

How do we know what (we think) we know? Uncovering Dreisbach history

A family history can resemble a large and sprawling mosaic. One can set its borders at certain years or generations, but there will nearly always be missing pieces, and even huge empty spaces. On the positive side, the discovery of one new piece can serve to link hitherto separate areas together.

In this DERR, number ten in the series, we take temporary leave of the comings and goings of Wittgenstein Dreisbachs and move to a different area. Having looked at conditions in Wittgenstein that can have triggered the departures of early emigrants, we shall shift our viewpoint and ask how much awareness of Wittgenstein the North American descendants retained, or lost, or perhaps rediscovered. Applying the mosaic analogy, let us set our timeframe to begin in the years just before 1800 when Dreisbach immigrants were growing older, and grandchildren had little idea of the family's origins. Our task in this DERR is to seek out the contributions of individuals and organization to the preservation or recovering of family lore.

One major area comprises the descendants of 1743 immigrant Simon Dreisbach. Here we shall discuss the family history notes of his son, Simon Jr., written most probably on a farmstead in Allen Township, Northampton County and, when last heard of, lying in an unidentified safe deposit box somewhere in the Lehigh Valley. Another area, the family history preserved among the descendants of 1751 immigrant Martin Dreisbach, has a prominent place in the mosaic. Yet another development, beginning in 1910 and covering the spate of research initiated by the first Dreisbach Family Association, earns for that organization a major place in the mosaic. What is more, though the founders of that Association were mainly descendants of Simon Dreisbach, they benefited greatly from a link to the other major Dreisbach line, that of Martin Dreisbach. Indeed, it was two descendants of Martin Dreisbach who, from the very start of the Dreisbach Family Association, supplied it with a certain amount of information on Wittgenstein.

The family notes of Simon Dreisbach, Jr (b. Oberndorf, 1730 – d. Northampton County, PA, 1806). Are they the earliest extant Dreisbach family record in North America?

"Here in this (word illegible) are written my and my wife's children's birthdates as follow. Firstly, I was born in Germany in Wittgenstein in Oberndorf the 18th of February 1730 and baptized into the Christian Reformed Church, and in my thirteenth year received Holy Communion for the first time from Pastor Knöb in the village Feudinggen in the Reformed ditto ("dito" added above the line) in the church at that place in the aforementioned Wittgenstein.¹

¹ Author's translation of the first lines of one of Simon Dreisbach Jr.'s two records of his family data, copies of which are in the library of the Lehigh Valley Historical Society, Allentown, PA. See Fig. 1.

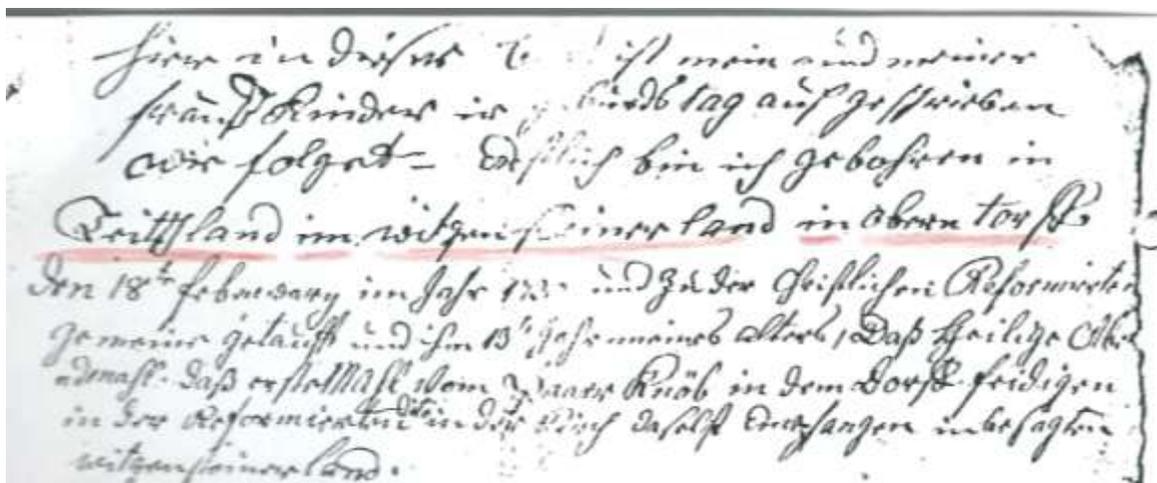


Fig. 1. The first nine lines of one of Simon Dreisbach Jr.'s two records of his children's births, etc. Underlined in red is his own place of birth, in "Teittsland im witgensteiner land in Oberntorff".² Copied from an imperfect photocopy in the library of the Lehigh County Historical Society, deposited by William J. Fiedler.

