Michigan Germanic Connections

Exploring Michigan's Germanic family history heritage

Winter 2025
Volume 3, Issue 3

Willkommen

We have several great programs lined up for the upcoming year. Members will automatically receive Zoom invitations for their use. If non-members would like to attend our virtual meetings they need to email information@miggs.org for an invitation.

IMPORTANT NEWS

The November meeting of the society will be held Monday, November 10th, at 7:30 p.m. (EST) Dr. Roger Minert will present "German Census Records, 1816-1916: The Where, When and How of a Valuable Genealogical Resource."

QUESTIONS AND HELP

You can email MIGGS with questions about your German family research. Please use the CONTACT US on the website. We can't do extensive research on your ancestry, but will try to point you in the right direction so you can be successful in your genealogical endeavors. Thank you Ed for monitoring the site for questions!

MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

Hallo! I hope everyone had an opportunity to celebrate German-American Month in October (or maybe an Octoberfest!). I am thankful for all of you who continue to support MIGGS; there wouldn't be a group without you. If you have any suggestions, please let us know. One member was kind enough to remind us that Michigan has 2 time zones. While most of us are on Eastern time, there are some in the Upper Peninsula near the Wisconsin border that are on Central time. Thanks for the reminder!

I hope that you will find the upcoming programs enjoyable and helpful. And if you have any topics, stuck research, ideas of thing you'd like to see, let us know. You can contact anyone on your board of directors by going to the miggs.org website. You can also use Paypal to join, or make a donation!
THANKS

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ABOUT MIGGS

The purpose of the Michigan Germanic Genealogical Society is:

1. **To promote the study of and interest in the immigration of people of Germanic heritage to America.**
2. **To exchange cultural information relating to the times, life, and society of Germanic immigrants and their descendants.**
3. **To encourage and provide the means for members to share their genealogical findings through meeting and newsletters and to promote the collection and preservation of such materials.**

What's in a Name? Understanding German Naming Traditions

by Brenda Leyndyke

Is your German family tree filled with children named Johann or Maria? For centuries, German boys were often baptized Johann (or Johannes), and girls Maria or Anna Maria. This religious first name is called the Vorname. The name they were called in daily life was the Rufname. Roman Catholics often chose saints' names, while Protestant families included names from the Old Testament or classical mythology.

Nicknames, or Kurzformen, were also common. Instead of shortening from the end of a name as in English, Germans often dropped the first part. Niklaus became Klaus, Sebastian became Bastian, Katharina became Trina, and Johanna became Hanna. These shortened forms even appeared in church and legal records.

Baptismal sponsors also influenced naming traditions. Sons were often named for their grandfathers in order, first after the father's father, second after the mother's father, and so on. The same pattern applied to daughters, using grandmothers' names. If a child died young, the name was often reused for a later child, and sometimes two living children shared the same name.

The use of surname, or Nachname, began in the 1500s, but some German states did not require it until much later. In 1790, Baden was the first German state to require fixed surnames. Preußen issued an edict on 11 March 1812 that required that permanent family names be adopted within six months. Compulsory surname laws were enacted in the German states of Bayern and Mecklenburg in 1813 and 1814. As surnames developed, they often came from four main sources:

Descriptors such as Kurz ("short"), Klein ("small"), Jung ("young"), Freund ("friend" or "friendly") or Stark ("strong")

Places of origin or landscape features like Bayer ("from Bavaria"), Busch ("near the woods"), Berger ("mountain dweller") or Bach ("stream" or near the stream")

Occupations such as Schmidt ("smith"), Becker ("baker"), Müller ("miller"), Schneider ("tailor"), Bauer ("farmer"), or Meier ("farm manager" or "steward")

Patronymics showing descent, for example Petersen ("son of Peter")

For those curious about where their German surname appears today, an interactive map showing the geographic distribution of surnames can be explored at https://www.kartezumnamen.eu/en/

For those curious about the meaning of their surname, check out https://www.familysearch.org/en/surname at Family Search.

