

Tracing the Pape Family Migration in Germany

One of the sources of information that can be used to trace the early location of a family and its later moves to other places is the set of church books for that area. German church records often contain a considerable amount of family information. While the detail contained in them can vary from one parish to another, birth/baptismal records usually list the father's home (including farm number in many cases) as well as his occupation. Marriage records may include this same information for the bride and groom as well as their parents. Finally the death/burial records also indicate the home and possibly the occupation of the deceased and/or spouse. In many church books, the information is tabulated in a convenient column format, making it easy to extract the information. In other cases, the entries are in paragraph form so that the information is somewhat more difficult to extract, particularly if the handwriting is hard to read.

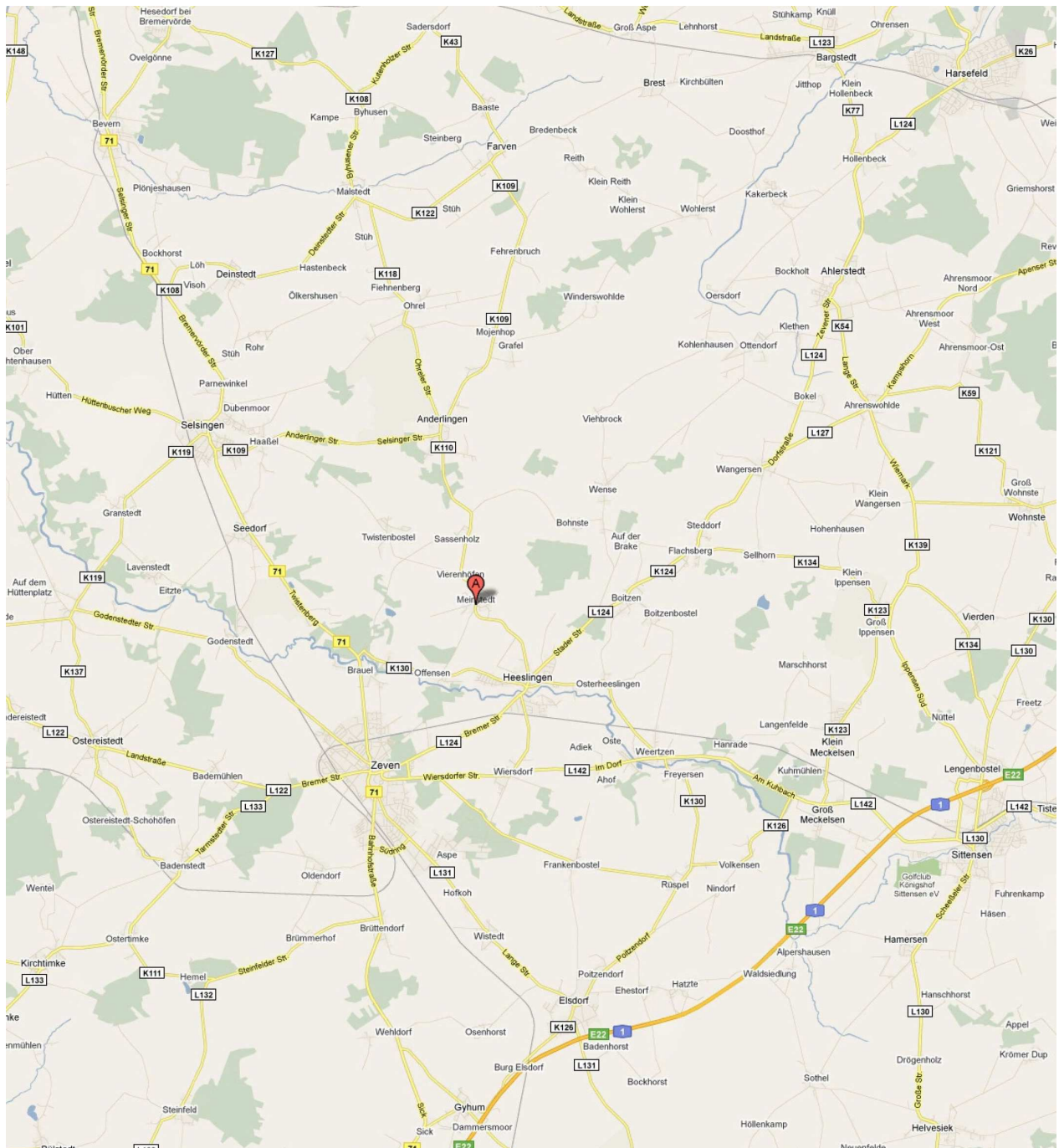
My grandfather Jacob Pape was born in Meinstedt, Germany and the Pape ancestors are known to have lived in the area of Heeslingen, Germany for a long period of time. Fortunately some of the early parish records there are available. Unfortunately, the entries in these books are in paragraph format with the quality and size of the handwriting from one pastor to the next varying widely. Parts of the microfilms of these records are also often illegible because the entries have faded or the filming was done poorly. Sometimes a date must be estimated. For example, if the date of birth is not listed in the baptismal record, it is assumed to be shortly before the date of baptism because child baptism was standard in that church. The birth might also be estimated from a death record when the age at death is listed.