There exist (as photocopies and, one hopes, as original documents) five pages of family records in the hand of Simon Dreisbach, Jr. As far as is known, these documents were for generations in the possession of the descendants of Simon Dreisbach Jr.'s daughter Elizabeth and her husband, Johan Nicolaus Hauer (Hower). They were exhibited at the first Dreisbach reunion in 1995 by Dreisbach/Hower descendant William (Bill) J. Fiedler, Jr. These documents were already known to members of the first Dreisbach Family Association, and according to an article in *The Dreisbach Family Journal*, Vol. I, No. 3, (April 1914), p. 14: "...complete manuscripts from (Simon Jr.'s) pen are today studied and treasured. Among these (is) a brief account of his own family..."

It was Bill Fiedler who presented Simon Jr.'s family records to the library of the Lehigh County Historical Society in the form of photocopies to be included in the library's holdings and thus be made more widely accessible. Indeed, during the 1990's copies of these photocopies were circulating among Dreisbach researchers. The whereabouts of these rare documents are today uncertain, as will be seen in the Research Notes below.

As relevant as these five pages are for Simon Dreisbach Jr.'s family history, their function in the present context is that of an enduring testimony on North American soil to the Wittgenstein origins of this branch of Dreisbach immigrants. With time, Wittgenstein became for some descendants an almost phantom territory, invisible on most maps of Germany. For others, the family origins were a mystery. In the mid-twentieth century there was even a Dreisbach researcher who proposed that Oberndorf was to be found near Ratisbonne (*Regensburg*) in southeastern Germany. Simon Jr.'s family text has demonstrated that some record of Dreisbach origins in Wittgenstein has survived within at least one part of the Simon Dreisbach, Jr. line

In about 1910 confirmation of Wittgenstein as the Dreisbachs' ancestral territory was brought to the newly formed Dreisbach Family Association from an unexpected source, two descendants of the 1751 immigrant, Martin Dreisbach.

² "Teittsland" = Deutschland (Germany).

The Martin Dreisbach line and its involvement in preserving Dreisbach history, starting with "Rev. John".

The Martin Dreisbach line has its own family history text. Whereas Simon Jr. made lists of his children's birth dates, presumably for private family purposes, "*A Short Family History and Genealogical Statement of Martin Dreisbach, Senior and his descendants*" was apparently written with a somewhat larger family readership in mind. The author, the Rev. John Dreisbach, a grandson of 1751 immigrant Martin Dreisbach, composed his text after the death of his father, Martin Dreisbach, Jr, in 1831, which is mentioned in the text, and prior to his own death in Circleville, Ohio in 1871. It is a remarkable document, starting with a mention of Martin's birth in Wittgenstein, proceeding to his marriage in the neighboring territory of Nassau-Siegen, his career in Pennsylvania, and comprising a list of Martin Dreisbach's children and their spouses, and in some cases their children, the cousins of the author.

"Rev. John", as he is generally called within the larger family, was born on the original Dreisbach homestead near Lewisburg, in what is now Union County, PA. He knew his grandfather, who died in 1799 when John was a child of ten. He can also have imbibed family lore from his father and his uncles and aunts during his periods of residence in both Pennsylvania and Ohio. Moreover, for a while, after becoming a minister in the new, German-speaking denomination that would become the Evangelical

Association,³ Rev. John and his young family lived on a farm not far from the Dreisbach homestead where he had been born. Also nearby was the Dreisbach church, a log cabin built on land donated by Martin Dreisbach..



Fig. 2. The Rev. John Dreisbach, born in 1789 in Buffalo Valley (in what is now Union County, PA), died in Circleville, OH, in 1871.⁴

After his move to Pickaway County, Ohio, in 1831, John had easier access to information from those of his Dreisbach relatives who had moved to Ohio in the first years of the nineteenth century. Whatever the sources of his information were, the resulting text remains a milestone of the history of the first Martin Dreisbach.

Rev. John's "*A Short Family History...*" cited here from an unidentified, three-page printed version, begins thus:

"My Grandfather, Martin Dreisbach, was born A.D. 1717, in the earldom of Witgenstein, German Europe; of Christian parentage – members of the Reformed Church in which he also became a member. When of proper age, he married Anna Eva Hoffman, daughter of a school teacher in Nausausiegen, a small State adjoining that of Witgenstein. My great-grandparents belonged to the working and middle

³ This denomination became, after a merger in 1946, the Evangelical United Brethren, and is now one of the constituent bodies of the United Methodist Church.

⁴ Photo from *History of Franklin & Pickaway Counties, Ohio With Illustrations And Biographical Sketches, Some of the Prominent Men and Pioneers*, Published by Williams Bros., 1880, p. 229.

class of society; had some considerable share of property and respectability. My grandparents emigrated to North America A.D. 1746, ..."

Apart from the mistaken date of emigration (as we shall see in a later DERR, it has now been proven that Martin and his family were still in Nassau-Siegen in 1751), Rev. John's text is essentially correct. It is not known to the present writer how widely "*A Short Family History and Genealogical Statement...*" may have been disseminated, but that it was put into print is significant. That it was known to researchers of the Dreisbach//Dresbach⁵ family is supported by its being cited in 1927 by Cora Hyde Dreisbach in her "*Annals of Martin Dreisbach, Sr. & Descendants*".⁶

The Dreisbach Family Association and the role of Rev. John Dreisbach's nephews.

