Dollhopf

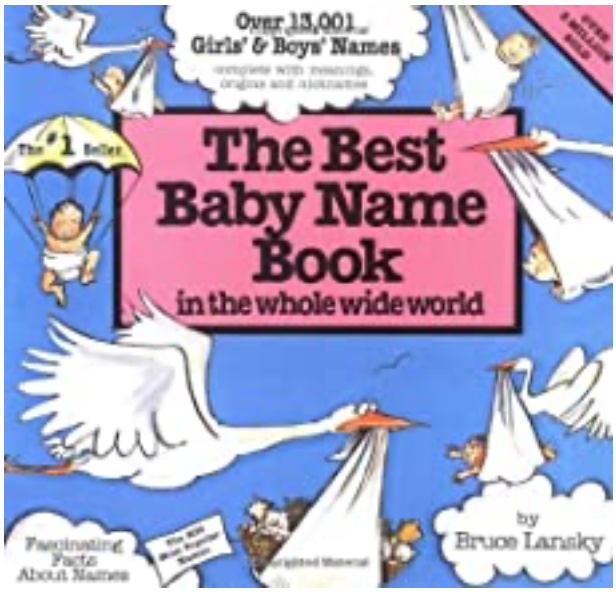
600 Years in the Baking

Dollhopf Naming Conventions

Why so many Johanns?

In previous posts I explored in considerable depth the origin and meaning of our surname, Dollhopf. But our ancestors had given names – first names – too. And many had middle names.

How and why were these first and middle names chosen? Today, parents are likely to pick a first name because they like the sound of it, or it is popular, or they have a friend with that name. Perhaps there is a cultural icon – a film star, musician, athlete, or politician – that they admire. Perhaps they are old school and use the name of a parent, grandparent, or other relative. Or, as is increasingly popular, they just make one up.



Parents today are likely to consult a book to name their baby. There is a remarkable number of baby name books on the market. The subtitles of these books – found on the Amazon bookstore – reveal much about our modern culture: “Unique Baby Names with Spiritual Meaning,” “The Most Help to Find the Perfect Name,” “Timeless Names for Modern Parents,” or “Find the Most Wonderful Name in the Whole Wide World.”

And this one: “The Baby Name Wizard: A Magical Method for Finding the Perfect Name for Your Baby.”

Um. Are you kidding me?

When our 2nd great-grandparents Johann Dollhopf and Margarethe Bär gave birth to their first baby in 1852, they didn’t consult a book. There weren’t any baby name books. So how did they choose? They had three boys and one girl, and *all three* boys were named Johann, the girl was named Sophia. What were they thinking when they gave the same name to all three sons?

Naming conventions – *how* people are named, and *why* they are given certain names – are influenced by tradition and culture. No surprise. Cultural variations can be significant, especially for surnames: in patrilineal societies the father’s surname passes to the children, in matrilineal, the mother’s.

In some cultures, one surname is used; in others, notably Hispanic, a double hyphenated surname is used, a practice not uncommon in America today among all ethnic groups.

Choosing a first and middle name, if a middle name is used, is more subtle and nuanced, and in medieval Germany naming conventions varied from region to region, if not village to village.

Where's Waldo?

Germanic naming practices present interesting challenges because of the considerable fragmentation of medieval German society. Prior to German unification in 1871 there were hundreds – in earlier centuries, *thousands* – of small principalities such as Mistelbach, each ruled independently by princes who had little regard, or need, for standardization.

For example, the size of an acre in one village could be different than the size of an acre in another. The length of a mile, or the size of a bushel, could be different, or the value of a coin. So it was with naming conventions, which often varied from village to village. This often makes genealogy laborious, if not difficult. Trying to keep track of 17 Johann Dollhopfs *in the same generation* is like trying to find Waldo. Why did they all have the same name?

On the following pages I list the direct line of our Dollhopf ancestors beginning with Hans Tolhopf, our 15th great-grandfather, who was born between 1390 and 1410. I annotated their names to explain the conventions – some would say peculiarities – that the names reveal, conventions shaped by five centuries of local tradition and custom.