As a matter of interest, the following is a photo of the Heeslingen church as it looks today.



The church was built in 944 AD and has been in continuous use ever since. The stone walls are the original walls of the building.

The following paragraphs list what I have been able to determine from their church records. The locations of the various villages in Germany that are mentioned in this trace can be located in the map below.



Map of Meinstedt/Heeslingen, Germany Area

The earliest entry in the Heeslingen Evangelical Lutheran Church records with a Pape surname is the marriage of Gerd Pape to Anna Bredehoeft on 24 Oct 1682. (Gerd and Anna were my 6th great-grandparents.) Gerd and Anna both died in Boitzenbostel, Hannover in 1729. People from that village were members of the Heeslingen church and are usually buried there. While there is no birth record for Gerd in these books, Anna is listed as being born in Boitzenbostel on 10 Sep 1665. So it appears that Gerd moved to Boitzenbostel when he married Anna. Gerd is listed in the records as a '*Baumann*' which usually indicates a builder but at that time was also used to indicate a farmer of a full-sized farm. The only clue as to where he may have been born is that the 1683 baptismal record for one of Gerd and Anna's children lists Johann Pape as a godfather and grandfather of the child. Johann is believed to have lived in Selsingen, Germany; so it is quite probable that Gerd came from that village. I do not have any information about the rest of Gerd's family, but it is quite probable that he was not the first son; otherwise, he would have inherited the family farm in Selsingen and remained there. A considerable number of Papes continued to live in the Selsingen area, including several other Pape families that immigrated to Concordia and Cole Camp, Missouri.

Anna's father Hinrich Bredehoeft had no sons, so at his death Anna became the heir (*Hofebin*) to the farm in Boitzenbostel. In the militia roles (LMR) of 1682, i.e. during the Swedish occupation, Hinrich was listed as a *Vollhöfner*. So he must have had a sizeable farm. Therefore, the Pape farm in Boitzenbostel was acquired by inheritance from the Bredehoeft family.

The next generation of Papes were Gerd and Ann Liesbeth Müller Pape, my 5th great grandparents. Gerd was born in Jan 1687/1688 in Boitzenbostel; while Ann was born sometime in 1701 in nearby Osterheeslingen (Nr. 1). They were married in Heeslingen on 3 Dec 1721 in Heeslingen. Gerd is also listed as a '*Baumann*'. While the death record for Gerd cannot be located, Ann died in Boitzenbostel sometime after 1734. It is assumed that Gerd lived in Boitzenbostel all of his life.

My 4th great-grandfather was also named Gerd. He was christened on 30 Jul 1724 in Heeslingen. He married Ilse Meÿer on 2 Dec 1751 in Heeslingen. Ilse was born about 1731 in Wense. This Gerd is also listed as a '*Baumann*'. He died 1 Mar 1793 and Anna on 3 May 1796 in Boitzenbostel. Both are buried in Heeslingen.

