

# THE FAMILY SNOOP

MERCED COUNTY GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 35, No. 6

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2017

November 2017 Meeting



**Descendancy  
Research**

**By  
Jennifer  
McDonald**

**1:00 p.m. Saturday**

**November 18, 2017**

**Gracey Room, Merced County Library**

## **November Speaker: Jennifer McDonald on Descendancy Research**

Jennifer McDonald, President of the Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County will be our Guest Speaker on November 18, 2017. Jennifer has been doing Genealogical Research for five years and has located over 300 of her relatives. Her specialty within the Genealogy field has been in Descendancy Research, which has led her to many great discoveries from prized family photos to unlocking key Genealogy Brick Walls. Within her research and contacting family members, she has also had a hand in reuniting several families. Two of her most famous mentors have been Troy and Katie Dunn from the television shows The Locator and Last Hope.

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### **Meeting Attendance**

**September Membership:** Attendance Final Count:  
22 Members + 5 Guests for a total of 27.

**October Membership:** Attendance Final Count:  
20 Members + 1 Guests for a total of 21.

Total Members: 87 active (October)

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## **September Speaker: Mike Cuchna Capture, Repair & Restore Old Damaged Photographs**



Mike Cuchna shared with us his journey into learning how to do photo restoration and digitally document family artifacts after he accumulated several photo albums and other artifacts. His goals were how to capture (1) both 2 dimensional and 3

dimensional images, and (2) edit and restore images. Some points he shared are the following:

- Commercial services vary in price.

- He needed both hardware and software.
  - Kickstarter.com
  - Lightbox and lights
  - Color temperatures
  - CRI color rendering image
  - Shoebox-allows the use of cellphone with an external shutter
  - Background panels
- Software-wide range of costs. He settled on Photoshop Elements for about \$79.00
- Training books and videos (YouTube):
  - See *Family Tree Magazine* for articles on working with images. Photoshop Element 15: Book for Digital Photographers – Kelby
  - Digital Restoration from Start to Finish – Clein
  - Photoshop Elements for Dummies – Obermeier/Padova
  - Photoshop Elements: Restore Vintage Photos – YouTube
  - How to digitally fix faded photographs – YouTube
  - Restore old faced color photos – YouTube



Some techniques he used were the following:

- Copy background image
- Used the menu to layer, new adjustment layer, levels
- Adjust RGB (Red, green, blue)
- Adjust contrast and sharpen

For black and white images, he found those easier to work with. He used the same techniques, and:

- Color adjustment
- Spot healing
- Clone tool



The following images have been from the 1940's and 1950's.



The next test was a wedding image from 1903. The yellowing was palpable, but the image itself had no scratches or artifacts. A new tool was used: Color Replacement. An artifact is a defect in photo due to emulsion and aging, not part of original photo. To clean up yellowed old images, use color replacement tool.



Tintype photos.... actually iron which over time oxidized (rusts).

Mike also shared with us how he used a light box and his camera to record some photos and three dimensional objects to share digitally:



- Camera
  - Use a camera with 12 megapixels
  - Be aware of the quality of the lense.
  - Use a tripod with the camera
  - If using a scanner, look at size of image verses the quality of resolution. Is it software driven?
- Light box – He used Shot Box (about \$200)



Upcoming Programs for 2017	
November	Jennifer McDonald – Descendency Research
December	Annual Christmas Party for members
December 2, 2017 1:00p.m.	Next MCGS Board Meeting – Doris Cochran Research room, Main Library

# When Your German Ancestor Research Takes You to Germany

## Part 2

(Part 1 was in the Sept/Oct edition.)  
by Robyn Echols

### “LEIBEIGENSCHAFT”

*Leibeigenschaft* was a medieval form of serfdom, usually passed down through the mother. It should not be equated with slavery. *Leibeigene* persons were tied to the land, so their mobility was severely limited. In return for the peasants' service, the landlord was supposed to provide support and protection in times of war, famine, and other times of need. Special permission from the landlord was required in order to marry, move to another farming estate or town, or emigrate. Some surviving records of these manumissions have been indexed and help locate the origins of pre-19<sup>th</sup> century emigrants. Special taxes, both in kind and money, and unpaid labor on the Lord's estate, were required. When the head of household died, the best piece of livestock in the barn [*Besthaupt*] was paid to the Lord of the land. In case of his wife's death, her best dress was the required payment. In the 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, most of the obligations associated with *Leibeigenschaft* were converted to cash payments.

