

## Searching Catherine Kappelmann's Past

My great-grandmother Catherine Kappelmann passed away at the ripe old age of 79 in Concordia, MO; but her early life had always been somewhat of a puzzle. Our family had little information about her past. First of all, there was some uncertainty about her maiden name. Secondly, various records such as church records and her death certificate indicate that she was born on May 25, 1841; but her tombstone has May 25, 1842 inscribed on it.

### Available records tracing directly to Catherine Kappelmann

Family records indicated the following:

- Given name – Catherine Elisabeth
- Birthday – May 25
- Married – November 06, 1861
- Died – October 29, 1920

Missouri Death Certificate:

- Full name – Catharina Kappelman
- Date of death – Oct. 29, 1920
- Date of birth – May 25, 1841
- Name of father – Hy Kappelman
- (Informant – John Kappelman)

1920 Freedom Township census records:

- Given name – Katherine
- Age – 78
- Immigrated – 1853

1910 Freedom Township census records:

- Given name – Katherine
- Age – 68
- Immigrated – 1851

1900 Freedom Township census records:

- Given name – Catherine
- Birth – May 1842
- Immigrated – 1853

1880 Freedom Township census records:

- Given name – Cath
- Age – 40

1876 Franklin County census records:

- Given name – Catharina
- Age – 21 to 45

Franklin Co., MO marriage records:

- Name of husband – Henry Kapelman
- Name of wife - K. Elisa Kappelman
- Date of marriage - 6 November 1861

As can be seen, there are variations in the name and date of birth in these records. German families in that era are notorious for changing given names. Slight spelling differences can be expected (particularly between German and English), but often people would swap first and middle name. Occasionally, they would even choose a completely different name. Ages listed in census records are not that accurate. They are based solely on what someone told the enumerator.

#### German Church, Immigration, and Other Franklin Co. Records

The marriage record for Henry and Catherine Kappelmann confirmed that her maiden name was also Kappelmann. Knowing that Catherine and her family immigrated to Franklin County and that many of the residents of that area came from the area of Borgholzhausen in Westphalia, Germany, I began searching the Borgholzhausen Evangelical Lutheran Church records. A microfilm of the *Kirchenbuch* from 1830 to 1849 was available from the LDS library in Salt Lake City (FHL INTL Film 1050775). The only birth record for a Kappelmann daughter in the 1841-2 time frame was the following:

Given name – Anne Marie Catherine  
Birth date – 25 May 1841  
Name of father – Heinrich Wilhelm Kappelmann  
Name of mother – Marie Elisabeth Nollkämper  
Place of birth – Barthaussen

That was encouraging! The date of birth and father's name match, but Catherine is her middle name (and no Elisabeth other than her mother's middle name). I was also able to locate the marriage entry for Heinrich Wilhelm and Marie Elisabeth in those same records, along with their other children. So a good picture of the family evolved.

Next, the passenger lists for the various immigrant ships from Germany to the US were checked. The family was found in the manifest for the 1853 voyage of the *SS Herman* that arrived in New Orleans on 16 Nov 1853. It lists a H. W. "Cappelmann", wife Ilse, seven children, and mother Kötting. [Note. The mother's name matches that in the marriage record.] The children's ages are not a perfect match to the church birth records, but that is not unusual for ship's passenger list. The daughter closest in age to Anne Marie Catherine is recorded as Cath. W., age 9. (Catherine should have been 12 at that time.) There is no Anne or Marie listed among the children.

Searching the next available Franklin Co. census records, the 1860 Beouff Township roles include a Henry Kappelmann, wife Mary E., and children including Chathariena W., age 19. Note that the first name matches, but the middle initial is W, just as on the passenger list. The age of 19 would also indicate a birthdate of 1841. The census was taken a year before my great-grandparents were married. She is the only Catherine about that age in the 1860 Franklin County records.

## Conclusions

As often occurs when tracing a family member, all the names and dates in various records do not always match perfectly. But the preponderance of evidences seems to indicate the following. Great-Grandmother Catherine Kappelman(n) was born in Barthausen, Westphalia, Germany on May 25, 1841 to Heinrich Wilhelm and Marie Elisabeth (nee Nollkämper) Kappelmann. The family immigrated to Franklin County on the *SS Herman* arriving in New Orleans on Nov. 16, 1853. She married Henry (a.k.a John Henry) Kappelmann on Nov. 06, 1861. She moved to Concordia, Lafayette Co., MO with her husband and family where she died on Oct. 29, 1920.

It should be noted that the biggest uncertainty in this analysis is her given name. Switching her first name to Catherine is not that unusual. However, it is not clear why she adopted the middle name of Elisabeth (or why her middle initial is listed as W. in some records). Both her mother and mother-in-law had Elisabeth for a middle name, so she may just have liked that name.