A change of residence occurred in the following generation. Gr-gr-gr-grandfather Bösche Pape was born about 1758 in Boitzenbostel. He married Catharina Hastedt on 20 May 1791 in Heeslingen. Catharina was born 29 Jan 1763 in Osenhorst (Nr. 2 - Tittens). She died on 5 May 1841 in Meinstedt (Nr. 3 - Böschen Hus) and is buried in Heeslingen. No death entry can be found in the Heeslingen church records for Bösche. However, in the 1817 marriage record for his eldest daughter, he is listed in as living in Meinstedt; but in the 1824 marriage record for his youngest son, Bösche was deceased. He is listed as a '*Hausmann*' which is used for various occupations including a farmer without specifying the size of the farm. As seen in the next generation, his son was born in 1792 in Meinstedt (Nr. 3 - Böschen Hus). So, Bösche must have moved from Boitzenborstel to Meinstedt by 1792 and died sometime between 1817 and 1824. He is assumed to have been buried in Heeslingen. In this case, we know that Bösche had an older brother Gerd who would have inherited the father's property, necessitating Bösche's move.

The following generation lived in Meinstedt in the same home that Bösche had moved to. Again the given name was Gerd. He was born on 12 Jul 1792 in Meinstedt (Nr. 3 - Böschen Hus). He married Catharina Adelheit Oetjen on 8 Mar 1811 in Heeslingen. Catharina was born on 10 Mar 1787 in Godenstedt and baptized in Selsingen. Gerd was listed as a *Vollhöfner*, i.e. the farmer of a full-sized farm. He died on 8 Dec 1867 and Catharina died on 4 Jan 1848, both in Meinstedt (Nr. 3 - Böschen Hus) and are both buried in Heeslingen.

Another change of residence occurred in the next generation. Gr-grandfather Claus Pape was born on 24 Mar 1827 in Meinstedt (Nr. 3 - Böschen Hus). On 22 Apr 1852 he married Maria Ropers who was born on 7 Oct 1829 in Kakerbeck. Claus was listed as an *Anbauer und Zimmermann*, i.e. a farmer and carpenter. He died on 15 Dec 1877 in Meinstedt (Nr. 12) and Maria died 20 Feb 1881 also Meinstedt (Nr. 12). Both were buried in Heeslingen. It is quite possible that Claus built the housebarn shown below where my grandfather Jacob Pape was born.



It stood at Nr. 12 Meinstedt until 1950 when it was torn down to build a new home. Again, Claus had an older brother Gerd who apparently inherited Bösche's property. So Claus had to look for other land. Note that the Nr. 12 Meinstedt property has remained in the Claus Pape family. A second cousin (once removed) of mine, Klaus Pape, owns that property and is living there today. See an earlier posting at <http://concordia-memories.org/files/EarlyGermanPapeFamilyLife.pdf>.)