A few years before 1910, Ammon Dreisbach (1850-1935) of Allentown, PA, was at a funeral where he met relatives he did not know, and others only rarely encountered. He then conceived the idea of an annual Dreisbach reunion, where "the ties of kinship and friendship may be established and strengthened". A planning meeting was held at his house, further plans then developed, but no real progress was made until the group learned of a Dreisbach descendant, the Rev. S. A. Bridges Stopp, who had been doing research on the Dreisbach family. With this new addition, the group was soon able to plan and hold the First Reunion of the Dreisbach Family, which took place on September 3rd, 1910.⁷ Owing to persistent rain and insufficient shelter at the Central Park venue, the participants agreed to adjourn to the house of the Rev. Stopp on N. 5th Street in Allentown. There the Dreisbach Family Association was formally established. Rev. Stopp, who presented a paper, "The Early History of the Dreisbach Family in America", was designated the family's official historian. Dreisbach history had thus established itself as a reunion topic.



Fig. 3, Ammon Dreisbach (1850-1935), ca. 1909, principal founder of the first Dreisbach Family Association.

Most of those present at Rev. Stopp's house were of the Simon Dreisbach line. This 1743 immigrant had settled in northern Northampton County, PA, and many of his descendants still lived there and in neighboring counties. There were, however, two persons present from the other major Dreisbach line. They were brothers, and like their uncle, Rev. John Dreisbach, they had been born in Union County, PA on the homestead that had first belonged to their great-grandfather, the 1751 immigrant Martin Dreisbach.

William Dreisbach had come up to Allentown from Philadelphia for the 1910 reunion with his daughter Bertha; Martin L. Dreisbach, IV and his son John had come over from Easton, some fifteen

⁵ Soon after having emigrated from Pennsylvania to Ohio in the early 1800's, most Dreisbachs changed the spelling of the family name to Dresbach.

⁶ This relatively rare item is listed as being in the Library of Congress. It may also be in the Pickaway County Genealogical Library, where the printed version of Rev. John's "*A Short Family History...*" is to be found.

⁷ From Ammon Dreisbach's own account, published in *The Dreisbach Family Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 7-8.

miles east of Allentown. By their very presence they enlarged what would have been a reunion of mostly Simon Dreisbach descendants. How did these Dreisbach brothers of the Martin line come to be present in Allentown at the birth of the Dreisbach Family Association? A clear answer has not yet been found.

Martin L. Dreisbach, IV (Lewisburg, PA, 1843 – Easton, PA after 1923).



Fig. 4. Martin L. Dreisbach, IV (born 1843 on the Dreisbach homestead near Lewisburg, PA, died after 1923, presumably in Easton, PA.) Photo from Laura M. Helman, History and Genealogy of the Dreisbach Family, Allentown, Pa, 1924, between pp. 8 and 9.

The fact that Martin Dreisbach, IV and his brother William were present at the first Dreisbach reunion in Allentown means, possibly, that they had been invited. It is not known how the first Dreisbach reunion was publicized, but that such information would have reached William in Philadelphia is unlikely. As for Martin, having lived in Easton for a number of years prior to 1910, he may have seen a local announcement of the reunion. It is also possible that, having married a woman with prominent family roots in Easton, Martin Dreisbach was locally known, and was informed about the Dreisbach reunion by some acquaintance.

Can there have been a personal link between Martin Dreisbach and his very distant cousin Ammon? In the 1880's Martin, married since 1871, was living with his family in Wilkes-Barre, PA, a booming coal and railroad town. The 1880 census shows that Martin was a coal merchant there. In 1880 Ammon, married since 1873, became a locomotive fireman on the Lehigh Valley Railroad. With his wife and children based in Easton, Ammon worked on coal transport trains throughout the anthracite region of northeastern Pennsylvania. During the 1880's Ammon would have had dealings with many coal merchants including, perhaps, Martin Dreisbach in Wilkes-Barre. It is not known when Martin moved permanently to Easton. By 1890 Ammon had left the railroad and moved to Allentown. Whether or not Ammon and Martin really did know each other, we are including in any event, in Fig. 5 below, the town that figured in the work history of both men.

Personally invited or not, Martin L. Dreisbach, IV was present at the first Dreisbach reunion, and when he emerged from Rev. Stopp's house that rainy day in 1910, he did so as one of the new organization's three Vice-Presidents. A few reunions later, in 1913, Martin was himself one of the reunion speakers: "*Martin Dreisbach of Easton, one of the descendants of the early emigrant, Martin Dreisbach, gave a very interesting address on the history of his branch of the family.*"⁸ History was now being actively shared between the Dreisbach branches.

Such sharing of history across the lines had already begun at the second reunion in 1911, when one of the speakers was Martin's niece, Bertha Dreisbach of Philadelphia.