We are indeed fortunate to be able to trace our lineage as far back as the late 1300s, the time when the use of surnames became common in central Germany. It is likely that Hans Tolhopf's father or grandfather was one of the first individuals to assume the surname Tolhopf. I would have loved to meet that person.

The following naming conventions were used by our ancestors:

- *Patronymic surnames*. Surnames were passed through the male line, as they mostly are today in Europe and America. But there was an exception. In the 1600s our line of male Dollhopfs assumed the surname of the house in which they were living, a so-called *Hofname* ("house name").
- *First names after saints.* Pop icons of the Middle Ages weren't actors, athletes, or artists; they were saints and characters from the Bible. Some of these cultural icons were local German saints, such as St. Conrad, St. Eberhard, St. Egidius, and St. Walburga. Nearly *all* of our relatives before the twentieth century were named for saints. This began to change only after John Dollhopf migrated to America in 1871.
- *Same-named siblings.* In almost every generation of the Dollhopfs there were families who had multiple children with the same first name, usually Johann, Conrad, Georg, Margarete, Anna, or Barbara. The multiple "Johanns" were almost never differentiated with a middle name, but in official records they were sometimes referred to as Johann "the older," "the younger," or "the middle."
- *Rufnamen* ("middle names"). Common in most of Germany, *rufnamen* were not so in the Mistelbach area, certainly not in our family, although there were some exceptions.
- *Kurzformen* ("nicknames"). Many of our ancestors had nicknames that, even though they were nicknames, were used in official record keeping. Cuntz, a nickname for Conrad, and Hans for Johann, are examples. In many instances their proper names never appeared in the church or civil records.
- *Gottvater* or *Gottmutter* ("Godfather" or "-mother"). All of our ancestors, boys and girls, had a godparent, as required by the Catholic church, and they ***all*** were named after their godparent. In many cases, the godparent was a relative, usually an uncle or an aunt. In our family this tradition persisted until the early 1900s.
- *Ancestor names*. Many children were named after parents or immediate relatives, as we do today. But, different than today, there was a specific pattern, or ordering, to determine who received which name.

Following is the list of our paternal direct line ancestors from Hans Tolhopf to Edward Dollhopf. I inserted annotations (the circled numbers) to explain the naming conventions. (I also inserted the ancestor's occupation or a distinguishing trait, and, as I will explain, have added additional notations that make it easier to differentiate among those with the same name):

Hans Tolhopf (1) (~1400-~1454) [635] (2) *probably* a miller in Bayreuth, first Dollhopf to own property in Mistelbach.
Wife: NN NN (3) (Unless otherwise noted, wives did not have a trade or occupation.)

Dietrich (4) (alias Übellein) Dollhopf (~1435-~1511) [609] mill owner, first Dollhopf to own the village mill.
Wife: Margarethe NN (? - bef 1511) [634].

Cuntz (5) I (6) (alias Übellein) Dollhopf (~1465-~1526) [598] mill owner.
Wife: Margarthe Eck (? – aft. 1534) [608].

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[1] As described in previous posts, the surname that we know today as Dollhopf was spelled at least ten different ways in church and civil records over the past seven centuries. Most of our ancestors before 1800 used more than one spelling! The variations include: Dohlhopff, Dolhopff, Dollhopf, Dollhopff, Tholhopff, Thollhopf, Tohlhopff, Tolhopf, Tolhopff, and Tollhopff. The name was mostly spelled with a "T" until the 1600s; that convention persisted until the 1800s. Our 4th great-grandfather Johann Dollhopf (1752-1828) was the last to use a "T" spelling.

[2] After each name you will find a genealogical reference number in brackets. This is a numbering system used by our researcher in Germany. John Dollhopf is assigned number [1], and the numbers ascend as one goes back in time. Every individual has a unique number, which makes identifying any particular individual much easier. There is nothing permanent about this system; my family tree software assigns a different set of numbers. There are many numbering conventions used by genealogists.

