies and leaves of absence for the Agents.

A WEALTH OF INFORMATION ON INDIVIDUALS

What the despatches lack in contextual information, they more than make up for in documenting American citizens in the Agency's district. The number of death reports is striking, especially given Saxe-Weimar's small size. This is a gift to family historians. The following list provides you with citations to these despatches.

Despatch 19 August 1895 – Gentle Child

This despatch reports the birth of a child to American parents Thos. N. Gentle, of Illinois, and his wife May Gentle, nee Kessler. The child was born in Jena.

Despatch 4 October 1895 – Gentle Child

This despatch provides more information on the Gentle child. The child's name was Catherine Margaret; the mother's full name was Carrie May Gentle.

Despatch 24 June 1896 – Johann Grünberg

This document reported the death of Johann Grünberg at Arnstadt. The report includes the date and cause of his death. It mentions names of other family members.

Despatch 28 July 1896 – Henry Wolf

This document reports the death of pensioner Henry Wolf, a Civil War veteran. The report includes the date and cause of his death as well as his Civil War military unit.

Despatch 4 December 1896 – Henry Wolf

This despatch contains the claim of Ernst Starkloff, a local businessman, for expenses he incurred relating to Wolf's death.

Despatch 16 December 1896 – Bertha Kluchhohn

This despatch reports the death of Bertha Kluchhohn. It includes an inventory of her possessions at the time of her death.

Despatch 18 May 1897 – Arthur Abell and Julie Loeser

This despatch reported the marriage of Arthur Maynard Abel and Julie Auguste Loeser. It includes a copy of their marriage contract; the contract contains information on the couple's families.

Despatch 15 December 1897 – Henry Wolf

This despatch contains more information on Ernst Starkloff's expenses claim relating to the death of pensioner Henry Wolf.

Despatch 7 February 1899 – Anna Knotzsch

This despatch reports the death of Miss Anna Knotzsch. It includes the date and cause of her death.

Despatch 6 February 1901 – Max G.F. Wagner

This despatch contains a great deal of information on Max G.F. Wagner, a naturalized American citizen, who was arrested and ended up in a state-run hospital. The documents include a transcript of the Agent's interview with Wagner and a letter the "poor, blind" Wagner dictated for delivery to the President of the United States.

Despatch 21 March 1901 – Karl H. Brand

This despatch reports the death of Karl H. Brand. It includes his age, the date and cause of his death, a printed death report, and an inventory of his possessions at the time of his death.

Despatch 27 June 1901 – Max G.F. Wagner

This despatch continued the story of Wagner's plight. It is a large file consisting of several documents, many of which are in German.

Despatch 20 September 1901 – Max G.F. Wagner

Most of this despatch relates to President McKinley's death. Enclosure number nine is a letter from Max Wagner about his situation.

Despatch 6 November 1901 – Adeline Helene Schoder

This despatch reports the death of Adeline Helene Schoder. It includes the date and cause of her death, her husband's name, and a printed death report.

Despatch 23 August 1902 – Henry Brimmer

This despatch reports the death of pensioner Henry Brimmer. It includes the date and cause of his death.

Despatch 9 September 1903 – Ferdinand Hans

This despatch reports the death of pensioner Ferdinand Hans. It is an exceptionally rich document that includes

- The date and cause of his death
- The place of his death – Neudietendorf
- His wife's name; Charlotte (see Despatch 13 December 1906 for her death report)
- The dates he immigrated to the United States and when he returned to Germany
- His military unit (Co. G., 5th Iowa Volunteer Cavalry)
- A printed form reporting his death

Despatch 16 September 1903 – George Jagemann

This despatch includes information on the probate of George Jagemann's will. Jagemann died in Chicago, Illinois but had relatives in Germany. The despatch consists of several documents, some of which are in German, and contains the names of a host of relatives.

Despatch 5 February 1905 – Charles S. Pine

Pine was an American businessman. The Royal Prussian Railroad fined him for delivering substandard material. This despatch mentions the fine and reports that the railroad reduced the fine.

Despatch 31 March 1905 – Edward Stiebritz

This despatch reports the death of Edward Stiebritz. It includes the cause and date of his death; there is a printed form reporting the death.

Despatch 22 August 1905 – Ida N. Bokum

This despatch pertains to an inquiry about the whereabouts of Miss Ida N. Bokum of Ft. Reed, Florida. The Agent reported that no one in his district knows her.

Despatch 20 September 1905 – Edmund Franke

This despatch reports on Edmund Franke's request for assistance to marry a German woman. Specifically Franke wanted to know what documents he would need to obtain in order to satisfy local German authorities so he can get married. Franke was from Brownwood, Texas.

Despatch 13 February 1906 – Charlotte Louise Hans

This despatch reports the death of pensioner Charlotte Louise Hans. It is a large file that includes the date and cause of her death, several documents in German, and a printed form reporting the death. Note: Despatch 9 September 1903 is the death report for her husband Ferdinand Hans; she was still living in Neudietendorf when she died.

Despatch 6 April 1906 – Heinrich Demme

This despatch reports the death of pensioner Heinrich Demme. It includes the date and cause of his death, his residence at the time of his death (Mülhausen in Thuringia), and a printed form reporting the death.

