Dollhopf

600 Years in the Baking[1]

Johann "John" Dollhopf (1852-1934)

Every family tree begins with *someone*; this one begins with Johann "John" Dollhopf (1852-1934, died 82 years old). Johann was born in Mistelbach, Oberfranken, Germany. Mistelbach today is a rural village of ~1,600 inhabitants located in the northeastern corner of Bavaria, near the border with the Czech Republic.

His wife was Elizabeth Bender (1857-1951, 94). "Lizzie," as she was also known, was born in Jersey City, New Jersey; both of her parents were immigrants from Hessen, Germany, an area of central Germany that includes Frankfurt.

This blog will cover the ancestors and descendants of both John and Lizzie (Johann changed his name to John in America). At right is a photograph of John, likely taken around 1880. I only have a childhood photo of Lizzie; I do not know if an adult photo exists.

John Dollhopf c.1880

John left Bremerhaven, Germany, on October 3, 1871, aboard the steamship *SS Baltimore*, arriving at the port of Baltimore, Maryland, 20 days later on October 23. He was nineteen years old. On the ship manifest he listed his occupation as cooper (barrel maker); he eventually became a cabinet and furniture maker.

John's father – also named Johann Dollhopf (1830-1858, 28) – died from tuberculosis when John was six years old. Within six months his mother Margarethe Bär[2] (1829-1891, 62) married Johann Hacker (1815-1882, 67). When John left Germany, he had fourteen siblings. He would never see them again.

Two weeks after arriving in Baltimore, he was working for the Harmony Society, a pietist utopian community in the factory town of Economy, Pennsylvania. Economy is located 16 miles northwest of Pittsburgh on the Ohio River. It was incorporated into the town of Ambridge, PA, in 1905.

He left the Harmony Society a little over two years later on March 9, 1874, and traveled to Neosho, Wisconsin, where his uncle Johann Bär had immigrated in 1854 and where he established a furniture making business. It is there that John learned the trade of carpentry and furniture making. He returned to Pittsburgh at some point before December of 1876. He married Lizzie, whom he had met at the Society, on December 12, 1876, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on Pittsburgh's South Side.

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[1] The tag line under the coat of arms on the first page – "600 Years in the Baking" – is a play on words. "600 years" is the span of time for which we have known Dollhopf ancestors. "In the Baking" is a play on "in the making," or "in the process of developing." "Baking" is substituted for "making" since the "Dollhopf" is a medieval term for *napfkuchen* a type of yeast cake. Yuk, yuk.

[2] Bär (ä with the two-dot umlaut) is pronounced "bear" as in the animal and indeed means bear.

By 1880 he had settled on Spring Hill, a mostly German neighborhood in Allegheny City, now a part of Pittsburgh's North Side (Allegheny City was annexed by the City of Pittsburgh in 1907).

Lizzie's father, Georg Bender (1833-?), was born in Niederdorfelden, Hessen, near Frankfurt. He indentured Lizzie and her twin sister Mathilde to the Harmony Society in 1865 when they were seven years old.[3] Lizzie and Mathilde had a younger brother (John Henry), and two younger sisters (Jane and Barbara), who were also put up for adoption, but not at the Society. All of the children were under the age of seven when their father and mother surrendered them.

They were likely given up for adoption because their mother, Barbara Mai, (1832-1922, 90) was committed to the New Jersey Hudson County Hospital for the Insane in about 1863, when she was 31. She spent 60 years in this asylum. Barbara was born in Kirschhausen, Hessen, not far from the birthplace of her husband Georg, although they met in New York City, not in Germany.

The terms of Lizzie's indenture allowed for her release from the Society at age 18. Upon release she married John when he was 24 and she 19. They had 12 children – ironic since members of the Society did not believe in having children. Members believed in the imminent Second Coming of Christ, and therefore it was unnecessary to bear children. However, John was an employee, not a member, and Lizzie was an indentured servant and not apparently required to be a believer.

Elizabeth (Lizzie), Mathilde, and Henry Bender, photo c. 1863. This is the only photo of Elizabeth that I have found. I do not know which of the two girls is Lizzie (they were twins). Lizzie and Mathilde were six or seven in this photo. Henry was five.

Nine of their 12 children survived to adulthood. Their stories will be told in future posts.

A word of explanation about John's name: I will refer to him as John, although his baptized name was Johann. All the Mistelbach church records and the Bavarian government records, of course, refer to him as Johann. Documents from the Harmony Society are written in German and still refer to him as Johann (they almost exclusively spoke German at the Society).

[3] Essentially, he gave his daughters up for adoption to the Society. Lizzie and Mathilde became indentured servants – an old-world concept. "Indentures are agreements between two parties about long-term work. The length of servitude might be a specified number of years or until the servant reached a certain age. Some people indentured themselves in order to gain passage to America or to escape debt and poverty." https://guides.loc.gov/indentured-servants#:~:text=Indentures%20are%20agreements%20between%20two,to%20escape%20debt%20and%20poverty.

I am to understand that he spoke German in his house with all of his children. World War I – and the embarrassment, or at the very least awkwardness, of being German – accelerated their use of English. I was told that the youngest of his children at that time were scolded if they spoke German in the house.

John was born out of wedlock to parents Johann and Margarethe. At the time the couple did not have sufficient resources for the residency tax required for marriage, nor were they able to prove to the government that they could sustain a family.[4] John was born in his mother Margarethe Bär's house, the Schnörrleinsmühle.[5] The mill was owned by Margarethe's father, Peter Bär. The mill is still standing, now used only as a house, and remains in the Bär family to this day.

Margarethe illegitimately gave birth to four children in the Schnörrleinsmühle – Johann, Johann, Sophia, and Johann Konrad (yes, the three boys were all named Johann). Margarethe and Johann married on Tuesday, November 11, 1856, shortly after the birth of their fourth child, five years after our great-grandfather John was born.

I will refer to John as "our" great-grandfather, recognizing of course that for some readers John could be your 2nd great-grandfather, or even your 3rd great-grandfather.

This website will explore the joys, trials, and tribulations of John and Lizzie, those of their ancestors and descendants, and their quest to make a better life for all who followed.

John Dollhopf, c.1930 at age 78, likely taken at his home at 22 Iona Street, Spring Hill, Pittsburgh. This photo was colorized from the original.

Mark Dollhopf
New Haven
April 20, 2020
Anno virus.

[4] Because of the extreme poverty and shortage of food the Bavarian government tried to prevent people from marrying and having children. Obviously the tactic failed.
[5] *Schnörleins* = flour, *mühle* = mill.