[3] Alas, in the early years of church record keeping, which in Mistelbach started in 1555, the woman's name often did not appear, a victim of patrilinealism. The abbreviation "NN" stands for "No Name." That said, there were some German conventions that were decidedly unpatrilineal – including partible inheritance and social class. In many regions, including Mistelbach, inheritance was *partible* – the *fief*, or right to a property, could be passed from the deceased husband to his wife, and then distributed among their children of both sexes, (although a male heir almost always inherited the physical property.) The females were given their fair share monetarily. This differs from *primogeniture*, in which property is inherited only by the oldest son.

[4] An overwhelming majority of German children were baptized with the first name of a saint, such as Johann or Margarethe. *All* of our direct line descendants, male and female, were named after saints, with one exception – Dietrich, which is an ancient German name, but not that of a saint. To differentiate multiple children with a saint's name, such as Johann, children would commonly be given a second name, or ***Rufname*** ("second name"). However, in Mistelbach, *rufnamen* were not common. In Dietrich's case, Übellein, sometimes spelled "Übele," was not a *rufname*, it was an alias or nickname, as was noted in a court document of 1511. This was the same for his son Cuntz, whose alias was also Übellein. Übele means the "evil," or "bad," one. More about *that* in a future post.

[5] Cuntz (pronounced *koontz*) is a nickname for Conrad. Nicknames, known as ***Kurzformen*** ("short form"), were used in formal church and civil records *even though* they were nicknames. In German, a nickname is most often formed by dropping the first half of the name – e.g., Johann becomes Hans, Margrethe becomes Grete, Niklaus becomes Klaus, etc. The nickname for Conrad (*koon rad*) is Cuntz (for the similar phonetic reason that the nickname for Friederich is Fritz). Conrad, or Cuntz, is common in our family. When reporting family names, I use the form most frequently, if not exclusively, found in the church records, which is usually Cuntz.

[6] In order to differentiate consecutive ancestors with the same name (there are five Cuntz Dollhopfs in a row, and four Johanns in a row), I have added a Roman numeral (I, II, III, IV….). This is my addition; this notation does not appear in any German records.

Cuntz II Dollhopf (~1498-1570) [401] mill owner, church warden when church began keeping records.
Wife: NN NN.

Cuntz III Dollhopf (~1540-1581) [372] tailor, died prematurely, did not inherit mill, mill goes to younger brother.
Wife: Margaretha Gross (?–1598) [380].

Cuntz IV Dollhopf (Vogel)[8] (1581-1635) [359] tailor, church warden, gives extraordinary gift to church.
Wife: Maria Sporrer Tolhopfin (abt. 1565–1634). [360] During her burial Mistelbach is attacked.

Cuntz V Dollhopf (Vogel) (1607-1683) [352] tailor, miller, church warden, mayor of Mistelbach. Built house #55.
Wife 1: NN NN (?- abt 1636) [361].
Wife 2: Margaretha NN (1614–1662) [355].
Wife 3: Margaretha Zimmerman (1607–1671) [354].
Wife 4: Barbara Wolfel (1630–1682) [353].

Hanss d. Ältere[9] **Dollhopf (Vogel)** (1629-1710) [342] tailor, lived at Zecken mill, amassed property.
Wife 1: Dorothea Neukam (1620-1687) [347].
Wife 2: Barbara Richter (1642–1703) [660].
Wife 3: Margaretha NN (1662-?) [348].

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[7] There was a common pattern in Germany for naming children, based on their birth order:

- First born son – named after father's father.
- Second born son – named after mother's father.
- Third born son – named after father.
- Fourth and on born sons – named after uncles.
- First born daughter – named after father's mother.
- Second born daughter – named after mother's mother.
- Third born daughter – named after mother.
- Fourth and on born daughters – named after aunts.

This said, it was not closely followed in Mistelbach. However, it is not hard to see why certain names persisted for generations within a specific family. If you are *always* naming children after relatives, then names will naturally repeat themselves.

