



# Dollhopf

## 600 Years in the Baking

### Dollhopf Women

*This is the 12<sup>th</sup> essay in a series addressing the life and times of our Dollhopf grandmothers.*

### 11th Great-Grandmother Margaretha Groß (Gross) (abt 1550-1598)

*[Abbreviations: NN stands for “no name,” In the dates below abt = about; aft = after; bef = before; c = circa]*

**Birth:** abt. 1550

**Place of birth:** Unknown

**Parents:** Hans Groß and NN

**First marriage:** 16 Aug 1570

**First husband:** Cuntz Dollhopf, (bet 1540/50 – 07 Sep 1581, ~31), miller

**Age at marriage:** ~20

**Residence:** most probably House #57, the Dorfmühle, and then the house of Hans Vogel.

**Number of Known Children:** 6

**Second marriage:** January 17, 1583

**Second husband:** Hans Vogel, farmer

**Age at second marriage:** ~33

**Residence:** most probably House #23, owned by Hans Vogelbauer

**Death:** 16 Aug 1598 (died on her anniversary)

**Age at death:** ~48

**Cause of death:** Dysentery (one of the first descriptions of the cause of death in the church records.)

Margarethe’s generation was the last of the most prosperous era for Dollhopfs, the last of the mill owners.

She was an “hourglass” great-grandmother. There were at least 30 Dollhopfs living in and around Mistelbach in her generation. But in the next generation, following the Thirty Years War, her youngest son Cuntz would be the only Mistelbach Dollhopf who survived. She was the narrow neck of the hourglass, through which only one grain of sand passed.

Margarethe was the last great-grandmother to be married to a miller. Her husband’s oldest brother Georg *der Ältere* (“the older”) was also a miller, and the owner of the Dorfmühle. We could reasonably assume that she and her husband lived at the Dorfmühle with her brother-in-law and his wife. It required many hands to run a mill. But between the two couples they had 16 children, and although five of them died as infants, that is still a lot of children living under one roof.

As was described in the previous blog, Georg was a relatively wealthy man evidenced by the facts that he owned the mill, had ten children, and perhaps the most telling, he owned horses. Peasant farmers in Mistelbach almost never owned horses because of the great expense of feeding them valuable grain to supplement their forage diets – something you didn’t have to do for cattle.<sup>1</sup>



*Peasant Woman Digging by Vincent Van Gogh, July 1885.*

<sup>1</sup> In a tax roll inventory of 1855, there were only two horses in the entire village of roughly 40 farms.

So given their relative wealth, it is possible they had sufficient facilities at the Dorfmühle to house many people, but we just don't know. Except for the mills, we don't have a list of the houses in Mistelbach before 1622.

Her husband Cuntz died prematurely in 1581 in his early thirties. The mill at the time was owned by his older brother, Georg "the older." Georg died twenty years later in 1600 (from a fall off his horse!). Because Cuntz, arguably the next in line to inherit the mill, had already died, the mill went to *the* youngest brother Georg "the younger." This Georg, who had 14 children, died in 1623, and the mill was then inherited by his son, also named Cuntz. Between the three brothers, who were all millers, there were 30 children.

I wish I knew where they all lived.

Margaretha was born about five years before the Mistelbach church began keeping baptismal records c. 1555, so we don't have an exact birth date – if she was born in Mistelbach. I haven't found evidence of anyone with the surname Groß in Mistelbach at that time, so I suspect she was from another village.

She was born during the time of the Second Margrave War, when villages in the territory were under constant threat of plundering.

According to church records, it was also during her lifetime that Mistelbach was hardest hit by the plague, in the years 1585, 1595 and 1602, and then again in the 1630s. Mistelbach had about 40 families in the late 1500s, so the plague, which typically caused the death of *at least* 20% of the inhabitants of any given village, would have caused the death of many of Margaretha's friends and family members.

She married Cuntz Dollhopf from the Dorfmühle. I did not know for many years if this Cuntz was indeed related to the Dorfmühle owner, also named Cuntz, since the church book did not list his parents. In fact, the only child listed of mill owner Cuntz was Georg the "younger." For many years this was the end of our genealogical trail.

It was only in 2019 when we were able piece together his life from the investigation of court records, in particular the record of a land inheritance between Cuntz's brothers (all named Georg), which also (thankfully) mentioned Cuntz. From that piece of information, we were able to trace back another four generations to our oldest known ancestor Hans Tolhopf.