How easy was it for a member of the German *Leibeigenschaft* to earn enough money for him and his family to get ahead? Not very. There were six work days in a week, and each was divided into a half day. The following were the work day obligations of the *Leibeigenschaft*:  
The farmer worked six half days per week on the farm owner's estate without pay.

Another half day was worked to earn money for various taxes paid in money or kind.  
Another half day was worked to pay tithes.  
Another half day was worked to pay for other contributions (maintain roads, deliver food to the military, help build a school, etc.).  
This left the farmer three half days to work for the sustenance of his own family.

Is it any wonder that Hessian mercenaries captured by George Washington agreed to take an oath to not fight the revolutionary forces in exchange to being sent to areas populated by German-speaking people where they would be given their own farmland? Is it any wonder that countless Germans

fled Europe either to avoid military service or in order to escape being beholden to a landed overlord?

### The following is the suggested reading from the FamilySearch Wiki:

Blum, Jerome, *The end of the old order in rural Europe*, Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1978, xiii, 505 p., [2] p. of pl. : ill., facsim., map, portr., [ISBN 0691052662](#), FHL INTL BOOK 940 H6bj. Historical overview of the social emancipation of the rural peasantry in Austria-Hungary, the Baltic States, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Romania, Russia, and Switzerland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Boehlke, LeRoy, *Pomerania: its people and its history*, [Germantown, Wisconsin] : L. Boehlke, 1983, 36 p. : Ill., coats of arms, maps., 4th printing, FHL INTL BOOK 943.82 H2b  
Cowan, Alexander Francis, *The Urban Patriciate: Lübeck and Venice, 1580-1700*, Köln : Böhlau, 1986, xvi, 267 p., [ISBN 3412060840](#), FHL INTL BOOK 943.512/L1 H6c. Includes an extensive bibliography.

Heinemeier, Dan C., *A Social History of Hesse: Roman times to 1900*, Arlington, Virginia: Heinemeier Publications, 2002, 377 p.: ill., maps, ports. [ISBN 0967182212](#), FHL INTL BOOK 943.41 H2hd. Has a good bibliography.

Hoffmann, Richard C., *Land, liberties and lordship in late medieval countryside: agrarian structures and change in the Duchy of Wrocław*, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989, xx, 578 p., [1] folded leaf: charts, general. Tables, maps, [ISBN 0812280903](#), FHL INTL BOOK 943.85 R2hr. Social history of the former Duchy of Wrocław, part of the larger Duchy of Silesia, from the twelfth to the sixteenth centuries. Includes glossary and gazetteer explaining German and Polish place-name changes.

Sabeen, David Warren. *Property, Production, and Family in Neckarhausen, 1700-1870*: New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. [ISBN 0521386926](#). FHL INTL BOOK 943.47/N6 H6sd. Extensive social history of a small Wuerttemberg community with lengthy discussions about family relations as they fit into the local social fabric.

Thode, Ernest. *GERMAN-English Genealogical Dictionary*, Baltimore, Maryland: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1992. [ISBN 0-8063-1342-0](#). FHL INTL REF 433.21 T352g 1992.

[This book is available in the Doris Cochran Research room, Call No. 929.103]



Walker, Mack. *German Home Towns: community state, and general estate, 1648-1871*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971, 473 p., ISBN/ISSN 0801406706, FHL INTL 943 H2wm.