Despatch 13 June 1906 – Maude Wilson Hatfield

This despatch reports the death of Maude Wilson Hatfield. It includes the date and cause of her death, a printed form reporting her death, the fact that she had a connection with Baltimore, Maryland, and that her family currently lived in Evanston, Illinois.

ACCESSING THE RECORDS

These despatches are part of National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Record Group 59, General Records of the Department of State, and form part of a huge series of records consisting of despatches from consular officers worldwide. In order to provide quick and easy access to these records, NARA microfilmed all of these despatches. The despatches discussed in the article are available as NARA microfilm publication **T705, Despatches from American Consuls at Weimar, September 22, 1893 – August 22, 1906**. There is only one roll of microfilm in this publication. You will need that information to examine the records.

You can access the microfilm in NARA's facility in College Park MD (also known as Archives II). You did not need an appointment. Because all microfilm publications are in cabinets in the Microfilm Research Room you do not need to worry about pull times; access to the rolls is self-serve. You can also make copies from the microfilm on printers in the Microfilm Research Room.

Keep in mind that the despatches are arranged in chronological order.

Estate Files from American Consulates in Germany: Brake, Königsberg, Mainz

By **Bob Greiner**

Hidden gems of genealogical value can be uncovered in many unexpected places, if you know where to start digging. Even if you know where to look, the nuggets may be hard to extract from surrounding detail. The State Department records at the National Archives described here contain historical family information you might find valuable. It focuses on several United States Consular Service posts in Germany.

The consular officer¹ in charge of a post was required to maintain a variety of files, such as logs of incoming and outgoing correspondence. A separate set of files was kept for correspondence about personal estates handled by the officer. These files contain potentially valuable information for a researcher with family connections to Germany. The National Archives has cataloged these files and makes them available for research at their facility in College Park, Maryland.

An officer would usually become involved with an estate at the request of a citizen or legal representative – American or German – seeking relatives of a deceased person in the other country to settle an estate. Sometimes people heard about the death of a relative in the other country and sought to obtain a share of what they hoped would be a large inheritance. Other personal situations requiring international coordination, such as divorce or debt proceedings, were also found in these record series.

While it is possible for a citizen of one country to initiate legal proceedings in another, it would be impractical and overwhelming for the average person. The language barrier would be a major deterrent for many people trying to communicate with foreign officials. Unfamiliarity with a foreign legal system and the cost of hiring a lawyer to pursue a case were other common reasons to use the services of a consular officer. Since the officer resided in Germany and presumably was fluent in the language, he was a logical choice to serve as a conduit between Americans and the German legal system – or vice versa.

Heinrich (Henry) Ringen, a New York grocer, died on 25 Jun 1896 onboard the steamship SS Havel en route to Bremerhaven. He was most likely returning to Germany to visit his family. Wilhelm Clemens, the consular agent at Brake, was asked to contact Heinrich's family in Germany to settle his estate. Heinrich's brother Claus was the only surviving relative. To verify that information, the court in Kings County, New York, required proof. The pastor of the Evangelical Church in the village of Rhade in Hanover sent an official letter documenting the birth and death dates of Heinrich's parents and siblings. It was essentially a family group sheet. (See Figure 1 at end of article) In addition, the Standesbeamte (local official) of Rhade sent copies of death records for the parents and siblings. Heinrich's death certificate was registered in the town of Atens, near the port town of Nordenham, north of Brake. This demonstrates the potential for finding original documents and genealogical information in the estate files.²

The records I reviewed were from the turn of the century – roughly between 1890 and 1910. They included documents from the consulate at Mainz, as well as consular agencies at Königsberg and Brake. In each case the post maintained a separate case file for each estate. The files include all correspondence received about the case, but generally not copies of letters sent. (Other record series for these posts contain copies of letters sent.) The result is that frequently you only get one side of the story from the estate files, although over a period of time the results of the investigation usually become apparent. Since the agent corresponded with German officials and citizens, much of the correspondence received was handwritten in German script. Many of these documents can be difficult to transcribe and translate.

Since this was before the time of instant communication, it could take weeks for correspondence to the States to be answered. Due to legal processes in both countries, months or years could pass before an estate was settled and legacies were paid. A lawyer in the United States might write to the consul requesting assistance to locate legitimate heirs of a deceased American citizen living within his area of jurisdiction in Germany. The consul would write to a local German official to request further information. The response might include a list of relatives and their addresses. After corresponding with those relatives to obtain more information, the consul would notify the lawyer of his findings. After deliberations in the U.S. court system, the lawyer might write back requesting more information. Frequently the consul was given a power of attorney to conduct legal business on behalf of the client. Sometimes an official document or deposition was required from Germany to satisfy legal requirements in the U.S., which the consul would certify.