More German Naming Resources

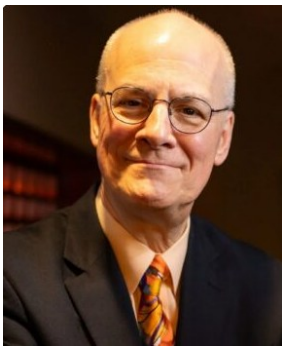
Family Tree (U.S.) magazine posted German Naming Traditions Genealogists Should Know. Here is the link to the article:

https://familytreemagazine.com/names/first-names/german-naming-traditions/?utm_source=eWeekly&utm_campaign=3c4675efa8-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_eweekly_2019_COPY_01&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_61ed05796b-3c4675efa8-91723293&mc_cid=3c4675efa8&mc_eid=68463967c1

The Wiki on FamilySearch.org has several articles about German Naming Customs, including naming practices, surname meanings, and a surname distribution map. Understanding customs used in German names can help you identify your ancestors in records. Learn to recognize name variations and see clues in names.

https://www.familysearch.org/en/wiki/Germany_Naming_Customs

EVENTS OF INTEREST



2025 MGC Fall Family History Event featuring Curt Witcher, FIGS, FUGA

Sat, November 15 at 9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST

Co-sponsored by the Archives of Michigan and the Library of Michigan.

Join MGC for these exciting topics.

- Doing Effective Genealogical Research in Libraries – Curt Witcher
- Perilous Assumptions: Revisiting Those First Finds with Kris Rzepczynski, Archives of Michigan
- Mining The Mother Lode: Periodical Research – Curt Witcher
- Michigan Souvenir Books – Visual Context to Our Family History Research – Adam Oster and Matt Pacer, Library of Michigan
- High Tech and High Touch of 21st Century Genealogy – Curt Witcher

Registration link: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2025-mgc-fall-family-history-event-featuring-curt-witcher-figs-fuga-tickets-1730490346209?aff=oddtdtcreator

This event will be held both on-site in Lansing and virtually. Tickets $50 – $60.

Virtual Workshop: "Introduction to German Genealogy"

Antje Petty
Virtual Workshop
November 15, 2025 @ 10:00 am - 2:00 pm

Registration is required by November 12, 2025 (see below). A Zoom Link will be emailed to you on November 13, 2025. This workshop is intended for genealogists who are new to researching ancestors from German-speaking lands.

https://mki.wisc.edu/event/virtual-workshop-an-introduction-to-german-genealogy/

The Grand Rapids Christkindl Markt is a Christmas village lined with artisan gift and food vendors, holiday entertainment, and festive family fun. Inspired by traditional European Christmas markets, this winter wonderland is filled with unique holiday experiences illuminated with international flair.

NOV 19 THROUGH DEC 23 (Wed-Sun). See their website for details on hours and location.

https://christkindlmarktgr.com/

Make this holiday season one to remember by attending the Heritage Christmas Market. This event is perfect for families, friends, and anyone looking to get into the holiday mood.
Mark your calendars and join us at 599 Weiss St, Frankenmuth, MI 48734 on November 22nd 2025, 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Kern Pavilion Frankenmuth , 599 Weiss St, Frankenmuth, MI 48734

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/merry-bright-christmas-market-tickets-1789839651579

CONTACT US

information@miggs.org

Newsletter:
jhannesch1@att.net or
germangenes@charter.net

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/
Michigan-Germanic-
Genealogical-Society-
104842025602301

Twitter/X: @MichiganGGS

Website: miggs.org

Michigan Germanic Genealogical Society

President: Julia Hanneman -Schoenbach

Vice President: Joan Cooper

Secretary: Tim Salatin

Treasurer: Ed Redmer

Director: Rodger Wolf

Director: Loretta Dunham

Director: Brenda Leyndyke

Complete bios are available at our website: https://miggs.org/board-bios/

COMMITTEES

We all wear many hats – the Board of Directors do the following tasks and are looking for volunteers.

Webmaster – Tom Koselka

Zoom Meeting Specialist – Rodger Wolf

Facebook – Shannon Gordon

Twitter—(@MichiganGGS): Open

Resource Librarian – Open

Newsletter – Julia Hanneman-Schoenbach & Loretta Dunham

Brochures/Publicity – Brenda Leyndyke

Email list – Ed Redmer & Rodger Wolf

Michigan Genealogical Council Delegates – Brenda Leyndyke and Tim Salatin

Program Coordinator – Joan Cooper

International Germanic Genealogical Partners Representative – Ed Redmer & Loretta Dunham

Contact Us: infomation@miggs.org

If you would like to join our team in any of these capacities, please email information@miggs.org.

WHY JOIN MIGGS?