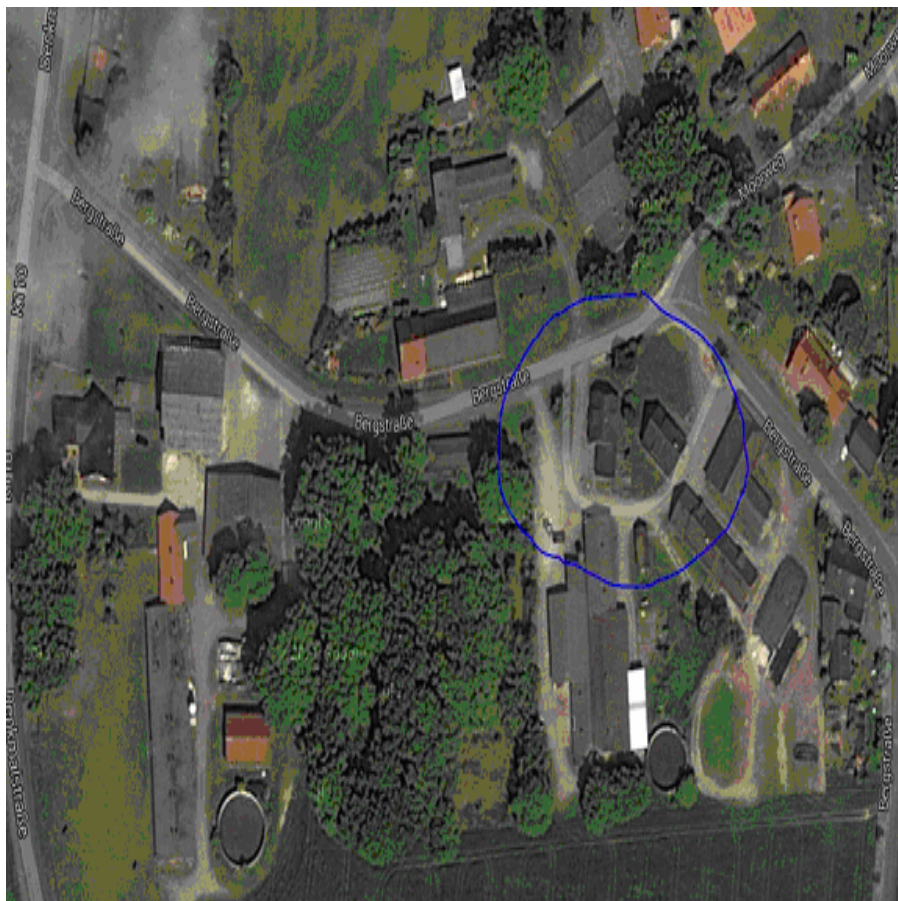
My grandfather Jacob Pape was born on 16 Dec 1868 in Meinstedt (Nr. 12). Both of his parents had died when he was young. He was cared for by his older brother Claus, but after he was confirmed he had to decide what he would do. He was the 8th child in the family and had no hope of inheriting any land. Prussia had also instituted military conscription, so it was very likely that he would be drafted into the army. So, at the age of 15, he signed up as an indentured servant to a farmer in Arkansas who paid his boat passage to the U.S. After a few years, he finally wound up in Concordia, MO where his sister Adelheid lived and where he had met a young girl, Maria Stuenkel, who became his bride.

Observations –

The birthplace of 6th great-grandfather Gerd Pape (abt. 1652) and earlier generations was not determined. Note that this was about the end of the 30 Years War when many records were destroyed or difficult to locate. However, there are good indications that it was in the Selsingen, Germany area. Several other Pape families from Selsingen area migrated to Concordia, MO. So it is possible that there is a distant connection between the families.

Property ownership was very important in the early German culture. In the various vital records, a person was listed by the amount of land he owned, e.g. *Vollmeyer*, *Halbmeyer*, *Viertelmeyer*, etc. Primogeniture rules were rigidly enforced. At the death of a father, all of his land was inherited by the eldest surviving son (or eldest daughter if there were no sons). With serious overpopulation in an agrarian society, this presented problems for the younger children in large families. The younger sons would either have to work for their eldest brother or find some other occupation. Lacking a full accounting of the early families, I did not determine how the Pape property was handed down from generation to generation. Many of the records did not include location where people were born or died. Also, some records did not include the occupation or status of the individual. So it was difficult to determine whether that person owned the property of his parents.

I was aware of the current Pape farm in Meinstedt and had assumed that it had been in the family for many generations. Nr. 12 Meinstedt is shown circled in the following overhead photography.



However, on further thought, having multiple sons in a family makes it highly improbable that a person's direct ancestral line lived at the same location for more than a few generations.

Assuming that there are at least two sons in any generation, the probability that one's direct ancestors lived in the same place are $1/4^{\text{th}}$ after two generations, $1/8^{\text{th}}$ after three generation, and so on. Therefore, the chance that my grandfather Jacob Pape lived on the same property that his gr-gr-gr-gr-grandfather Gerd Pape (1652-1729) first settled in the late 1600's would be only gave been about 1 in 64 (unless several brothers lived on the same farm).

The trace listed above shows that the current farm was only in the family since the mid 1800s.

My great-grandfather Claus Pape (1827-1877) moved from Nr. 3 Meinstedt to Nr. 12 Meinstedt, probably in the 1850s. (All of Claus' children were born at Nr. 12 Meinstedt.) As noted earlier, Claus had an older brother Gerd. I have no record as to when Gerd died, but he probably inherited Nr. 3 Meinstedt. So Claus would have had to find some other property.

R. L. Pape

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