[8] Vogel is a so-called ***Hofname*** ("farm name" or "house name"). House names occurred most often when a daughter inherited the family farm or house, usually when there was no male sibling. Her husband would then take her name, or the name of the "house." Their children would take the house name rather than the name of the father. This was not so common in Mistelbach, but it did occur in our family. Cuntz III, our 11th great-grandfather, died prematurely, only four weeks after the birth of his sixth child. We don't know the exact year of his birth, but Cuntz likely died in his late thirties. His wife, Margarethe Gros, then married Hans Vogel and moved to his house with her six children. Those six children then "adopted" the name Vogel, thus *four* generations of male Dollhopf descendants were called Vogel. In this list I include Vogel in parentheses to indicate those Dollhopfs who were called Vogel. Were it not for the marginal notations of the pastors, who explained that these Vogels were really Dollhopfs, we might not have been able to trace our direct lineage – we would be known today as the Vogel family, and not the Dollhopf family.

[9] How they differentiated among multiple children in the same family with the same first name is a mystery. Several of our father and son (not sibling) Dollhopf ancestors are differentiated in church records with the use of the abbreviations d.Ä. or d.J. – "d.Ä." stands for *der Ältere*, "the older one," and "d.J." for *der Jünge*, "the younger one." Sort of like Sr. or Jr. Hanss d.A. Dollhopf, was our 8th great-grandfather, and Hanss d.J. Dollhopf, our 7th great-grandfather. In an earlier generation, Cuntz II Dollhopf named three of his four sons Georg, and in civil records they are identified as Georg *der Ältere,* Georg *der Mitte* ("the middle one"), and Georg *der Jünger*. This convention is also used several times in our tree among maternal lines.

Hanss d. Jünger Dollhopf (Vogel) (1656-~1705) [329] tailor (probably) predeceased his father, inherited house #55.
Wife: Margarethe Wedel (1652–1705) [330].
Conrad Dollhopf (1693-1759) [194] tailor.
Wife: Anna Nützel (1692–1749) [205].
Johann[10] I Dollhopf (1718-1771) [23] farmer.
Wife: Kunigunde Seuffert (1722–1798) [43].
Johann II Dollhopf (1752-1828) [11] farmer, acquired house #19.
Wife: Anna Catherina Hagen (1754-1823) [12].
Eberhard[11] Dollhopf (1789-1843) [4] farmer, purchased much land. Built the current house #19 after great fire.
Wife: Margaretha Graisinger (1802–1863) [5].
Johann III Dollhopf (1830-1858) [2] farmer, inherited house #19 and farm, dies 6 months later at age 30.
Wife: Margarethe Bär (1852–1934) [3].
Johann[12] IV Bär Dollhopf (1852-1934) [1], cooper, furniture maker, immigrates to America.
Wife: Elizabeth "Lizzie" Bender (1857–1951) [233].

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[10] Almost without exception, our pre-19th century Dollhopfs were named after Biblical figures or German saints, as was Catholic tradition. This continued even after the Reformation. Some examples from our tree:

- Johann – John the Apostle (c.6-c.100).
- Conrad – St. Conrad, or Konrad, of Constance (c. 900-975).
- Eberhard – St. Eberhard of Friuli (815-866).
- Margarethe – St. Margaret of Antioch (c.289-c.304)
- Barbara – Great Martyr Barbara, early Christian Greek martyr (c.250-c.275).
- Catharina – St. Catherine of Siena (1380-1461).
- Maria – St. Mary, the Virgin Mother (c.18 BC–c.48 AD)
- Anna – St. Anne, mother of Mary (c.49 BC-c.4 AD)

[11] How did *he* sneak in? Eberhard and Dietrich were the only non-Johann/Hans or Conrad/Cuntz names of the 12 generations of direct line Dollhopfs born in Germany. Eberhard had three older brothers named Johann. Two of the brothers died as children, the next oldest moved to the neighboring village of Eckersdorf.

The name of a deceased baby or child, which unfortunately happened frequently, was often given to the next born child, as happened in Eberhard's family. Eberhard and his surviving older brother Johann both inherited land from their father, but Eberhard got the farm, even though he was the youngest. I don't know why. Father liked him best, I guess.

[12] Children were almost always named, nearly without exception in the Dollhopf family, for their godparent. The *Gottvater* for boys, and the *Gottmutter* for girls, are always listed in the baptism record. This was true even for our great-grandfather John Dollhopf, whose first several children, even though born in America, were named after their godparents. John apparently dropped this practice after his fourth child.