The consular officers did not do this for free. They were usually very quick to inform the requester of the fees they would charge, whether or not a person was found or there was a satisfactory settlement. The customary fee was 5 percent of whatever funds were recovered. Typically, the officer would receive an estate settlement directly from a lawyer. He would deduct his fee and send the remainder to the heirs in proportion to their inheritance. According to the 1905 issue of the Civil Service Register, the compensation for consular agents Eckhardt at Königsberg and Clemens at Brake was based totally on the fees they were able to collect. Mr. Schumann received a salary of \$2,500 a year as consul at Mainz.³

*Emil Klein, of New York City, wrote to Mr. Schumann at Mainz to request his help in settling the estate of Emil's parents, Christoph and Wilhelmine Klein in Darmstadt, Hesse. Emil eventually received \$4,207 from the estate in May 1904. However, he was very dissatisfied – expecting at least 10,000 Marks more from his siblings in Germany. He expressed his concerns in many long letters to the consul, which are preserved in the file.*⁴

The officers spent much time and incurred frequent frustration dealing with authorities on both sides of the Atlantic. In some cases they were forced to accept a reduced fee due to extenuating circumstances. Citizens in both countries were frequently upset by the fact that they had to give up a portion of what they might inherit, but in most cases it appears that the agent was fairly compensated for his efforts. A New York lawyer, in response to an earlier letter from the consul at Frankfurt wrote:

*We note what you state regarding the entire business of attending to legal business for parties residing in Germany. There is no doubt that Consuls are not always thanked for what they do and that people often fail to appreciate the work done for them. Such cases, on the whole however, are exceptional; and our experience is that in rather a majority of cases German claimants make satisfactory clients.*⁵

I extracted names of people mentioned in these files and added them to the Consular Estates database on the MAGS website. I abstracted information about each case into a document that is posted along with the database description on the site. If a file included extensive family information or other interesting documents, I took digital photographs of the papers. These are available on request from the MAGS webmaster.

If you are fortunate enough to find a name of interest in this database, there could be a wealth of information in the case file. It could provide that elusive link back to your German ancestral village. Although these files are publicly available at the National Archives, it is not a typical source a researcher would search for German ancestors. Because they have never been indexed, the records are difficult to search for a specific person. Due to the nature of the files, they will probably never be digitized or placed online. The effort by MAGS to extract names from these files makes them readily accessible for the first time. You can find several other databases of names from National Archives record groups on the MAGS website.

In a future article I will describe the estate files from the consulate at Frankfurt, Germany. There are more than 200 cases found there between the years 1889 and 1905.

Record descriptions

The following paragraphs briefly describe the consular posts in Germany that were reviewed for this article. Each section includes an overview of the records found for each post.

Brake, Oldenburg

Brake is a port city on the west bank of the Weser River, north of Bremen. It was originally part of the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, but today is in Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen). The port of Bremerhaven is on the east side at the mouth of the river. This consular agency was strategically located to serve U.S. commercial interests at one of the major German ports of the 19th century. It was subordinate to the consulate at Bremen. The consular agent during the period encompassed by these records was Wilhelm Clemens. He served from 1885 until the agency closed in 1916.

There are only six cases in this file for the period 1891 – 1897. Five of them are for persons who died on board a ship en route to Bremen. The files contain several loose papers for each case. The agent contacted relatives of the deceased person in Germany and took care of forwarding the deceased's remaining possessions to them. Two of the files contain copies of birth and death records used to prove relationship to the deceased. The others mention the heirs and their residence.

Königsberg, East Prussia

Königsberg was a port city on the Baltic Sea and the capital of East Prussia during the latter part of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The area was captured by the Russians in World War II and was annexed to Russia after the war. The city was renamed Kaliningrad in 1946 and is now the capital of the Kaliningrad Oblast, an area physically separated from Russia itself. This was a very important and historical city, but was totally destroyed by allied bombing during the war.

Although the title of this record does not contain dates, the records are all from the first decade of the 1900s. The consular agent during that period was Alexander Eckhardt. There are 14 cases represented in this series, all consisting of loose papers. The majority of them represent either a person who died in the United States with relatives or heirs in Germany, or someone who died in Germany with heirs in the U.S. One case involved a woman residing in Germany who sought a divorce from her husband in the U.S. In addition to the names of related persons and their residence, one case contains a family group sheet of the Friedrich Dors family in East Prussia.

Mainz, Hesse-Darmstadt

Mainz was a principal city in the Grand Duchy of Hesse and by Rhine, normally referred to as Hesse-Darmstadt. Today it is the capital of the state of Rhineland-Palatinate (Rheinland-Pfalz). The records in this series cover the period 1900 – 1906 when Walter Schumann was the consul. He retired as the consul in 1907 and remained in Mainz, where he died in 1929.

There are nearly three dozen cases in this file, plus several that were combined into one miscellaneous file. They are loose papers sorted into a manila folder for each case. The name of the deceased (or other primary person) was written on the outside of the folder. The loose sheets are tied together at the lower left corner by a loop of twine, sometimes making it difficult to lay the sheets flat.

Three of the cases were divorce situations, usually where one of the parties in Germany sought to finalize a divorce that was never properly recorded. One case involved an American citizen – apparently mentally unstable – who traveled to various spas in Germany but never paid her bills. The bills arrived at the consulate with the expectation that they would be paid.

The remainder of the cases represent estates of deceased persons in Germany or the U.S. Several of the files include some sort of family chart or list of relatives in Germany. A few contain copies of civil

birth and death registrations that were used as proof of relationship. Many have a copy or synopsis of the deceased's will.

