

THE

Lahmeyer

NEWSLETTER



LAHMEYER

ISSUE #9

MAY 1986

GREETINGS!

It's taken a long time to get this issue completed but quite a lot has happened in the since the last issue.

Here are the items contained in this issue:

- Report on the search for our roots in Schwarme, Germany
- Biography of Christena and Louis Lahmeyer written by Steena herself
- Report on my research into the meaning of the name "Lahmeyer"
- Some old pictures of Anton Lahmeyer and his family
- Listing of the current family tree data, 460 names
- Printout of the current mailing list
- Reunion portrait with caption

There have been several letters exchanged between myself and folks interested in helping us find our ancestors in Germany. The latest result is a negative one in that no record of our family was found in the church books in Schwarme. I'm not sure what this means but it is not a dead end, just a stumbling block. I still hope to locate records of Anton and his family in a nearby town. This is a common problem in genealogy research, the information is vague or just plain incorrect. Still, we know we are on the right track.

Christena was nice enough to write the story of her entire life for us all to enjoy. She sent it to me some time back and I am using it just as she wrote it. My sincere thanks to you Steena for all your work, and I'm sorry it's taken me so long to get it printed and sent out to everyone. We should all take a cue from Steena and try to get our recollections recorded so that everyone can enjoy them and so that our descendants will have the information available to them. By this I mean that this newsletter represents a reasonably permanent record of our family history. First of all, it is distributed to many family members so hopefully a few copies of it will be around for some time, and second, the newsletters are all stored on computer disks which will last almost forever. I intend to see that they are well taken care of and passed along to some family member after I am gone. To this end, I would ask all of you reading this to consider writing up your own stories or the memories you have of your ancestors. I pestered my father for some time till he wrote up his recollections of his parents. My fondest wish is that we can record as much information as possible about the second generation of American Lahmeyers, that is Anton's children. No one living remembers Anton but there are memories of all of his children (except Dick Lahmeyer who died before Anton). Won't some of you write and send me your recollections of your ancestors. I will write it up for this newsletter.

I have wanted to know for many years about the meaning of the name "Lahmeyer", and my current studies in German have made it even more tantalizing. One can translate many if not most German names by using a dictionary, but not ours. Finally I was motivated to begin some serious research on the matter at the library at UCLA. The two words that make up our name are well known in old German but making sense out of it is not so easy. Many alternative definitions exist and my work is far from complete but I report on progress so far in the article called "Lahmeyer = Bush Farmer?".

The two pictures included are some very old ones that were made available to me by Lorene Read. The first is of Anton and Margarethe Lahmeyer and some of their descendants. It seems to have been taken around 1900 judging from the ages of the people involved. Anton himself may have been over 80 at this time. The mystery here is the youngsters in the picture. The two small children would seem to be about 2 and 4 years old. These ages do not jive with any

possible pair of Johann's children (check the family tree listing). And the two young men on the right might be too old to be Johann's boys. Any help anyone can provide about the identity of these folks would be most welcome. Write me. The second picture is likely to remain a mystery. It would appear to be taken in Germany before the immigration. It looks like a large banquet held outside a large home, perhaps Anton's. One possibility is that this house may still stand in Germany and we may locate it someday. This is not very likely but houses are sometimes preserved for many years in Europe. It's for certain that this picture is very old, perhaps 120 years.

The family tree listing is also reprinted in this issue in its latest form. I have condensed the line spacing somewhat to save paper but you can see how big our family record has grown. There are still a few names to add also before this chart is completely up to date. So if you have any names or data to add please send it to me. This information is also available in the family tree chart which we had on display at the reunion. You may have your own reduced copy for \$10. If you see any names missing from this listing which you have told me about already I am very sorry. It is in my files somewhere. Help me out here if you can add anything to this listing.

Also included is a copy of the current mailing list. It is somewhat shorter than in the past as I have decided to pare it down to those who have shown that they really interested in receiving the newsletter. I will send some of the future mailings to a greater number of people when it comes time to advertise for the trip to Germany next year. More about that in future letters.

A bonus in this package for many of you will be a copy of the portrait of the group at the family reunion in Bland, Missouri in July, 1986. I had hoped that a lot of you would order copies for your own. Very few did, so I got Bob Lahmeyer to print up a bunch of them because I would just like for those who came to the reunion to have a copy to keep. While there is no obligation, a contribution of \$5 or so to help defray the cost of these would be welcome. One of my pleasant discoveries when planning the 1986 reunion was that many of you have a print of the group picture taken at the 1952 reunion. Someone was diligent enough to see that all those copies were made and that everybody got one. We should try to do as much for the 1986 gathering.