Other than the book noted, none of these are presently available in the Doris Cochran Research room or in any library in the ValleyCat San Joaquin Valley Library System. Plan to research these books during your next trip to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City.

**The following are helpful websites for your German occupation research:**

*As you can tell, for some it would be helpful to be able to read German.*

<http://worldroots.com/brigitte/occupat.htm> and <http://www.rootsweb.com/~romban/misc/germanjobs.html#OutlineTree> –old German professions, occupations, and illnesses, translated from German into English language [some letters are missing].

<http://wiki.genealogy.net/wiki/Kategorie:Berufsbezeichnung> –dictionary of historic occupations with references [in German].

[www.lothar-kucharz.de](http://www.lothar-kucharz.de)–Web page showing photographs of many historic occupations.

<http://www.nuernberger-hausbuecher.de/index.php?do=page&mo=8>–*Die Hausbücher der Nürnberger Zwölfbrüderstiftung* (The Housebooks of the Twelve-Brethren Foundation in Nuernberg) Two social foundations in Nürnberg maintained retirement homes for indigent old craftsmen. The “housebooks,” kept since about 1426 and 1511 respectively, include portraits of the residents, usually depicted in the typical clothing and with the tools of their trade. Each folio includes a transcription of the text and explanatory notes in German. The collection includes several topical indexes in English.

Another website not part of the FamilySearch Wiki, but dealing with emigration from Germany: <http://www.germany.travel/en/ms/german-originality/heritage/timeline/timeline.html>

## The Iron Crosses of the Plains

By Celia Yeary

Symbols of Strength and Spirituality



Imagine you are an immigrant, perhaps German or Polish, living on the Great Plains of America during the Nineteenth Century. An

outbreak of diphtheria takes the lives of some friends, neighbors, and worst of all, your own little son. You go to the barn to find pieces of wood to fashion a small coffin. Heartbroken, you and your wife bury your precious little boy. You forgo the common wooden cross to mark the grave.

### TYPICAL PIONEER FAMILY

Instead, you visit the "smithy" in the village, another immigrant like yourself who understands you want a traditional iron cross, one that will last centuries.

You work with the smithy to create a special cross made of iron and other bits of scrap metal he might have. The cross will be unique, one of a kind, to mark the child's grave. The design will tell a story...



In September 2005, my husband and I embarked on our fourth and last trip to Europe. After landing in Frankfurt, we began a long trip by tour bus through Central Europe. I admit the trip did not interest me at first, but my husband thought we should see this area of Europe. By the time we finished the tour, I said it was second on my list of favorites.

We visited places in several countries (in order): Frankfurt, Berlin, Warsaw, Poznan, Auschwitz, Krakow, Slovakia, Budapest, Vienna, Prague, Rothenberg. and back to the Frankfurt Airport.

During this long journey, I was enthralled with everything (except Auschwitz), but one vision remained with me--the iron crosses in cemeteries on the long drive between Eastern Germany and into Poland. The tour guide never mentioned them, but I'd watch out the bus window and see one cemetery after another among fields of flowers or crops of some kind.

The iron crosses were easily identifiable. The cemeteries always lay close to the road, and since the bus didn't travel very fast on the narrow roads, I had time to study quite a few.

When we arrived home, I looked up information about the Wrought Iron Crosses, and learned how and why they were made.

Several years later, we...once again...were on a tour bus. This time we were on one of several tours to SEE AMERICA FIRST. No, we saw it last! We flew to Denver and met our fellow passengers, and boarded the bus the next morning. (3/4 of the passengers were from the UK--I fell in love with the joyous group discovering America.)



CEMETERY IN KANSAS

On the first leg of the trip, we drove from Denver to Cheyenne and on to South Dakota to Mt. Rushmore and Deadwood. Much of the countryside was flat--the Plains or Prairies. Once again I saw cemeteries with the iron crosses. I was thrilled, and

tried to explain to others, but no one else seemed as excited.

The iron crosses are made and used by Germans from Russia, for the most part, and some were made by the Irish, the Hungarians, The Czechs, The Ukrainians, and others.