Accessing the records

These records are not digitized, so you must travel to the National Archives facility at College Park, Maryland, to view them. They can be retrieved from the Textual Reference research room on the second floor of the facility. You will need all of the following source information to access the records. Give the information to the reference specialists, and they will show you how to look up the shelf reference and fill out the required forms.

You submit the form for a specific pull time and wait for the records to be retrieved from the shelf. See this website for information about visiting the facility in College Park, Maryland. Note the restrictions on what can be brought into the research room.

<https://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/>

Record Group 84, Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State:

- Records of the American Consular Agency at Brake, Oldenburg, Germany; Papers relating to Estates of Deceased Americans, 1891-1897; Box 3; NAID 1323993
- Records of the American Consular Agency at Königsberg, Prussia, Germany; Inheritance, Debt & Divorce Cases; Volume 7; NAID 1327129
- Records of the American Consulate at Mainz, Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany; Estate Case Files, 1900-1906; Box 1; NAID 1327360

¹ There were several levels of consular officers in foreign countries at this time. The consul was in charge of a consulate for a specific area. He could have a deputy or vice-consul. A consular agent served as a subordinate to the consul at a nearby city, frequently a port city, to conduct business on behalf of the consul. The consulate at Bremen had agents at Brake and Bremerhaven. A larger city with subordinate consulates (e.g., Frankfurt) was called a consulate general. It was headed by a consul general. (Description from *United States Consular Regulations, Department of State*, quoted in *Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance of the United States, Issues 1 – 3*, Bureau of Statistics, Department of the Treasury, p. 763; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=bpcyAQAAMAAJ>)

² Heinrich Ringen estate, Box 3; Papers relating to Estates of Deceased Americans, 1891 – 1897; Records of the American Consular Agency at Brake, Oldenburg, Germany; Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD; NAID 1323993

³ *Congressional Directory, 59th Congress:1st Session*, contained in *United States Congressional Serial Set*, p. 331; Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1906, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=hvM3AQAIAAJ>

⁴ Christoph & Wilhelmina Klein estate, Box 1; Estate Case Files, 1900 – 1906, Records of the American Consulate at Mainz, Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany; Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD; NAID 1327360

⁵ Harriett Erskine estate, Box 363; Closed Estate Cases, 1896 – 1897, Record of the Consulate General at Frankfurt-am-Main, Germany; Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD; NAID 1326008