John Dollhopf's godfather was Johann Bär – his mother Margarethe's younger brother, who was a cabinet maker. (His mother had a sister also named Margarethe, and four brothers named Johann, all of whom survived to adulthood.) Uncle Johann Bär immigrated to the US in 1853, settled in Neosho, Wisconsin, near Milwaukee, and started a furniture business. He wrote to our great-grandfather John several times, inviting him to come to America to work in his shop since he didn't have children and needed the help. John did leave Pittsburgh in the spring of 1874 to join his uncle in Neosho for two years where he learned the furniture-making trade.

Margarethe had an uncle, also named Johann Bär, who likely fought as a mercenary in the American Revolutionary War. See Blog #13.

The Modern Era

When Johann Dollhopf arrived in America in 1871, he adopted New World conventions. He changed his name to John, although we don't know exactly when; he continued to sign most documents and letters to friends as Johann. As far as we know, he spoke German in his house.

He and wife Elizabeth "Lizzie" Bender had 13 children. When they began their family, they did indeed followed old world naming conventions but abandoned these traditions beginning with their fifth child. At that point they started giving their children names that weren't even German. Baby name books began to appear in the late 1800s; maybe they consulted a book! Here is a list of their 13 children and guesses at reasons for the names:

1. **Johann Heinrich**, born 1877, called "H.J." or "Henry," named after his godfather, Johann Heinrich Bender, Lizzie's brother. (Why they reversed the initials, I do not know.) HJ married Wilhelmine "Minnie" Hildebrand, and was a butcher for the A&P Supermarket on the North Side.
2. **Wilhelm (William) Frederick**, born 1879, called "Will." This seems to be a break from tradition, since there was no Wilhelm or Frederick on either the Dollhopf or Bender side. His godfather could possibly have been a close friend, although I don't know who that might have been. Will was a carpenter and furniture refinisher who worked for his father. In his late 20s he left his wife and daughter, and moved to California, where he died at the age of 39. His wife, Margaret Schlotz, filed for divorce after he moved.)
3. **Johanna Elizabeth**, born 1881, called "Jennie," their first girl, named after her father *and* mother. Godmother unknown. Jennie married Richard Schulz and moved to Chalfant Street in East Allegheny. Richard worked for Westinghouse. John was especially proud of this, writing about it to his German friends.
4. **Johann Nicholas**, born 1884, the second Johann, called "John," named after his godfather Johann Nicklaus Schmidt, known as JN, who was John's brother-in-law. JN was a boyhood friend from Mistelbach who married Anna Barbara Hacker, John's stepsister (daughter of his mother Margareta Bär and her second husband, Johann Hacker). JN immigrated to America in 1869, two years before John, and worked at the Harmony Society. John followed him there in 1871. John Nicholas, his son, was an upholsterer for his father. He never married or left his parents' home, and died of tuberculosis at the age of 31.
5. **George**, born 1886, no known Georges in the family, except in the 1600s, and John would probably not have known that. George worked on the loading docks at Burrell Laboratory Instruments, a business that was located next to his father's furniture shop. He was also a fireman and was killed at the age of 40 in a fire truck accident in January 1927. Responding to a fire alarm, the truck hit a construction ditch and he was tossed from the truck slamming into a pole. He died of a fractured skull.
6. **Edward**, born 1889, our grandfather, called "Eddie," was the first non-German name they used. There were no other known Edwards on either side of the family. Eddie worked for a blacksmith until he joined his brother George on the loading dock at Burrell. After George's death he stayed with Burrell and remained there for his entire career, eventually as salesman and office manager. George and Edward, and their families, shared a two-family house on Spring Hill. Edward moved to West View in 1926.
7. **Albert** (German *Albrecht*), born 1891, no known Albrechts in family within five generations. Albert, a known alcoholic, was a black sheep (there seemed to be more than one). In his twenties he was a salesman in a meat shop, later worked as a mover, but for a number of years was unemployed. He was a machine gunner in WWI and fought in the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne. He never married and from what we know never left his parent's house. He served at least two jail sentences, the last in 1947 for beating his mother. May he rest in peace.
8. **Emma**, born 1893, who died at age 3 months. The origin of Emma is the German name *Ermen*, but there were no other Emmas in the family.