The family pilgrimage to Germany next year is still in the planning but I will not report on in this time. Several of you were nice enough to send me your druthers about time and itinerary but it is clear that we will not be able to satisfy everybody. Keep sending me your suggestions for this trip and I'll try to accomodate as many wishes as I can and will promise to report in more detail in the next newsletter. I have made contact with a very competent travel agent and hopefully we can get some group rate discounts. Next time.

A few words about why this newsletter is so late. Mainly because this has been about the busiest spring season I can remember. I am always heavily involved in outdoor activities, planning and leading many camping and exploring trips. Particularly I lead canoe and raft trips on the rivers in this area for a large wilderness club that I belong to. This year we decided to purchase our own liability insurance for the river rafting trips and the logistics of getting that done was a nightmare. But the biggest single time consumer is my German class. It just seems like every time I try to sit down to work on newsletter there is a major piece of homework to be done. Class ends after one more week and then I expect to not take another class for several months. The more time to do letters! In addition I have a good friend of many years who has cancer and probably has a limited time yet to live. I have been trying to spend an evening with him every week or two. And if all this wasn't enough, I am taking up a new sport, skydiving. Really it only LOOKS dangerous. It has become my passion lately and I am out at the local jump school almost every weekend for a practice jump. I have done over 20 jumps now and will complete my student training on June 20. Forgive my indulgence but one has to allow some time for fun also. I wouldn't otherwise feel so obligated to do newsletters except for all of you who have sent me money for them in advance and I apologize for not doing a better job lately. I promise to do better from now on. My best wishes to all the cousins.

INQUIRY TO SCHWARME YIELDS NEGATIVE RESULT

Regretfully, the following exchange of letters indicates that no record of the Anton Lahmeyer family could be found in the church books at Schwarme. It is possible that the family lived there but attended a church in a different town, or maybe the Lahmeyer farm was actually closer to another town. The memory of their residence there is about 120 years old and could be in error. My next course of action will be to clarify with Friedrich Albers of Felde the location of the Lahmeyer family and then to inquire with the church officials of several villages in the vicinity of Schwarme. The information must be there somewhere! Meanwhile, these letters may be of interest. This is my translation of the two letters, the first written by Johannes Lameyer in our behalf and the second by Gunda Schmidt, the church official in Schwarme. We are grateful to Johannes (Hans) for all his help.

Dec. 12, 1986

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing to you on behalf of my American namesake Chuck Lahmeyer, Temple City, California. Chuck is seeking his ancestors, who immigrated to Missouri around 1870. Involved are Anton Lahmeyer, born 9/9/1818 and Margaretha Adelheid Lahmeyer, born 3/25/1825. Presumably the lived in Schwarme before they immigrated. Anton and Margaretha had the following children, who were born in Germany, possibly in Schwarme:

Fritz	born	2/11/1851
Adelheid	"	2/11/1854
Diedrich	"	9/27/1856
Heinrich	"	6/23/1859
Hermann	"	8/27/1863
Johann	"	10/27/1866

Johann came to Germany in 1888 to get his bride from Felde. The marriage had been arranged by their parents before the immigration. The bride's name was Adelheid (Lena) Albers. The nephew of Lena is Friedrich Albers, Boertoldsdamm 10, Riede. He told me that the bridegroom of his aunt had lived in Schwarme before the immigration of his parents, this he knew from his parents.

Living in the USA are over 400 Lahmeyers who know almost nothing of their ancestors. A group of them want to visit Germany in 1988, especially Schwarme. From church books, birth registries or similar sources, can you tell us anything more about the Lahmeyer family? Where the ancestors of Anton and Margaretha came from? We, Chuck Lahmeyer and I (Lameyer), are in agreement that all Lahmeyers, Lameyers and Lameiers originated at the Lahof, Kleine Ringmar, near Bassum. Is there a connection in Schwarme.

I am grateful for your answer.

With friendly greetings,

Hans Lameyer

Jan. 7, 1987

Dear Mr. Lameyer:

Regarding your inquiry of 12/12/86, I am sorry to inform you that the name "Lahmeyer" does not appear in the Schwarme church books at the time in question. I could not find the name "Lahmeyer" in the earlier books either. Perhaps the marriage took place in another location.

I am sorry I can not help you further.