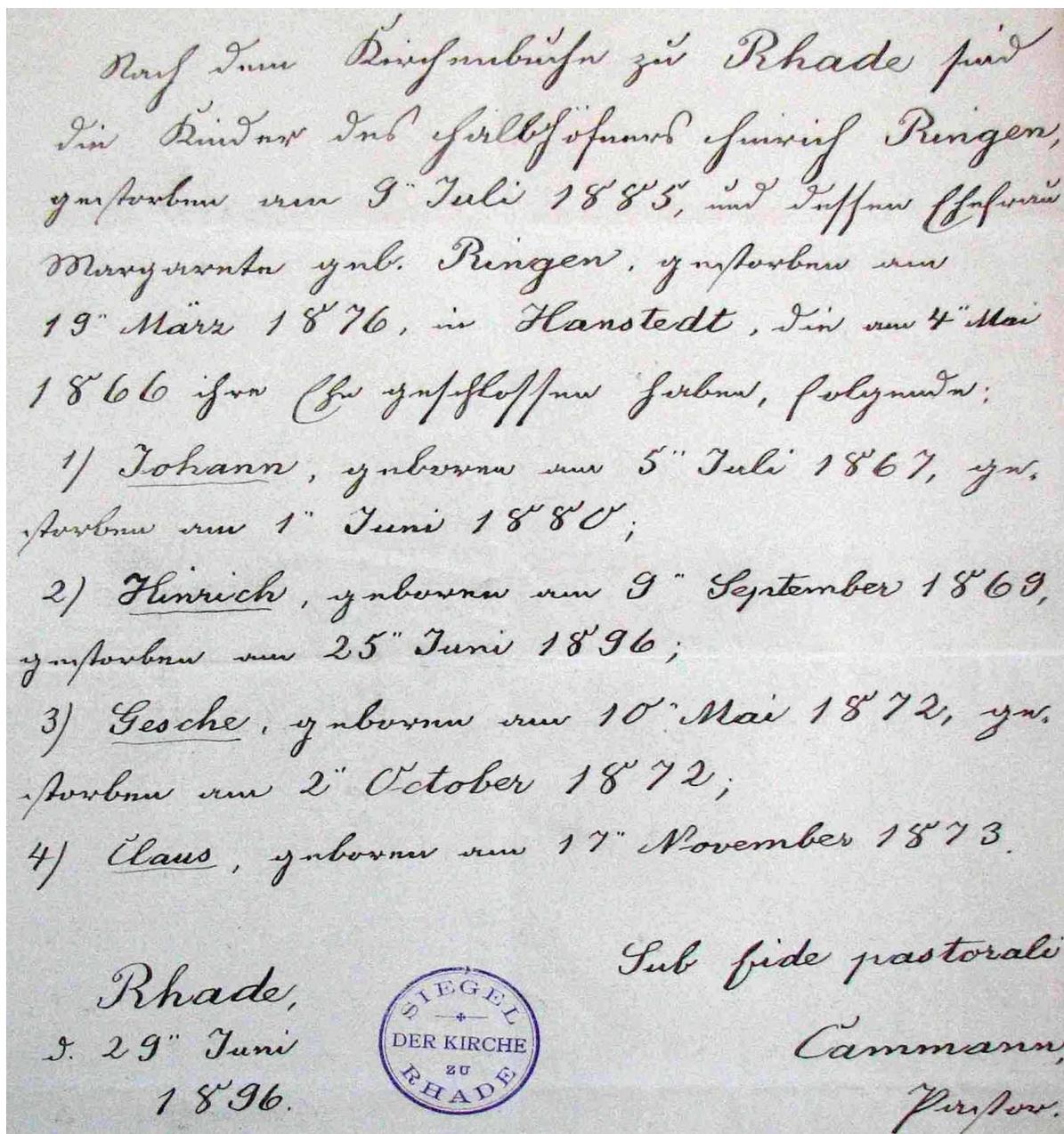


Figure 1

Translation:

From the church book at Rhade, Grand Duchy of Oldenburg:

Hinrich Ringen, farmer of a half-sized farm (Halbhöfner), d. 9 Jul 1885, Hanstedt
m. 4 May 1866

Margareta Ringen, d. 19 Mar 1876, Hanstedt

Children:

1. Johann, b. 5 Jul 1867, d. 1 Jun 1880
2. Hinrich, b. 9 Sep 1869, d. 25 Jun 1896
3. Gesche, b. 10 May 1872, d. 2 Oct 1872
4. Claus, b. 17 Nov 1873

Rhade, 29 Jun 1896

Under the pastoral faith, Cammann, Pastor

Description of U.S. Consular Agents' Duties

By Bob Greiner

One of the exciting aspects of research in the National Archives is the discovery of unexpected documents. Sometimes a file will contain an original document with personal information about a United States citizen. In other cases the document may provide a contemporary account of historical events, or just shed more light on conditions of the time and place. Here is a good example of the latter.

Wilhelm Clemens was the consular agent appointed to the port towns of Brake and Nordenham, Germany, from 1885 until 1905. These towns are located on the Weser River, and together with Bremerhaven served as ports for the city of Bremen, further upriver. Brake and Nordenham were towns in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg at the time. Bremen was an independent city surrounded by the Prussian Province of Hannover. The port of Bremerhaven, although physically separated from Bremen by 40 miles, was considered part of that city.

You may be unfamiliar with the function of a consular agent and how his role relates to that of a consul. What were the duties of a consular agent? The following description was extracted from the document *United States Consular Regulations*, published in 1903 by the Department of State.¹

*Consular agents are consular officers subordinate to their principals, exercising the powers and performing the duties within the limits of their consular agencies, but at ports or places different from those at which their principals are located. Their functions are not, in all respects, as extensive as those of the principal officer. Though they act at places different from the seat of the principal office and their duties are in substance the same persons desiring consular services, they act only as the representative of the principal and are subject and subordinate to him. They are not authorized to correspond with the Department of State unless through the principal or under exceptional circumstances; they make no returns or reports directly to the Department, and they are not permitted to render accounts or make any drafts for expenditures on the Departments of the Government unless under express instructions.**

** Consular agents are in many cases natives and citizens of the countries in which they serve, though the regulations state that "In all cases where it is practicable consular agents should be citizens of the United States and none other should be recommended for appointment unless citizens of proper character and status can not be found."*

Clemens himself provides an even clearer description of his duties. Contained within a volume of outgoing letters from Brake maintained by the National Archives is a document written by Clemens dated 29 August 1896.² In the report, which was obviously written for the benefit of his superior, the consul at Bremen, Clemens described the towns of Brake and Nordenham, their port facilities, and principal trade items. Following that, he mentioned his principal duties, then added his personal history. While interesting in itself, the discovery of another document adds a bit more to this account.

By a resolution of March 1901, the United States Senate requested the Secretary of State to provide an accounting and status of every consulate and consular agency. John Hay, Secretary of State under Theodore Roosevelt, provided a complete report to the Senate in June 1902. The report described all of the United States diplomatic and consular posts at the time. For each post it gave a description of the place, the principal imports and exports to the United States, and a description of the appointed officers and their duties. This publication is freely available from Google Books.³