9. **Elanora**, born 1895, a variant of Eleanora, not a German name, no known in the family. Elanora, which she also spelled Ella Nora, married John Mohr. After her husband died, she occupied an apartment in the same building as brother Eddie in Perrysville.
10. **Louis Friederick**, born 1897, was called "Fred" but lived only 11 days. No known Louis in family.
11. **Flora Helena**, born 1901, no known Flora's or Helena's. Flora never married and worked as a candy packer at the Clark Bar factory on the North Side. As an adult she reportedly hated her brother Eddie and refused to speak to him or his children.
12. **Ralph Louis**, born 1901, Flora's twin, died at birth. No known Ralph's, which was an old English name.

There will be considerably more information on this family in future posts.

Grandparents Edward and Susan

Our grandparents Edward and Susan Born Dollhopf largely ignored German naming conventions. Their first two children, Edward and Ruth, were born during WWI. In those years, and immediately following, German immigrants in the US were viewed with fear and suspicion. Germans like our great-grandparents tried hard not to be German, or at least not to openly flaunt their Teutonism. For all we know, our great-grandfather might have feared that his furniture shop would be vandalized – as other German businesses were.

I have been told that John scolded his children who still lived at home if they spoke German. At the onset of WWI, his youngest children were Flora, 13, and Elanora, 19. Although older, his sons Albert, 23, and John Nicholas, 30, were also still living in the family home at 22 Iona Street.

Edward and Susan did use some Biblical names, and they did give their first born the first name of the father (Edward), but I do not think that that they gave any thought to the origin of names such as Ruth, Lois, Roland or LaVerne. Perhaps they just liked the sound of the names. Their children:

1. **Edward John,** called "Ed." Edward, as described above, is not German, but English – St. Edward. Edward was his father's name; John was his father's father name.
2. **Ruth Emma.** Ruth, not a saint's name, but certainly Biblical; Emma's meaning as above.
3. **Lois Anna**. Lois is also an English name but has Biblical roots – Lois was the grandmother of St. Timothy. Anna was a Catholic saint, but I don't think that they picked the name because of the saint connection. But I could be wrong.
4. **Roland Wilbur**, called "Rolly." Roland is also not a German name, but French. However, if you go back far enough, it is *Frankish*, the tribe that settled Franconia, the region encompassing Mistelbach, as well as France. The name Roland is indeed found in present day Franconia. Roland was a military general celebrated in the French saga, *Chanson de Roland* ("Song of Roland"). Wilbur was a Middle English name that meant, as it sounds, "wild boar."
5. **LaVerne Elsie**. Also a French name, La Verne translates as "the alder tree." Elsie is an old diminutive form of Elizabeth.

John and Lizzie largely abandoned German naming conventions after their fourth child, and their children also chose not to continue the family traditions. Among their 18 grandchildren, only two – Albert (*Albrecht*) Schulz, son of Jennie; and Catharine (*Catharina*) Mohr, daughter of Elanora, had given names that appeared in the family tree before 1900.

Conclusion

As you might imagine, it has been enormously frustrating and tedious to deal with so many individuals named Johann or Cuntz, Margaretha or Anna. I've spent countless *hours* deciphering and double-checking records – "Was that death record for Johann the son, the father, the grandfather, one of the brothers, one of the uncles, or one of the nephews?!"

There are many instances in our tree when more than half of the males or females in the same generation had the same first name, including nuclear family units such as our great-great grandparents Johann and Margarethe. At first, I found this amusing, but after a while I was ready to hit the delete key on these hundreds of same-named, centuries-accumulated, records. Couldn't deal with it.

But over the past 40 years, as I wrestled with their names, the personalities behind those names came into sharper focus. As I study their occupations, families, houses, properties, possessions, inheritances, church records, naming conventions…they reveal themselves. They come to life, present to me, in ways I didn't think possible.

Our ancestors are not just list of names. They suffered, they triumphed; they mourned, they celebrated; through bad times and good. They had hopes and dreams just like you and me.

I hope that by telling their stories they might come to life for you.

Mark R. Dollhopf
New Haven, Connecticut
October 1, 2020
In anno corona virum.