⁸ From "Dreisbachs gather in a monster reunion", a three-column report on the 1913 reunion in the Allentown *Morning Call* newspaper.

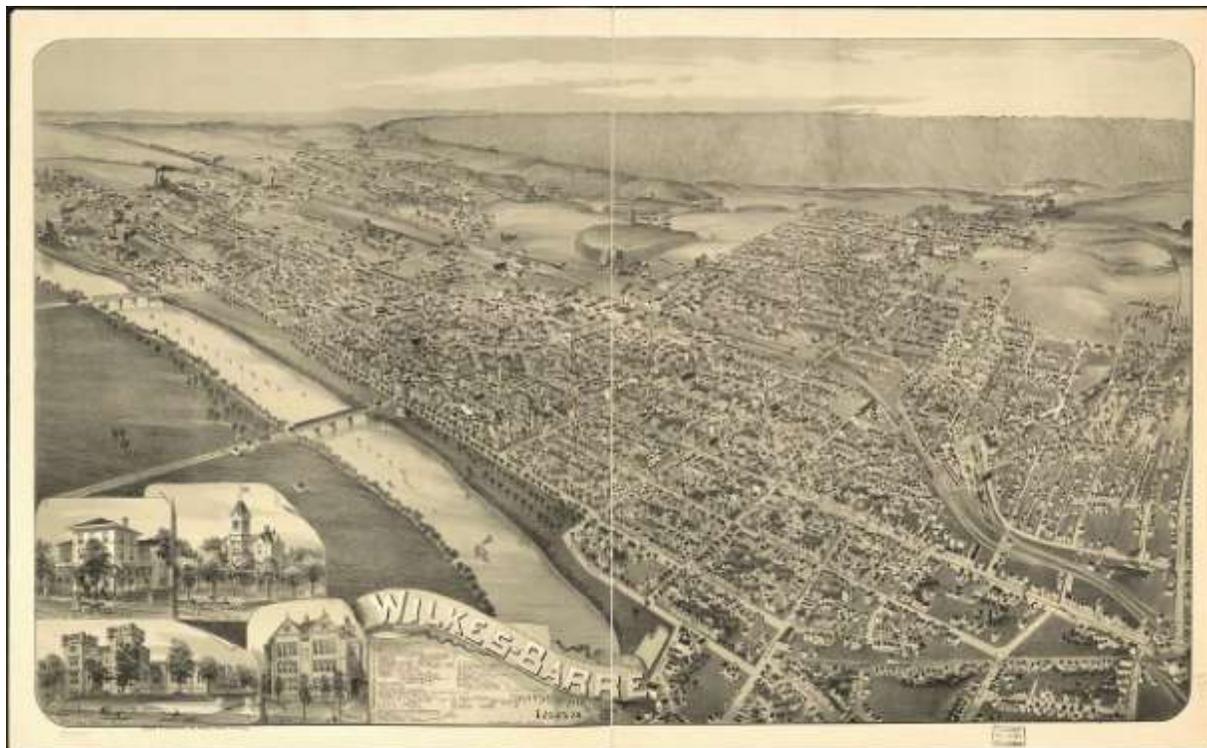


Fig. 5. View of Wilkes-Barre, PA in 1889. The Lehigh Valley Railroad tracks begin lower right and curve through the town, exiting in the distance. Source: Wikipedia commons.

William Dreisbach (Lewisburg, PA, 11 Oct. 1834 – Philadelphia, PA, 24 November 1913), the photo of Wittgenstein Castle and possible correspondence with the mayor of Laasphe.

Though we are not sure how William Dreisbach came to be at the first Dreisbach reunion, it is likely that his brother Martin urged him to come, knowing his interest in and knowledge of Dreisbach history. Despite health problems, William at age seventy-five not only traveled sixty-five miles to be present but, during the session held in Rev. Stopp's house, he *"took a keen interest in the proceedings and made a most interesting address"*.⁹

The following year, 1911, William was apparently unable to travel to the reunion. He was represented by his daughter, Bertha, who read a paper on the family history that she had helped her father prepare (see n. 9). That paper has not been preserved. It may have been a more detailed account of what William had spoken of at the first reunion, perhaps mentioning the emigrant Martin Dreisbach's years as a young husband and father in Crombach in Siegerland, followed by his career first in Cocalico Township, later on near Reading, and finally in Buffalo Valley in what is now Union County.