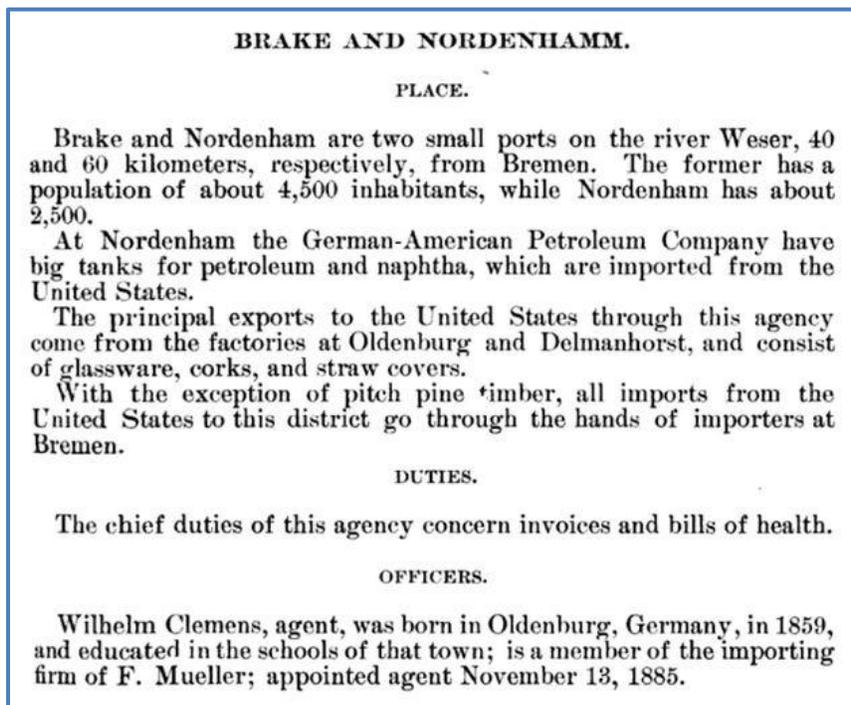
The report included a few paragraphs describing the consular agency at Brake and Nordenham. Comparing the text with that of Clemens' report of 1896, it became obvious that the publication used the information Clemens provided six years earlier. The description in the book is much more concise and does not include everything that Clemens offered. However, many of the sentences used in the description are nearly word for word from Clemens' report.

It is not hard to imagine that when the State Department began the task of answering the Senate resolution of 1901, the bureaucracy sent a request to each consular post asking for the required information. The consul in Bremen must have kept a copy of the report from Clemens and simply used that information for his report back to the State Department. The editing was probably done at the State Department so the format corresponded with that of other posts in the final report.

You can see the difference for yourself. Figure 1 is an image of the description of Brake and Nordenham from the State Department report. Compare that with a transcript of the original report from consular agent Wilhelm Clemens to the consul at Bremen. A sample of the original report can be seen in Figure 2.

These documents give us a good impression about the type of person that was hired to be a consular agent, as well as the type of duties he performed. In this case, Wilhelm Clemens had experience in the import / export business. As a native German, he was fluent in both German and English. He was apparently still employed by a German company, but was responsible to the consul at Bremen to sign documentation required by the United States to regulate the shipping industry. Although a consular agent received no salary, he was entitled to the fees collected in the performance of his duties.

Figure 1- Article from 1902 State Department report



1896 Report from Wilhelm Clemens to Consul at Bremen

Brake & Nordenham, the places for which I am appointed Consular Agent, are two small ports on the river Weser, 40 and 60 kilom. respectively from Bremen, in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg. Brake with abt. 4500, Nordenham with abt. 2500 inhabitants.

Brake has a fine little dock, dry dock and jetty (pier). Nordenham a long pier (abt. one kilometer long) with deep water, the berth of the mail steamers of the North German Lloyd.

There is only little proper trade in these places, but a considerable transit trade. The goods exported to the United States come from the factories at Oldenburg & Delmenhorst. I mention Glasware (empty bottles, Corks, Strawcovers).

The Grand Duchy of Oldenburg is famous for its Coach Horses and good saddle [saddles?].

Besides Pitch Pine Timber, of which a good many cargoes are imported here, the whole imports from the United States for the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg go through the hands of importers residing at Bremen.

I have to sign invoices, Landing Certificates and to issue Bills of Health.

I am German, was born 1859 at Oldenburg. After having absolved the first class of a school, in which languages, the arts & sciences are taught (Realschule) at Oldenburg, I commenced 1874 active life in the office of Mr. F. Müller at Brake and Nordenham – forwarding house who keeps large warehouses, especially for grain, at Brake & Nordenham, and was admitted as a partner there in 1883, after a stay of 3 years in Portugal (Oporto) from 1880 to 1883.

I was appointed Consular Agent in January 1886.