If you have ancestors in Germanic areas of Europe, joining a society that specializes in Germanic genealogy can be helpful to your research. Joining MIGGS has the following benefits:

- Free 30 minute consultation with a skilled Germanic researcher
- Reduced rates for admission to Association workshops
- Preferred seating at our informative virtual meetings
- Many of our programs will have nationally recognized speakers
- Quarterly newsletter (paid members will get notified when available)
- Meetings, workshops, and event notices and first right to accept when programs become available
- Networking opportunities

All this for the cost of $20 Individual and $30 Household membership. A membership form is on the last page of this newsletter. If you are already a member, thank you!

Do you have any ideas used by other societies you belong to that have been successful in raising membership?

National reports indicate 22-29% of the US population is the descendant of a German immigrant. Come join our society and find out if you have German ancestry.

Affiliations:

INTERNATIONAL GERMAN Genealogy Partnership

Michigan Genealogical Council 1972

2025/2026 PROGRAM ANNOUCEMENTS

The following programs will be presented virtually via Zoom on the second Monday of September, November, March, and May, at 7:30 pm. **Please note that our meetings will be held on Monday nights until further notice.** Members will receive a Zoom invitation. Non-members will need to email information@miggs.org for Zoom information.

Nov 10, 2025: "German Census Records, 1816-1910: The Where, When and How of a Valuable Genealogical Resource **"** with Dr. Roger Minert
Roger is a professional genealogist and an emeritus AG (Accredited Genealogist). He has a background in German language study and has published reference books for genealogy work on German immigrants, guides on performing German genealogy research, and books about the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Germany. He frequently presents on German family history topics at genealogy conferences.

March 9, 2026: **"**Pennsylvania's German Waves" with James M. Beidler
Applying genealogical basics to the peculiarity of searching for the rich records relating to America's first large ethnic minority population – especially highlighting church registers and immigration documents – as well as the Second Wave Germans who joined them in Pennsylvania.
James M. Beidler, a Pennsylvania German expert, has authored four books, writes the weekly column/blog "Roots & Branches," and is a German Life magazine columnist.

May 11, 2026: "German Directories" with Luana Darby
In Germany, more and more directories are online. This presentation will tell you where to find them, how to work with them and how to interpret the information typical for German directories.

Michigan Resources

by Julia Hanneman-Schoenbach

Did you know that Lansing has a German choir group?

The Lansing Liederkranz is on Facebook and has a building at 5828 South Pennsylvania Ave, Lansing, MI, United States, Michigan. Their phone number is: (517) 882-6330).

They will be having a Holiday Craft Bazaar Nov 9 from 11:30-3:30 pm Eastern time, along with a Bake Sale and Kaffee Haus with brats, German potato salad, and sauerkraut.

A few other German groups in Michigan are:

The German American Cultural Center in Detroit

https://germanamericanmetrodetroit.org/index.htm for various Germanic clubs and events.

The Edelwiss Club in Grand Rapids

https://www.facebook.com/EdelweissClubGR/

Germans in Michigan:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/germansinmichigan/

Repatriation to Germany

by Friedrich R. Wollmershäuser

The Nazis had a program to call back emigrants to return to Germany.

The main question is: Did this family resign their German (Prussian, Bavarian etc.) citizenship when they emigrated? In this case, they would have had to apply for citizenship anew when they came back. The records about this are very detailed, but one must know the place where they returned.

All of these files are kept by the former (1930s) counties (Landkreise). Many of them still exist, many others have been dissolved (in 1938 and in Baden-Württemberg around 1972), but the records have migrated to the new counties.

Once the new place of origin is found, one may continue with the residents´ registration (Einwohnermeldekarteien) and other types of records.

International German Genealogy Partnership Newsletter Changes

by Tanje Bals

For several years, the Partner Newspaper has been created with great dedication by its founder, Edie Adam – all on her own and with remarkable commitment. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to her. Thanks to her efforts, news from the genealogical world was collected and prepared for our partner societies and their members.

At the end of 2025, she will step down from this role – creating space for something new. The publication will continue to exist but will in the future be shaped collaboratively: no longer as a solo project, but as the responsibility of a small editorial team. Whether as a newspaper, newsletter, or blog – the format will emerge through teamwork.

Your involvement is expressly encouraged!
The editorial team is now being established – and right now is the time to bring in your own ideas. Things don't need to remain as they were before. Those who join can actively help shape content, formats, and processes – much is open to new impulses.

The coordination of this transition will be handled by Tanja Bals, who looks forward to welcoming everyone interested in creating something new together.

Whether in German or English – that does not matter. With translation tools and mutual support, we will overcome any language barriers.