These immigrants who came to America during the migration to the West brought with them the blacksmiths and artists who created iron crosses for their deceased loved ones.

The unique crosses are scattered from central Canada to Kansas, from the Mississippi to the Rockies. Those prevalent in the Dakotas are of the Germans from Russia.



*The cross represents the sacred.  
The iron represents strength.*

Unlike wooden crosses, they were tough enough to withstand prairie fires, storms, and even time itself.

Each cross is unique, made from metals that were available at the time. The size, shape, style, color, design, and symbols all have cultural significance. Each one tells a story, and not everyone can "read" the story. For example, one features an iron snake crawling up the cross. At the very top of this same cross is an angel. It tells the story of creation, the fall of man, and heavenly salvation.

Common features were the sun, a heart, a star, leaves, flowers, a tree, and shapes of animals. Filigree was popular on many crosses.

Have you seen the Iron Crosses of the Plains of the United States? I'd love to know if anyone else has seen these, either in Europe or America.

*(This article was reprinted with permission from the author, Celia Yeary. It originally appeared in the Sweethearts of the West blog:*

*<http://sweetheartsofthewest.blogspot.com/2017/10/the-iron-crosses-of-plains.html>)*

**The Family Snoop** is published on the first day of each month except Aug and Dec. It is sent in .pdf to members who receive it by email. Back copies can be emailed to members as attachments. Send items, articles, stories, etc., to robynechols AT gmail DOT net. You can choose to receive the Family Snoop via email in a pdf format – get it sooner and in color. Contact Sharon Darby, our treasurer. **Deadline for the January, 2018 issue is December 26th.** There is no meeting in August.

Dues are \$20 per year for an Individual or \$30 for a Family living at the same address.

The Doris Cochran Research Room is open 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays, **BUT WE NEED SUBSTITUTE VOLUNTEERS TO HELP KEEP IT OPEN!! Please Volunteer!**

**Merced County Genealogical Society**  
**P.O. Box 3061**  
**Merced, CA. 95344**

President	Wayne Wallace 489-2795
President-elect	open
Vice President	Lois Jimenez 723-9019
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Editor, <i>The Family Snoop</i>	Robyn Echols 358-2461 robynechols AT gmail DOT com

### Family History Center

<https://familysearch.org>  
 1080 E Yosemite Ave Merced. 722-1307  
 Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 10:00 am-4:00 pm.  
 Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday evening 7:00 pm-9:00 pm

Free access on their computers to Ancestry and other programs. Take along your flash drive to save and download. Volunteers are there to help you and microfilms can now be ordered online.

### Merced County Library

[www.co.merced.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=77](http://www.co.merced.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=77)  
 2100 O Street Merced 209-285-7642  
 Fax: 209-726-7912  
 Monday through Thursday – 10am to 6:00pm  
 Friday & Saturday - 10:00am to 5:00pm

### Merced County Courthouse Museum

[www.mercedmuseum.org](http://www.mercedmuseum.org)  
 21<sup>st</sup> and N Streets  
 P. O. Box 3557  
 Merced, CA 95344  
 Wednesday through Sunday - 1:00pm to 4:00pm.  
 Free admission.

### Genealogical Society of Stanislaus County

[www.cagenweb.com/lr/stanilaus/gssc.html](http://www.cagenweb.com/lr/stanilaus/gssc.html)  
 Click on their newsletter to read online or download.  
 Information about bus trips and programs offered throughout the year that may interest you.

### Combined Monthly MCGS Financial Report: August/September 2017

Income	1,103.09
Expenses	(199.95)
Checking Balance	\$5,552.91
Savings Account:	3,870.84
CD-9 months; matures on 6/19/18	5,880.24
CD-12 months; matures on 5/18/18	5,711.31
<b>Total in Checking and Savings:</b>	<b>\$21,015.30</b>

**MCGS Website: <http://www.rootsweb.com/~camcgs>**