Brake, August 29, 1896
Wilhelm Clemens
Cons. Agt

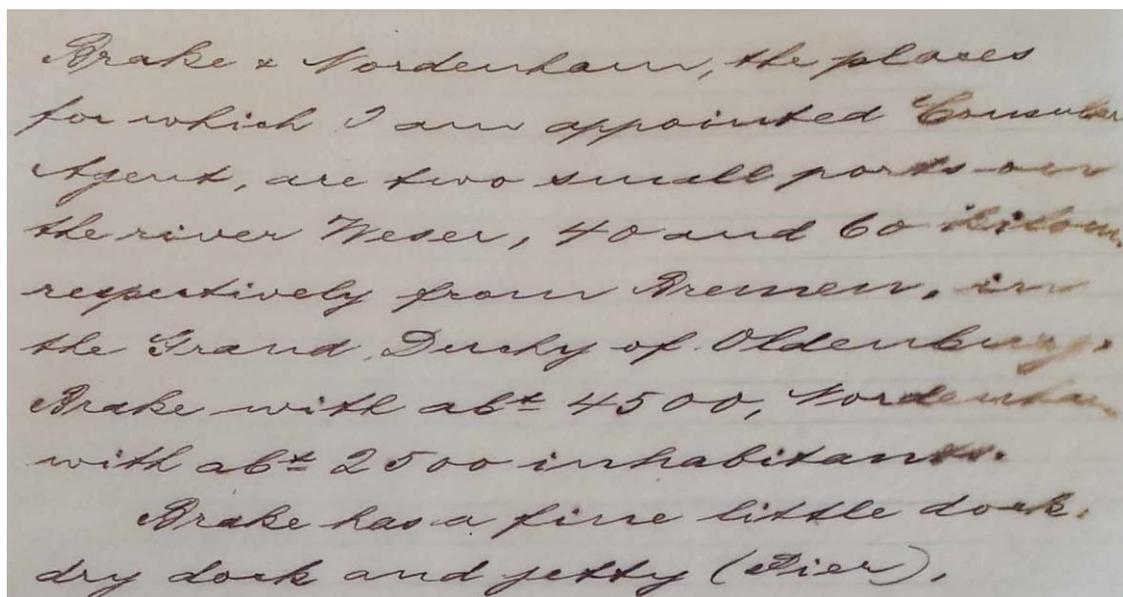


Figure 2- Snippet of original Clemens report

¹ Description from *United States Consular Regulations, Department of State*, quoted in *Monthly Summary of Commerce and Finance of the United States, Issues 1 – 3*, Bureau of Statistics, Department of the Treasury, p. 763; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=bpcyAQAAMAAJ>

² Untitled report, dated 29 Aug 1896, p. 92; Miscellaneous Letters Sent, 1894 - 1907; United States Consular Records for Brake-Nordenham, Germany, 1863 - 1917; Records of Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State, Record Group 84; National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD; NAID 1323985

³ *Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting, In Response to the Resolution of the Senate of March 2, 1901 ...*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902, Google Books, <https://books.google.com/books?id=QjJUAAAIAAJ>

News release

from the German-American Genealogical Partnership

Nov. 21, 2016 — For immediate release

Contact: Kent Cutkomp, (612) 920-8118, partnership@ggsmn.org



**German-American
GENEALOGICAL PARTNERSHIP**

International German Genealogy Partnership is new name of young organization, reflects growing global participation

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn.—International German Genealogy Partnership is the new name adopted by members of a new and rapidly growing global organization known since its founding less than two years ago as the German-American Genealogical Partnership.

“New member societies are coming into the Partnership from around the world. There is a growing international participation in the Partnership, and our members decided on a new name that better describes the organization’s international presence,” said Kent Cutkomp, a Minneapolis resident and co-founder of the partnership.

The Partnership was founded in 2015 by genealogy society leaders in America and Germany. Today, the Partnership joins Germanic societies across America, Germany, Canada, England and other European countries.

“The purpose of the Partnership is to expand cooperation among societies nationally and internationally. It’s a great way individual societies can become more successful in serving their members, and that includes helping their members make personal connections worldwide. We’re delighted to see such interest coming from so many parts of the world,” Cutkomp said.

He said organizations joining the Partnership range from small to large. For instance, the Germany-based Deutsche Arbeitsgemeinschaft Genealogischer Verbände, a founding member of the Partnership, comprises more than 65 societies serving 22,000 individual members.

Several major initiatives are being undertaken by the Partnership, including the 2017 International Germanic Genealogy Conference, scheduled for July 28-30, Minneapolis, Minn., and themed “CONNECTIONS: International. Cultural. Personal.”

Other initiatives include sharing of knowledge and resources such as exchanging periodicals, sharing researcher and speaker lists, and creating a list of most valuable references, resources and websites. Communication and connections between Partnership organizations are important parts of the process.

For information about the Partnership, visit the website of the Minnesota-based Germanic Genealogy Society at www.GGSMN.org, click “German Partnership.” The Partnership’s official website is expected to launch soon.

SUCHANZEIGEN / *Queries*

Please mention at least one time, one place, one German surname with known variants. Limit each query to one family. Use no more than fifty (50) words, not counting your name and address. There is no charge for members of MAGS. Non-members please include \$1 (check payable to Mid-Atlantic Germanic Society) per query with your submission. More than one query may be sent at a time, but each should be clearly written or typed on a separate sheet of 8 1/2 by 11 inch clean, white paper. E-Mail is acceptable. Please indicate desired priority for printing. MAGS reserves the right to edit. Neither MAGS nor Der Kurier assumes any responsibility for accuracy. Send your Queries to Edythe H. Millar, Queries Editor, MAGS, 7102 Cedon Road, Woodford, VA 22580 or e-mail: ehoffmillar@netscape.net (Please write 'MAGS Query' in subject line)

MAGS Welcomes New Members

A maximum of four surnames being researched by each new member appears in bold parentheses and italics following the new member's name. Space does not permit more than four surnames or most spelling variations. MAGS encourages all members to submit free queries to the queries editor regarding specific ancestors.