Cuntz's father, the mill owner also named Cuntz, died in 1570 when the younger Cuntz was in his mid 20s. His older brother, Georg "the older" was 31 and inherited the mill. Cuntz apparently worked the mill with both his older brother and younger brother, Georg "the younger," since they were all listed as millers.

Margaretha married Cuntz on August 16, 1570. Between the time she was born and the time she was married, the church began keeping records, so we have the date of her marriage, and for the first time in Dollhopf history, we have church records for the children:

1. **Elizabeth** (14 Dec 1572 – ? ~32), left Mistelbach. Inheritance record indicates she died bef 1604.
2. **Johann** (20 Mar 1574 – 25 Mar 1574), died after 5 days.
3. **Margaretha** (10 Dec 1575 – ? ~29), left Mistelbach. Inheritance record indicates she died bef 1604.
4. **Cuntz** (07 Mar 1578 – 07 Mar 1578), died after 1 day.
5. **Stephan** (10 Jul 1579 – ?), left Mistelbach.
6. **Cuntz** (11 Aug 1581 – 1635, 53), our 10<sup>th</sup> great grandfather.

This is the first generation of Dollhopfs whose births were recorded.

The question marks in the above dates for Elizabeth, Margaretha, and Stephan indicate that no death was recorded. This is evidence that they did not die in Mistelbach. Either they had moved away, or they died while traveling. Stephan was in Mistelbach for some time as he and his younger brother Cuntz inherited their father's land in 1604. Since they were the only two that received an inheritance, the sisters Elizabeth and Margarethe had already died by 1604 – perhaps succumbing to the plague that hit the area in 1602.

Given the frequency of the plague and other diseases, it was not unusual for two of the children to die as infants, and two to die as young adults.

The roughly 80 years in Mistelbach between the Margrave Wars (1550s) and the Thirty Years War (1630s)<sup>2</sup> were apparently relatively peaceful, and for that reason they were most likely prosperous years – prosperous at least for the Dollhopfs who were millers.

This no doubt encouraged the Dollhopf families of that era to have many children:

- Cuntz and Margaretha had six children (they probably would have had more but Cuntz died a month after their sixth child).
- His oldest brother Georg “the older” and wife Magdalena had ten.
- His next older brother Georg “the middle” and wife Kunigunde moved to Bayreuth and did not have children.
- His younger brother Georg “the younger” and Barbara had an astounding 14 children.

And these are the four siblings we know about!

According to the court records that survive, Cuntz the mill owner had three boys name Georg and one named Cuntz. Why didn’t he name them all Georg? This is highly unusual; there must have been more. Given that this was a mill family and relatively prosperous, it is likely that there were many more children. But the church had not yet begun recording births, and we could only find these four in court records.

Between 1556 and 1597 the three brothers had 30 children, all, of course, first cousins. In those 40 years a new cousin was born every 16 months. Baptisms, not to mention weddings and funerals (many infants died as well as adults), must have been enormous affairs.

Peasant parents would not choose to have so many children unless they were relatively certain they could feed them. For mill owners, better off than most, big families appeared to be the norm. Not that there weren’t bad times during this era despite the lack of war. In the 1580s and 1590s Mistelbach experienced times of impoverishment and famine, no doubt exacerbated by the plague, which the Chronicle reports took many victims:

From this time the farmers and day-laborers report: "their food is black rockenbrod, porridge, cooked peas and lentils - their almost only drink is water and whey, many do not a bite of meat, nor a drop of beer all year round. In the years 1585, 1595 and 1602 the plague again spread through the country and claimed many victims. In 1605 a great fire raged in Bayreuth, through which many citizens lost everything.

So the Dollhopfs were luckier than most. Relative peace, however, would soon end with the onset of the Thirty Years War in 1618, and again the plague in the 1630s. As stated above, in the aftermath of that war there was only one of those 30 Dollhopf cousins left in Mistelbach – the rest were killed by mercenaries, succumbed to the plague or other disease, or abandoned Mistelbach.

Margaretha’s husband Cuntz died unexpectedly four weeks after the birth of their sixth child in September of 1581. He was probably in his early thirties (we don’t know his exact date of birth) and we don’t know how he died at such a young age. Their last child was also named Cuntz, our 10<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Thirty Years War started in 1618 but did not affect Mistelbach until 1632.