With friendly greetings,

Gunda Schmidt

CHRISTENA (DAVATZ) LAHMEYER. A BIOGRAPHY

On March 27, 1894 my father drove the 22 miles from his farm, which was 2 miles from the farm of Henry Lahmeyer (Anton Lahmeyer's son), to St. James, the nearest railroad station, to meet his bride-to-be Katherine Ruedy from Casey, Illinois. Henry was also there to meet the train. My parents were married at Wollem, Mo. by Rev. Hoffman, my father's sister's husband who was pastoring the church. They settled on father's farm. On Dec. 12, 1896 their second child was born Christena Margaretha and on March 29, 1897 Henry Lahmeyer's child was born, Ludwig Fredric (Louis Fred). Both families attended the German Evangelical Church at Old Bland and we knew each other all our lives.

Years passed and on Louis' 21st birthday, his sister Anne gave him a birthday party and we three DaVatz children were invited. After that the Lahmeyer car was frequently seen parked in front of the DaVatz home. After my father's death in 1917 our family moved to Kansas City. Six weeks later, on Dec. 10, 1918, I went back to Bland. The train was late and a group had gathered at the depot and our friends knew our secret. We drove to Herman and got our marriage license and at Owensville on our way home we were married by Rev. Albertsworth. The nervous young couple left for Bland. It was after dark by this time and believe it or not we got lost. The young husband had to go to the home of a farmer have him come with a team and pull us out of the ditch. The roads were muddy and had many turns. Thus began our married life on the farm with Louis' father. After about a year and a half the desire to go west prevailed and we loaded all of our worldly possessions into our Buick touring car and early in the morning started for Copeland, Kansas to visit my sister and her husband. Being harvest time at Copeland, Louis got a job with a threshing crew, all very different from harvesting in Missouri but he stayed with the crew. The Standard Oil Company was looking for a delivery man and Louis took the job. Years went by and we added a service station and hardware business. All went well and we had our own home and also made a payment on 800 acres of land south of Syracuse, Kansas. Then the big Depression hit. After struggling along for 3 years we decided to move our business to Syracuse because it was closer to our land and also Syracuse was a larger town. Our land was in wheat but wheat had dropped to 20 or 25 cents a bushel. We managed to build a house on the farm but business did not improve. Louis was now drilling water wells for the government and an oil company but hoped to raise crops, so we moved to the farm. This was in 1933, the year the dust storms started and we sold only 95 dollars worth of crops in the next five years. The well drilling also closed down so Louis started leasing land to non-resident owners to keep it from blowing so bad. The rent was 50 cents an acre and we furnished the equipment and fuel. We had adopted a boy, George, who was ready for high school. He was a growing child by now and had just 2 pair of pants and 3 shirts that were fit to wear to school. But mother kept his clothes washed and pressed so he looked as nice as the rest of the students. Even in our condition we were better off than some of our neighbors and we shared what little we had. The rains finally came and the land produced well.

After 24 years in western Kansas we decided to move to northern Idaho where some of our friends had moved during those bad years. What a change from the treeless plains to a timbered mountain country! We loved the country and as usual Louis got busy with lumber business and building. We sold logs, posts and wood. Summers were very pleasant and we usually had a lot of snow in the winters. I never saw temperatures lower than 20 below. Mostly they were in the lower 30's and upper 20's. After eleven years he had the urge to go back to Owensville, Missouri. In about three years time we were back in Bonners Ferry, Idaho and he got work at a lumber mill. One evening he came home and said "Let's go to Alaska". I was surprised as we had just finished our home. Fortunately the Methodists were looking for a parsonage and in a few days all the arrangements were made and we were on our way to Palmer, Alaska with the pickup and trailer house and two little boys. We had a good trip but found Alaska a very different country. Our plans were to stay and work for not longer than three months. I could write a book on our Alaska experience! We stayed 8 1/2 years. Palmer is the agricultural center of Alaska but does not resemble any farming we know. After spending about three weeks in that area and didn't find any work we started for home, "Idaho" by way of Mt. McKinley Park. At the park Louis found

work with the maintenance department so we decided we would like to spend the winter there. It was a government job and paid well. Everything was so interesting and different.

The minister with the Presbyterian Mission Board visited the park and Louis went to work for him. His parish was 8 feet wide and 125 miles long, along the Alaska Railroad. This work took us to other places of history and interest. After some time with the Mission we learned that the Salvation Army would take us to places we hadn't been, so Louis managed to get a job with the Maintenance department for the state of Alaska. To mention a few of the places he worked: Palmer, Sitka, Petersburg, Wasilla, Creg. We were living in Anchorage at the time of the great earthquake in 1964. We were there when Alaska became a state and thought it was truly a great and interesting state. We were happy to have Gary and Brian with us part of the time. In 1966 we decided it was time to look for a place to retire so one misty morning in May we waved goodbye to our Petersburg friends and boarded the Ferry for Prince Rupert, Canada.