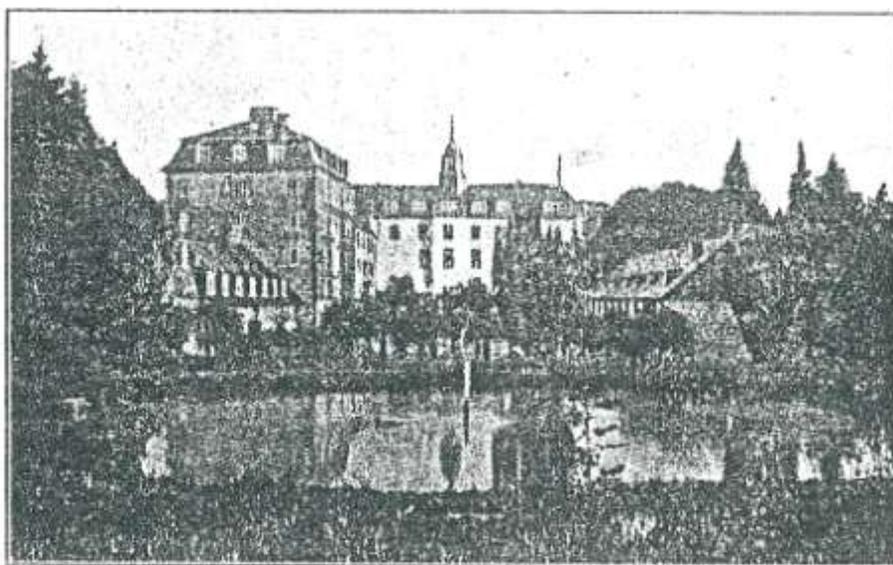
A significant step was taken at the 1913 reunion. There a motion was put forward and approved to issue a quarterly paper or journal "in the interests of the Dreisbach family" (see n. 8). We shall see how

⁹ From "In Memoriam, William Dreisbach." in *The Dreisbach Family Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Jan. 1914, pp. 3-5. <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~dreisbachfamily/william.html&strip=1> Consulted ca. 20 June 2014.

this gave William two further opportunities to be of service to the Dreisbach Family Association in the few remaining months of his life.

The first number of *The Dreisbach Family Journal* was scheduled to appear in a very short time, as early as October 1913. A distinctive cover illustration was needed. Martin Dreisbach contacted his brother William in Philadelphia, who had access to a photograph of Castle Wittgenstein, which is situated above the city of Laasphe, in Wittgenstein. The photograph clearly found favor with the *Journal* staff. Thanks to William Dreisbach, every number of *The Dreisbach Family Journal*, (October 1913 to Jan. 1915) bore the photograph of Wittgenstein Castle on its cover.

The Dreisbach Family Journal



SCHLOSS WITTGENSTEIN

Volume 1.

Number 2.

January, 1914.

Fig. 6. Photocopy of a poor quality photocopy of a cover of The Dreisbach Family Journal. This image of Schloss Wittgenstein, or Wittgenstein Castle, provided by William Dreisbach of the Martin Dreisbach line, was used on all five numbers of the journal.

The use of this photo today would carry some copyright risks, for according to the article, "The Castle of Wittgenstein", appearing in the *Journal's* first number, (1913), the view of the castle was "taken from an illustrated supplement of the *"Wittgensteiner Zeitung," published in Laasphe an d Lahn, Germany"*. It is not impossible, but rather unlikely that the *Wittgensteiner Zeitung* was to be found at Philadelphia newsstands. A more likely explanation is that William had had some contact with an individual or an office in Wittgenstein. An indication of this is found in William's other service to *The Dreisbach Family Journal* – his note of congratulation after the first number had appeared, together with a suggestion.

Soon after the October 1913 appearance of the new *Dreisbach Family Journal*, William sent a brief but positive message to the editor. Shortly thereafter he died of complications that had followed an accident. His note was printed posthumously in the next issue, No. 2, January 1914, on p. 5:

"Have received the copy of the JOURNAL. If you have an extra copy you might send it to the Burgo-meister of Laasphe. He might appreciate it. Think the Editor has done remarkably well in the reproduction of the SCHLOSS.

October 18, 1913.

William Dreisbach"

Not only was William satisfied with the quality of the photograph of Wittgenstein Castle on the *Journal's* first page, but he seemed to expect that the mayor of Laasphe would appreciate receiving a copy of the *Dreisbach Family Journal*. The question arises: had William had contacts of his own with the *Burgo-meister* of Laasphe? A partial answer may be found in the memorial article on William in that same number. We read, on page 5, *"His vital and helpful interest and his keen historical sense were abundantly shown by one of his last acts in sending to Laasphe, Germany, for information concerning the old house of the Dreisbachs."*

What kind of correspondence had William Dreisbach initiated? We have only the hints outlined above. We do not know if a copy of the *Journal's* first number was ever sent to Laasphe. Very little has been preserved of the papers of the (first) Dreisbach Family Association, and there is seemingly no extant correspondence with Wittgenstein dating from 1913-14. With regard to William Dreisbach's possible contacts with Wittgenstein, no evidence has survived of his having written to Laasphe toward the end of his life to obtain information on "the old house of the Dreisbachs" in Wittgenstein. Nor is there any known response from Laasphe concerning such a Dreisbach dwelling in Wittgenstein. What we do know now is that the house Simon Dreisbach once inhabited in Oberndorf had burned down in the mid-1840's. As for the house in Raumland in northern Wittgenstein where Martin Dreisbach was born, it still exists today. However, even if that house was known of in 1913, the relevant information would have been kept at the Princely Archive of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Berleburg in Berleburg in northern Wittgenstein, and would not have been found in the Princely Archive of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein in Laasphe.¹⁰ Fortunately, this was not the last stage in the Family Association's search for Dreisbach origins in Wittgenstein.