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(Knauer)

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(Nixdorf, Korn, Kunkle, Baehli/Baily)

CINDY DRAGE of WAYNESBORO, PA

(Luppold(t), Fehrmann, Kranz, Klappstein)

GREGORY GRANT of REISTERSTOWN, MD

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B.T. & JOHN P. HELMS of FREDERICK, MD

(Boschert, Seelbinder)

OLIVER JELLMANN of WINSSEN, GERMANY

(Yellman, Spoede, Schild, Hicks)

GREER MANEVAL of LEWES, DE

(Kitzmilller, Spangler, Maneval, Spielman)

PAT & DONALD McMAHON of WILLISTON PARK, NY

(Brokob, Staub, Schaer, Schär)

DENNIS MORRIS of SWOYERSVILLE, PA

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KATHY MUSTI of WRIGHTSVILLE, PA

(Kölle, Manger, Otto)

MARIA L. REEDY of MECHANICSBURG, PA

(Gärtner, Seabolt/Sebolt/Ziebold, Yousling, Getz)

NANCY RONNING of MARLBORO, NJ

(Körber, Mummell)

MALISSA RUFFNER of BALTIMORE, MD

(No Names)

CAROL STURM of CHRISTOVAL, TX

(Sturm, Stengel, Winner, Ruhenkamp)

MATTHIAS UTHOFF of KIRCHLENGERN, GERMANY

(Faeth/Fath/Feth, Uthoff, Balsmann, Steffen)

RUTH E. VAN AKIN of WILLOW STREET, PA

(Imler, Exline/Oechlin, Crilly, Stufft)

JUDITH J. WENIG of GERMANTOWN, MD

(Wenig, Janssen, Boomgarten)

DEBRA WHITE of HAZLET, NJ

(Hofstetter, Zieseniss, Schmidt, Pranckel)

MARGARET & ED WISENBALER of ANNAPOLIS, MD

(Peora, Wisenbaler, Thum, McDade)

EDWIN H. & SANDRA ZIMMERMAN of SEVEN VALLEYS, PA

(No Names)

DER KALENDER

The Calendar

2017

March 17-18. MAGS Spring Conference, Doubletree, Laurel, MD. Info: www.magsgen.com

April 22. Palatines to America, Ohio Chapter, Spring Seminar, Columbus Metropolitan Library, Main Branch, 96 S. Grant Avenue, Columbus, OH "Beyond the Obvious - German Genealogy" Presenting Dr. Fritz Juengling from the Family History Library. Registration will be available online at: <https://oh-palam.org/registernow.php> or with check payable to Ohio Chapter-Palam, Joe Stamm, 3930 Lander Road, Chagrin Falls, OH 44022-1329; For questions e-mail: lindabelle@lcs.net

April 26-29. Ohio Genealogical Society Conference, "Genealogy Gone Wild," Kalahari Resort, Sandusky, OH. Info: www.ogsconference.org

May 6. Palatines to America, Pennsylvania Chapter, Spring Conference, Kutztown, PA. Info: www.palam.org/pennsylvania-palam-chapter.php

May 10-13. National Genealogical Society Conference, Raleigh, NC. Four days centered on the theme of "Family History Lives Here." Info: conference.ngsgenealogy.org

May 18-20. Lancaster Family History Conference, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, PA. Theme is "New Arrivals in a New Land" with keynote speaker John L. Ruth. *Der Kurier* editor James M. Beidler among the speakers. Info: www.lmhs.org

July 28-30. International German Genealogy Partnership, Minneapolis, MN. International conference, "CONNECT - International.

Cultural. Personal." MAGS is a Partner organization! President Kenneth Heger, Recording Secretary Debra A. Hoffman and *Der Kurier* editor James M. Beidler will be speaking!

Aug. 30-Sept. 2. Federation of Genealogical Societies National Conference, Pittsburgh, PA. "Building Bridges to the West." FGS and local host the Western Pennsylvania Genealogical Society invite genealogists and family historians from throughout the More info: www.fgsconference.org/

✱ **Attention** ✱

MAGS is now accepting dues for the year

2017

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Phone: (434) 409-1582

Email: klaus@klaus-trans.com

American Translators Association Certified Translator: German into English, English into German

2. American Translators Association, 225 Reinekers Lane, Suite 590, Alexandria, VA 22314-2875

Phone: (703) 683-6100

Website: www.atanet.org.

They have an online directory for individual translators and area of specialization choices.

3. Gen Collins

Phone: (301) 770-0683

Email: glcjpc@verizon.net

Specialization: Translates German and German script into English and English to German.

4. Uwe Jacobsen, Wilhelm-Spiegel-Str. 30, D-24145 Kiel, Germany

Email: uwejacobsen@gmx.de

Specialization: Genealogical research in Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg-Altona, Sonderjylland / Denmark. Transcription and translation of old documents.

5. Roger P. Minert, Ph.D., A.G., PO Box 1845, Provo, UT 84603-1845

Phone: (801) 374-2587

Email: grtpublications@juno.com.

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6. Katherine Schober

Phone: (314) 660-1061

Email: language@sktranslations.com

Website: sktranslations.com

Specialization: Genealogy and old German script, translates German to English

7. Ann C. Sherwin

Website: www.asherwin.com

Specialization: Genealogy, history, old handwriting.

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