<sup>3</sup> If you are trying to keep track of all of the people named Georg, Cuntz, Hans, or Margarethe, good luck. It took me countless hours to try to figure out who was who – especially in this generation when there were at least 35

About a year and a half his premature death, Margaretha married the farmer Hans Vogel on January 17, 1583. We know that Hans was a farmer because in the church books he was identified as “*Vogelbauer*” (*bauer* = “farmer”). We don’t know much more about him, other than the fact that he took in Margaretha and her four living children, and that the Dollhopf children took his name.

The Mistelbach Chronicle lists a Hans Vogelbauer as the owner of House #23 in 1622, and another Hans Vogelbauer as owner of house #39, but this is 40 years after she married Vogel. One or both could be the descendants of Margarethe’s Hans Vogel. Perhaps Margarethe and her children moved into one of these houses. In addition to Margarethe’s children, two subsequent generations of Dollhopfs continued to use the surname Vogel, an indication that those generations continued to live in a Vogel owned house, further evidence that the Dollhopf descendants were living in one of the above Vogelbauer houses.



***Peasant Woman and Child Harvesting the Fields, 1882, impressionist oil painting by Camille Pissarro. We don’t have photographs from these times, only “impressions.” Margaretha’s first husband, Cuntz, a miller, died a month after the birth of their sixth child. She was left with four very young children (two had died as infants). She married the farmer Hans Vogel and thus began her life as a farmer’s wife...with children in tow.***

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Dollhopfs living in Mistelbach, a village at the time of only 30 farms. For a detailed breakdown of all of the relatives in that era, see *Blog #18: Land Owned*.

Despite the fact that these subsequent generations were living in a Vogel house, the pastor kept the Dollhopf name in play. He noted in the margins of the church records that these descendants were actually Dollhopfs. Had he not done so, today we would be known as the Vogel family. Easier to spell.

Margaretha died on August 16, 1598, the anniversary of her marriage to Cuntz. She also died at a relatively young age; she was probably in her late 40s. Her youngest child Cuntz had just turned 17 and was still living in Mistelbach. Of her six children, four were boys; two – Johann and Cuntz, died as infants; Stephan left Mistelbach, and our Cuntz remained.

That youngest child Cuntz became a tailor, and since there is no evidence that either his biological father Cuntz, or his stepfather Hans, were tailors, it is likely that he was apprenticed to a tailor. (In fact, he never knew his biological father Cuntz, who died when he was one month old.)

Boys were typically apprenticed in their young teens, if not earlier. Apprenticeships had to be approved by the margrave or town council in order to control the number of peasants in any given trade.

This story now gets interesting.

There was a tailor in Mistelbach at the time to whom Cuntz could have been apprenticed – Johannes *d. Elter* (“the elder”) Holl (our 10<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather), who was married to Maria Sporer (our 10<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother). We are related to them through their daughter Barbara Holl.

If Cuntz was apprenticed to Johannes Holl as a tailor, it likely occurred around the year 1594 when he was 13. Johannes would have been 34, his wife Maria, about 30. Cuntz would have reported to work every day at the Holl house – in a small village like Mistelbach tradespeople did not have separate shops; all work was done out of their homes.

At the time Johannes and Maria had a five-year-old daughter, Magdalena (b. 1589) and a two-year-old son Conradus (b. 1592). Over the next five years they had three more children – another Conradus (b. 1594), Barbara (b. 1597), and Johannes (b. 1599).

Cuntz would have come to know these children well as they played and tripped over needles, pins, scissors, cloth, and the other tools of the tailor’s trade.

Johannes Holl died on July 11, 1603, at the relatively young age of 42. Maria was 37, and Cuntz the apprentice was 21. Eighteen months later, on April 8, 1605, Cuntz married Maria, 16 years older than he, the wife of his master tailor.

I was puzzled for the longest time. Why would Cuntz, a 23-year-old, marry a woman 16 years older with five children. Although I do not have absolute proof that Cuntz was apprenticed to Holl, the facts line up. If this is truly the case, then perhaps we have one of the first occasions when a Dollhopf couple married for love, not because the union was arranged.

Two years later, Cuntz and Maria gave birth to a son also named Cuntz, who would be their only child, and who would be our 9<sup>th</sup> great-grandfather. Remember... Barbara, the 10-year-old step sister of this baby Cuntz, was also our 9<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother through a maternal line. Thus, their mother Maria was our 10<sup>th</sup> great-grandmother *twice* – by each of her husbands.<sup>4</sup>

As described in previous blogs, this Cuntz who married Maria was an enigma. When he was 51 years old, he gave an extraordinary gift of several years of tailoring wages to the Church to hire court painters from Bayreuth to paint Biblical scenes on the church ceiling in Mistelbach. Where did he get this money? And where did he learn to be so generous? Was his mother Margaretha the great influence in his life? His stepfather Hans?