The five numbers of *The Dreisbach Journal* are themselves witnesses to the breadth and depth of incipient Dreisbach research, and it is to be wished that they were available online.¹¹

¹⁰ Both Dreisbach houses are discussed, with illustrations, in DERR no. 4 (22 May 2013), pp. 5 and 6.

¹¹ See <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~dreisbachfamily/familyjournal.html>. Here the contents of each of the five numbers of the *Dreisbach Family Journal* are listed.

1924 and 1927: Laura M. Helman produces two small books with, it seems, all the Dreisbach family information she has been able to compile – a major achievement.

Laura M. Helman's work fits well in our mosaic analogy. Whereas the articles in *The Dreisbach Journal* presented various smaller parts of the Dreisbach mosaic, Laura Helman, historian of the Dreisbach Family Association, and for many years its Secretary, made a remarkable attempt to order or at least to present all the genealogical information available to her. The forty-seven pages of her first volume, *History and Genealogy of the Dreisbach Family*, printed in Allentown, PA by Press of Berkemeyer, Keck & Co. in 1924, would by themselves have constituted a sizeable part of the Dreisbach mosaic at that time.

A conscientious historian, Helman inserted the many corrections and additions readers had provided into a sequel, *History and Genealogy of the Dreisbach Family, Supplement to Vol. 1*, printed by the same firm in Allentown, PA in 1927. The result is a confirmation of her exactitude and respect for the facts as she received them.



One must not hope for sections on all the children of immigrant Simon Dreisbach. Only two are included, Adam and Simon, Jr. Laura Helman was descended from Simon Dreisbach, Jr.'s son Jacob, and it is not surprising that several of Simon Jr.'s offspring get sections of their own.

These volumes are a product of their place and time, having a high concentration of families in or near the Lehigh Valley area. However, the Martin Dreisbach line, represented in central Pennsylvania, Ohio and elsewhere, does occupy several pages, and there are even more pages devoted to Martin's grandson, Rev. John.

Fig. 7. Laura M. Hellman of Catasauqua, PA, author/compiler of History and Genealogy of the Dreisbach Family, 1924, and Supplement to Vol. 1, 1927.¹²

Both volumes go beyond the conventional structure of genealogical lineages, as they contain sections on earlier generations of families whose only link to the Dreisbachs is that one of their number married a Dreisbach. (It is possible that in certain cases Helman may have been subjected to some 'moral' pressure.)

'History' is the first word in Helman's title, but it is only a minor part of her books. Indeed, the only truly historical pages, "The Name of Dreisbach", first appeared in the *Dreisbach Family Journal*. This notwithstanding, these slender volumes are solid evidence of "research in progress". They serve as milestones of the collection and dissemination of Dreisbach relationships at a time when communications were far from instant and the management of data was still very much as it had always been.

Helman's two Dreisbach volumes were the second major result of the activities of the Dreisbach Family Association, following on the *Dreisbach Family Journal*, which may have ceased publication with the advent of World War I. A third activity was about to produce unexpected results.

¹² Photo: detail of Frontispiece of *Supplement to Vol. 1* (1927). Helman's two volumes may be hard to locate. They were accessible online through *HathiTrust Digital Library* during June 2014. In 1927 Helman also published a small volume (28 pp.) on her female line, *History and Genealogy of the Drum Family*, at the same Allentown publisher/printer as the Dreisbach books.

1928: a flood of information arrives from Laasphe, some of it perplexing.

We know very little of Dreisbach Family Association activities after 1914. A few reunion programs may have survived here and there (the present writer has copies of two, from 1917 and 1921). It appears that the reunions did continue, probably annually, until sometime in the 1930's. The Helman books of the 1920's discussed above indicate that interest in the Dreisbach lines in North America was alive and well. Then, at some time between 1925 and 1928, the attention of the DFA took a new turn, or returned, rather, to an old concern: Wittgenstein.

In 1925 one Harold F. Hippenstiel of Bethlehem, PA, a man in his thirties who had Wittgenstein ancestors, made available his Hippenstiel research, which eventually brought him to the attention of the Dreisbach Family Association. It was in 1925 that he privately 'published' *"1819, the Hippenstiel Families in America"*. This was not a book, but a folder containing twelve large sheets, or twenty-four sides, with little text, but many charts of immigrant Hippenstiels who came mainly from the Wittgenstein village of Richstein.¹³ Here was a local researcher who knew where Wittgenstein was, and who had some knowledge of at least one Wittgenstein village and of certain of its emigrants! Could he be induced to undertake Dreisbach research in Wittgenstein?