Which roles need to be filled?
The exact tasks may shift slightly depending on the future format of the publication. At present, we assume the following fields of activity will need to be covered – with the understanding that individual roles may evolve as the editorial team develops:

Collecting news – gathering relevant content and topics

Writing and translating texts – writing articles based on collected news (German/English) and then translating them with the help of translation tools

Proofreading / language review – reviewing texts, possibly editing for clarity and style (whether this should be a fixed part of the editorial team will be decided together)

Checking translations – ensuring automatic translations are understandable and linguistically appropriate (not stylistic refinement, just functionality)

Layout and design – if the publication continues as a PDF or visually designed format, design support will be needed. Anyone who enjoys visual design is warmly invited to step forward already.

Organization and coordination – making sure everything comes together. Depending on the format, this can look very different, but if you enjoy keeping track of things, you are most welcome.

Other possible tasks – depending on how the future format develops, additional roles (e.g., sending out a newsletter) may arise. How such tasks are included will be clarified as we move forward.

What happens next?
By the end of October at the latest, the fields of activity will be published with concrete task descriptions. Afterwards, there will be a joint kick-off meeting where all interested participants can get to know each other and discuss the next steps.

Want to get involved already? Absolutely!
If you already feel addressed and would like to take on a task or simply receive more information without obligation, please contact Tanja Bals directly: familienzeitreise.tanja@gmail.com

We look forward to many thinkers and co-creators – and to shaping together the next phase of our publication.

Did You Know?

From the German-American Heritage Foundation and Museum: Just in time for the Fourth of July, and the U.S. Army's 250th birthday, we have added a short biography on Brigadier General Edmund Gruber to our gallery of German/Austrian American military personnel. Gruber was the composer of "The Caissons Go Rolling Along" later renamed as "The Army Goes Rolling Along" and the official Army Song since 1956. If the name Gruber reminds you of another famous musician, Franz Xaver Gruber who wrote the melody for "Silent Night", you are correct! General Gruber was a direct descendant of the Austrian school teacher and organist.

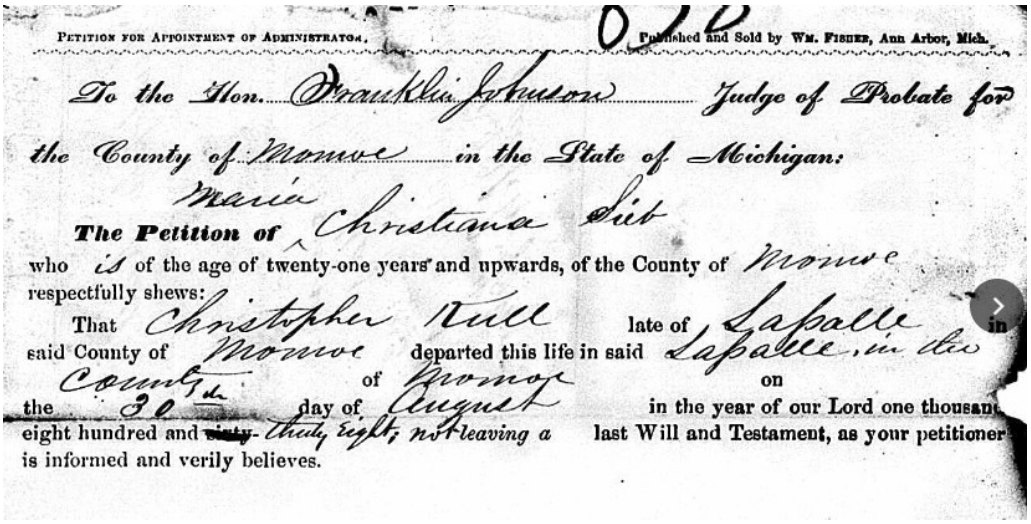
American Records in German Resources

by Loretta Dunham

During a recent IGGP representative meeting someone mentioned that they found a record in Germany of the death of someone that had emigrated to the United States and who had died in Indiana. He mentioned that it was very unusual for someone who had left the country to have a record of their death listed in Germany.

While it was unusual, it does happen occasionally. In my research of German families from Monroe County, Michigan, I have found 2 records mentioning Monroe and one gave the death date for someone who died well before Michigan required deaths be recorded. The following is one of these records.