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<sup>4</sup> Confused? So was I. For years.

Margaretha died from dysentery, one of the first mentions of a cause of death in the church books.

Dysentery is a bacterial or parasitic infection of the colon caused by exposure to the fecal matter of an infected person. It is caused by drinking contaminated water or eating contaminated food, poor handwashing or no handwashing after defecating, swimming in contaminated lakes or ponds, or otherwise close physical contact with someone who has it. Death is caused by painful cramps, bloody diarrhea, and severe dehydration.

The fact that two of her babies died within days of birth, and that her husband died prematurely in his thirties, is perhaps a clue to the unsanitary conditions in which they, and all poorer peasants, were living.

### ***Disease in the Middle Ages***

*by Ellen Castelow*

*Filth was a fact of life for all classes in the Middle Ages. Towns and cities were filthy, the streets open sewers; there was no running water and knowledge of hygiene was non-existent. Dung, garbage, and animal carcasses were thrown into rivers and ditches, poisoning the water and the neighboring areas. Fleas, rats and mice flourished in these conditions...*

*As there was no knowledge of germs or how diseases spread in the Middle Ages, the Church explained away illness as 'divine retribution' for leading a sinful life. Common diseases in the Middle Ages included dysentery ('the flux'), tuberculosis, arthritis, and 'sweating sickness' (probably influenza). Infant mortality was high, and childbirth was risky for both mother and child.*

*Rushes and grasses used as floor coverings presented a very real hygiene problem. Whilst the top layer might be replaced, the base level was often left to fester. As Erasmus noted:*

*"The floors are, in general, laid with white clay, and are covered with rushes, occasionally renewed, but so imperfectly that the bottom layer is left undisturbed, sometimes for twenty years, harboring expectoration, vomiting, the leakage of dogs and men, ale droppings, scraps of fish, and other abominations not fit to be mentioned."*

*<https://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofEngland/Disease-in-Medieval-England/>*

It is important to note that Margaretha's family in the 1500s had no idea what caused the severe diarrhea, nor did they know how to treat it. There were many beliefs – that it was caused by a change in diet, or a change in temperature, or, more probably, by evil spirits or punishment from God.

They would have tried treating it with prayers, magical incantations, or herbs. They thought that any plant with a purple flower was a cure – infused in hot water to drink, or which they rubbed on their stomachs. As early as the 1400s it was thought that goat's milk had an effect.

If any of these "cures" worked, which of course they didn't, it was only because the distressed person was ingesting much needed fluids. Today, along with plenty of fluids, we treat dysentery with drugs that kill the bacteria or parasites.

Margaretha's house did not have running water. It did not have a bathroom, and in many cases, houses did not even have an outhouse. People defecated in buckets at night, or in the same place that the animals did (the animals lived inside the house in a separate room). Often, they defecated in the fields or gardens to fertilize the crops.

In Mistelbach it was common for animal dung, which likely included human dung, to be piled high in front of the house, outside the door leading to the stable. People defecated in the pile; privacy and modesty were next to nonexistent. (See *Blog 11: Doorway.*)

There was no toilet paper – leaves or other plant material served the purpose, or one's hand, which was then wiped on something else. Remember, no running water. Babies were most vulnerable. Imagine changing a baby's diaper (actually a rag), and then having to store and wash it. *No running water.* Margaretha lost one baby at one day of age, and another after five days. Although there was no cause of death attributed to the babies, we can only imagine.

Given these conditions it is no wonder that so many died of dysentery.

In wars fought until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, more soldiers died of dysentery than of battle wounds. Troops lived in dense, overcrowded, unsanitary conditions. It was said that those who suffered from dysentery “lost their guts.” The soldiers who still had their guts – those not affected by dysentery – were healthy and could continue to fight.

Therefore, they had the “guts” to fight – the origin of the phrase that means having the courage to do something.

Now you know.

Margarethe died on August 16, 1598. *Four months* later her husband Hans Vogel married Kunigunde Danner, the young family maid. Hmm.

Next in the series on Dollhopf women: 10<sup>th</sup> Great-grandmother Maria Sporrer.

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*Peasant Woman with Dark Bonnet, 1885 by Vincent Van Gogh. Van Gogh was drawn to peasants, and they were often the subjects, dark and gritty, of his paintings.*