We spent some time in Montana, Washington and finally went to Veronia Oregon where we had some friends and decided to build our retirement home. Before we had it finished Louis became ill with cancer and in ten weeks time he left us. I brought his body back to Syracuse, Kansas for burial, returning to Vernonia to make final plans. Gary and Brian were with me and persuaded me to finish the home.

We spent two Christmas seasons in our home and in the spring I became seriously ill. My brother and sister came up to be with me but in three months time I realized that my active life was over. I spent the next four months with my sister and her husband in California. Gary went back to Sedalia, Mo. That October my brother Chris came and brought me to Cherryvale, Kansas. His wife had died six months after Louis died. This was in 1971 and now in 1987 we are helping each other. He is now 87 and I am 90.

Living with Louis was not a dull life. I see my grandsons frequently and we really enjoyed the Lahmeyer Family Reunion. The Lahmeyer ancestry dates back many years in Germany and the DaVatz family has the same honor in Switzerland.

God Bless You,

Christena Lahmeyer

(FROM NEXT ARTICLE)

* We might ask if this word loh suggests a relationship between the names Lahmeyer and Lohmeyer. Grimm's (yes, of fairy-tale fame) Dictionary seems to argue for caution here. A more modern word Lohe relates to the process of tanning hides. Loh-meyer might be just a tanning master. The resemblance between the names may well be superficial. I have seen no evidence to suggest any common ancestry between Lahmeyers and Lohmeyers. The Missouri Lahmeyers tended to pronounce the name "low mire" but this must be a local phenomenon. Good German would dictate "lah' mire", accent on lah.

LAHMEYER = "BUSH FARMER" ?

One of the questions that has interested me the most has been the meaning of the family name. Unlike many German names, ours cannot easily be translated into English by means of a German-English dictionary. For example, Pfeiffer=piper, Schaeffer=shepherd, Schneider=taylor, Rothschild=red shield(not a British name), Messerschmidt=knife-smith. These can all be looked up in a dictionary. But try "Lah" or "Meyer" in an ordinary dictionary and you will find nothing. In a large German dictionary you will find "Meier" listed as an obsolete word meaning "dairyman" with "Meierei" being a dairy, but this is only an inkling of where the trail will lead. Lately I have put in quite a few hours at the UCLA Research Library where they have an excellent German reference section which includes many dictionaries of old German. They have the entire Grimm's Dictionary of 32 volumes. In addition a recent letter from Horst Lameier contained some reference material in German on the origins of family names and place names. I am grateful to Horst for his assistance. I have now learned enough to be dangerous even if I am far from learning the full story. I have collected loads of reference material which I have yet to digest but I will report here on what I have learned so far.

Clearly our name consists of two parts, Lah and Meyer. In addition, most of you have now heard of the Lahof, our original family home in north Germany. We must consider this word also as Lah and Meyer don't really fit together by themselves. A better interpretation of Lahmeyer is "the Meyer of the Lahof". So what is a Hof? What is a Lah? And what exactly is a Meyer?

Hof is one of those words with too many meanings in German. You may know of Bahnhof=train station. The simplest definition of Hof is courtyard or court but it can also mean yard, manor, palace or even farm. A king's court (a collection of people and institutions) was called his Hof. Large buildings in Germany today may be called Hof and a farm today is called a Bauernhof, after the modern word Bauer=farmer. Hof today can mean many types of places in modern German so that it can almost be translated Hof=place. For our purposes Hof can mean farm but one must remember that a farm in 1375 (the earliest historical reference to the Lahof) was quite a different institution than what we call a farm today. In those times, the local prince or baron owned all the land in his domain and he parcelled out large portions of it into Hof's to be operated by tenant farmers and supervised by a steward (called Verwalter or Meier). It may have been common for several related families to share residence on such a Hof. These were feudal times and the concept of a private family farm did not yet exist. Although landed estate may be the best interpretation, let's assume Hof can be loosely translated as "farm".

Lah is the most difficult word to trace as it has not been used in German in several hundred years. One must dig back into Middle High German or even Old High German to learn anything. It seems to have been derived from the Old High German word loh* which was derived from an older Latin word lucus which meant grove or glade. The word loh itself is usually translated as bushes, thicket, or woodland. One reference even suggests it meant a clearing in a woods. The concept "forest", implying large trees is probably not the right idea, especially for the low rolling countryside of north Germany. Low woodland or brushy thicket might be closer to the truth. For our purposes let us say that Lah means roughly "woods". So far then we have that Lahof (in former times spelled Lah-hof) means "the farm by (or in) the woods".