By the summer of 1928 an agreement must have been reached, commissioning research in Wittgenstein, with the result that Hippenstiel sent off a letter to the Princely Archive of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein in Laasphe. Hippenstiel's initial letter and one sent later that fall are no longer in the holdings of the Princely Archive.¹⁴

However, two responses from Laasphe, dated 1 September and 29 December 1928, did reach Hippenstiel in Bethlehem. He translated or had someone translate the first letter, a response from the Princely Archive itself, communicating the findings made by "Professor Kanstein" in the legal records. Hippenstiel's typed version of this communication has a line of English translation under each line of German, filling three and a half pages. The letter of 29 December was a 'memorandum' with further Dreisbach information, written by "E. Canstein" (this is the spelling the 'Professor' himself used). This time Hippenstiel's version gives only the English translation of the memorandum, which occupies a page and a half.

The variety of tidbits of information on Wittgenstein Dreisbachs in these two missives must have both pleased and disconcerted the DFA officers. They lacked the necessary knowledge of local administrative contexts and of widespread Dreisbach family branches that would enable them to interpret the data that Hippenstiel placed before them. The lists and other information had been extracted by Prof. Canstein from archival holdings of various types. This, with one exception, was not the narrative information on Simon Dreisbach they expected to receive. The exception was a most surprising one.

The first piece of information in the first letter received from Laasphe, did indeed contain a significant fact about Simon Dreisbach. It was unexpected and perplexing. Simon Dreisbach, it appeared, had not left Wittgenstein openly with the Count's permission, but had made an illegal (and as we now know, clandestine) exit.

¹³ The 1925 Hippenstiel collection of family charts still exists, one example being in the library of the Lehigh County Historical Society, Allentown, PA.

¹⁴ On 17 January 2013 Heinrich Imhof wrote that, having searched through the extant 1920's correspondence in the Princely Archive in Laasphe, he had found neither any letters received from Harold Hippenstiel, nor copies of any responses sent to him. Mr. Imhof noted that there were several time periods when correspondence seemed to be missing.

"On May 15, 1743 is one Simon Dreysbach without Sovereign permission moved out of the County, with the intention of wandering to Pennsylvania, which purpose he apparently has accomplished." *Translation (by Harold Hippenstiel?) of Prof. Canstein's formulation of significant information on Simon Dreisbach in the Princely Archive in Laasphe.*

Heinrich Imhof, who currently performs the same function at the Princely Archive as Canstein once did, has identified the source of this information as archival holding D 53, This is a lengthy set of documents on the circumstances connected with Simon Dreisbach's departure for Pennsylvania.

Hippenstiel has copied Canstein's German text as follows:

"Ein Simon Dreysbach ist am 15 Mai 1742 ohne landesherrliche Erlaubnis ausser Landes gezogen, mit der Absicht nach Pennsylvanien auszuwandern, welches Absicht er wohl auch ausgeführt haben wird."

(Note: /Canstein had misread the date as 25 May, whereas in the original document the first digit is a 'one' – thus, 15 May.)

It is interesting to compare this with an article in the first number of *The Dreisbach Family Journal* where, on page 4, Rev. Stopp has high praise for the presumed Dreisbach status in both the Old and New Worlds:

"Although there are as yet some missing links in our genealogical chain" (i.e. to the 'extinct' noble von Dreisbachs), "the sturdy stock that was later planted on American soil gave abundant evidence of many preceding generations of high station, large usefulness and hearty devotion to Church and State. The Dreisbachs who came to America, rather colonists than immigrants, at once assumed the position of importance for which their prominence in the Old World had fitted them."

These confident words of 1913 come from another age, and another mentality, and were a common mode of local history writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They can still have been resonating in 1928-29, and it is to the credit of the DFA officers that Hippenstiel's translations of the two communications from Laasphe were distributed without comment, starting with those who had contributed \$5.00 dollars to defraying Hippenstiel's expenses.¹⁵ Facts, including unwelcome ones, are facts.

In reality, Prof. Canstein was both reserved and cautiously neutral in presenting Simon Dreisbach's unauthorized departure from Wittgenstein. The voluminous information in the Princely Archive's holding

¹⁵ From a copy of Hippenstiel's letter of 14 June 1929 to the "President and Executive Board, Dreisbach Family Association". Hippenstiel's packet to the \$5.00 donors also included a map of Wittgenstein, the 1743 ship's list for the "Lydia" on which the Simon Dreisbach family sailed, a list of Dreisbach burials at Zion's Stone Church near Kreidersville and other items, including a color illustration of the "Dreisbach" coat of arms obtained from the John Frick Jewelry Co. in New York. (The Frick Co.'s accompanying text says, correctly, that the coat of arms was used by Gottfried von Driespach in 1512 A.D., but it tactfully? omits the fact that he was the last legal bearer of these arms.)

D 53 contains not only negative formulations, but also an eye-witness report of the secret exodus, by night, of Simon Dreisbach and his family, with some of their farm animals – the horse pulling a loaded cart, as they abandoned their house and started the long journey to the Rhine River and on to Pennsylvania. *Which purpose*, Canstein wryly notes, writing for Simon Dreisbach's American descendants, *he apparently has accomplished*.