Christopher Kull's estate went through probate in 1863 -1864 in Monroe County, MI (Case File 858). According to the inventory of the estate, all Christopher's belongings were left in the care of Matthias Slatterer. Christoph left no will and owned no real estate. He was the first of his family to immigrate to Michigan. His sister (my ancestor) didn't arrive in the US until 1850. It is unknown why it took another 13 years to settle his estate, but his sister, Christiana Sieb, and her sons are mentioned in the probate file.



PETITION FOR APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR. Published and Sold by WM. FISHER, Ann Arbor, Mich.

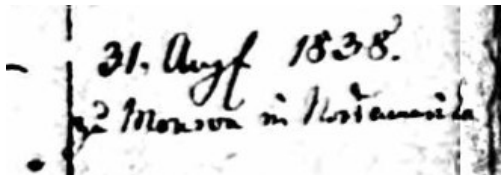
To the Hon. Franklin Johnson Judge of Probate for the County of Monroe in the State of Michigan:

The Petition of Maria Christiana Sieb who is of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, of the County of Monroe respectfully shews:

That Christopher Kull late of Lapalle in said County of Monroe departed this life in said Lapalle, in the County of Monroe on the 30 day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ~~sixty~~ thirty eight, not leaving a last Will and Testament, as your petitioner is informed and verily believes.

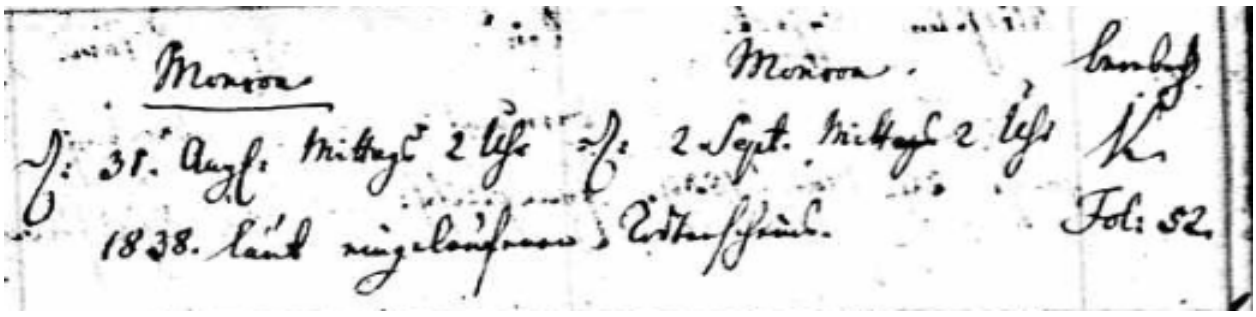
Christopher's death is recorded in the probate file as 30 Aug 1838. His death is also recorded in the family book in the church in Bernbach. Ancestry has digitized many of these family books and they are available to search. (Württemberg, Germany, Family Tables, 1550-1985).

Below is a copy of the death information for Johann Christoph Kull that appears in the family book.



From: Bernbach, Neuenbürg u. Oa> Seelenregister, Familienbuch, Notizen u. Konfirmationen 1750-1918 Image 1086/1436

The death records for Bernbach are even more detailed regarding Christoph's death in Monroe. They provide his burial date and cause of death, age at death, occupation, marital status, birth date and his parents' names. See below for part of the entry found in the Bernbach records.



Excerpt from death entry for Johann Christoph Kull from Bernbach church records.

The first column contains the place of death (Monroe), date of death 31 Aug 1838 with the time, 2 in afternoon. The second column contains the place of burial (Monroe) with burial date 2 Sep 1838.

The third column is a reference to the book and page number for the family register.

You never know where a record of your relative might appear!

MICHIGAN GERMANIC GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY *MIGGS.ORG*

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL APPLICATION 2025 - 2026

Please Print

Last Name:	First Name:	
Mailing Address:		
City:	State:	Zip +4:
Home Phone:	Cell Phone:	
Email Address*:		

*We communicate often with email. We do **not** share contact information. It will **not** be published.

Our preferred method of sending meeting announcements is email. May we use email to communicate with you?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Membership Type:

☐ $20.00 Individual ☐ $30.00 Household
Membership is for one (1) year, July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026.

☐ New Membership ☐ Renewal

Payment: ☐ Cash ☐ Check Check Number:_____

Make checks payable to: **Michigan Germanic Genealogical Society**

Please mail to:

Michigan Germanic Genealogical Society
c/o Ed Redmer
7687 Nollar Road
Whitmore Lake, MI 48189-7209

Office Use: ☐ Cash ☐ M.O. ☐ Check # _____ Amount_____ Date_____