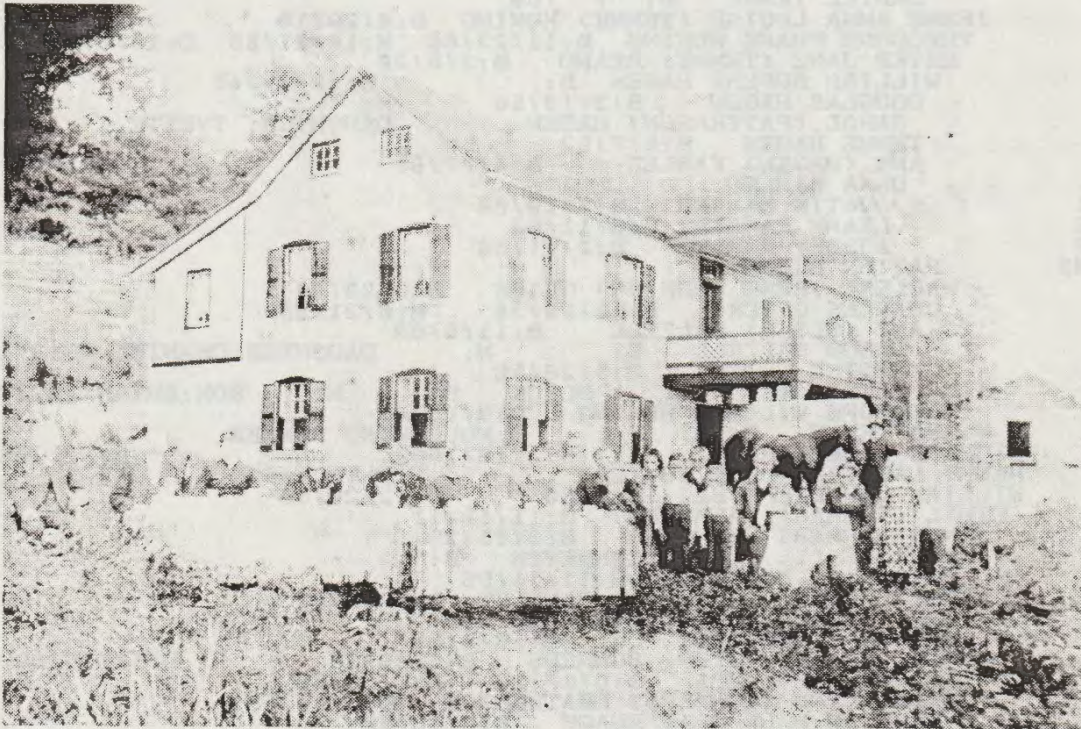
Meyer is perhaps the most interesting of the three words as it has the richest sources and is at least the second most common name in Germany (counting combination forms like Lahmeyer it is probably the MOST common). It also has the most possible spellings including Meyer, Meier, Mayer, Maier, Meir, and in older times Meiger, Meyger, and Mayger. The earliest form seems to be the Latin "Major domus" who was a representative or head steward of the king. Related forms are the English words mayor and major and the French word maire. All these imply someone in authority. The earliest use in German seems to have been the previously-mentioned steward of a farm estate in the name of the local prince. This older office is now called Verwalter in modern German and this means steward, manager or administrator. In later years the word came to mean closer to the concept of farmer and in its most recent usage the word meant dairyman, but even this is considered archaic today. The most appropriate meaning for our purposes should be the one in use when the name was created, sometime between 1400 and 1570. That word should probably be "steward".

So what is the best meaning of the name Lahmeyer, the Meyer of the Lahof? With much work yet to be completed, and promising to publish results as more is learned, I propose the following as the current best translation:

Lahmeyer = The steward of the farm by the woods.



The Anton Lahmeyer homeplace and some of the family. Pictured are Anton and Margarethe (seated) and their son Johann with his wife Lena (standing). The photo was made before 1903 as Anton died then and it could not have been much before 1900 because Johann was born in 1866 and looks to be in his 30's here. The youngsters in the picture are not identified.



This appears to be a outdoor banquet given for or by Anton Lahmeyer in Germany. He and Margarethe may be seen near the center of the table. The event dates from before 1869 when they left for the USA. One interesting theory is that this could have been a going away banquet for the folks about to leave for America.