The Dreisbach mosaic on its way to 1929. And then what?

This has been a journey which started off in Northampton Co., PA in the second half of the eighteenth century when Simon Dreisbach, Jr. began noting the births and baptisms of his children, starting with his own birth in Wittgenstein. We were then introduced to what is probably the first general history of any Dreisbach line, Rev. John Dreisbach's "*A Short Family History and Genealogical Statement of Martin Dreisbach...*" written after 1831.

We have traced the formation of the Dreisbach Family Association back to a funeral somewhere in eastern Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley in the early 1900's which in turn gave rise to Ammon Dreisbach's vision of a family reunion where Dreisbachs could meet on a regular basis. We have seen that vision take shape in Allentown in 1910 as the newborn DFA. We even met Rev. John's nephews, William and Martin IV there, contributing the history of their own line. We have also seen the growing interest in family history blossom into the publication of *The Dreisbach Family Journal*, 1913-1915. We have noted that family data of the Simon and Martin lines was collected and ordered by the DFA secretary, Laura M. Helman, resulting in two genealogical volumes in 1924 and 1927,¹⁶ and we have concluded our journey with the 1928 influx of archival information on Dreisbachs extracted from archival records in the Princely Archive in Laasphe.

Then came the Depression, and the apparent demise of the DFA in the 1930's. A letter written in 1933 states that the President of the DFA at that time was Mr. Robert D. Dreisbach of N. 8th St. No city was given, but the name and address are those of the writer's grandfather, who was thus following in his father Ammon Dreisbach's steps.¹⁷ No further information on the 'first' DFA is known to this writer.

At the end of this first part of our journey into Dreisbach historiography, a glance at the mosaic model will show a remarkable expansion of form and content. After individual efforts scattered in space and time, such as those of Simon Jr. and Rev. John (and one hopes, lineages in some as yet undiscovered family Bibles), came the uncritical camaraderie of the early years of the DFA, sharing the stories of more or less remarkable family members and preparing the way for later research. In the 1920's came a more developed genealogical approach with recognizable contours, followed almost immediately by the expansion of Dreisbach horizons occasioned by a showering of archival information from Wittgenstein.

Did the shape and content of Dreisbach family research stagnate in the following decades? When and how did the Martin line's historiography develop? Did the so-called Bucks County, or Rockhill Henry line inquire into its descent from 1754 immigrant Henrich Dreisbach? To be continued...

¹⁶ We have also mentioned briefly on p. 4 and in n. 6, Cora Hyde Dreisbach's 1927 publication, "*Annals of Martin Dreisbach, Sr. and Descendants*", which we have not seen. That she knew Rev. John's family history text is certain. Whether she can have been inspired by Laura Helman's 1924 *History and Genealogy of the Dreisbach Family* cannot be determined until both volumes are placed side by side.

¹⁷ Letter of 21 Sept. 1933 from a Mr. Cathcart, Director of the Western Reserve Historical Society, in reply to one Carolyn B. Ellis. The information on the DFA President was given to Cathcart by Allentown historian, Charles R. Roberts. This information was received in an email on 26 March 1998 from then President of the DFA, William S. Dreisbach.

Research notes

- *The unknown fate of Simon Dreisbach Jr.'s family notes, formerly in the possession of William J. Fiedler. (See pp. 1-2.)*

William J. Fiedler, Jr. died on 24 October 2010. It is not known if, at his death, his collection of family papers, etc. was still in the safe deposit box where he was known to have kept them. The surviving family members when he died were three siblings in Emmaus and Schnecksville, PA and Berkeley Heights, NJ. An attempt to reach them through the funeral firm was without success. Access to Simon Jr.'s original hand-written papers could lead to a more accurate transcription of his family lists.

- *What does this number of the DERR have to do with emigration? Who can tell us more?*

The DERR's general focus is eighteenth century emigration from German-speaking areas to North America. Its particular focus is the emigration of Dreisbachs and related families, especially those from the two 'Counties' of Wittgenstein. One of the many subdivisions of emigration studies might be termed *awareness*. How did prospective emigrants become aware of possible places to move to? How did they keep those at home informed about their new lives? How long were ties maintained between the old and new homelands? How long did an awareness of the family's origins survive among descendants? What measures were taken by the descendants to preserve such awareness or to recover lost knowledge of their origins?

This number of the DERR has tried to examine the last variant of emigration awareness mentioned above. Of particular interest are the actions undertaken to reconnect with Wittgenstein and obtain more information, such as occurred in 1913 and 1928. **Readers of the DERR are requested to send further examples of American Dreisbachs who have initiated contacts with Wittgenstein, or who have perhaps traveled there, particularly in the period 1929-1969.** Details of later contacts with Wittgenstein are also gratefully received. E-mail communications can be addressed to:

grosjean-dreisbach@comhem.se

A.D.G., 28 June 2014