



Dollhopf

600 Years in the Baking

Dollhopf Women

This is the 13th essay in a series addressing the life and times of our Dollhopf grandmothers.

10th Great-Grandmother Maria Sporrer (abt 1565-1634)

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

Birth: abt. 1565

Place of birth: Lindenhartd (10 miles from Mistelbach)

Parents: Hans Sporrer and Martha Ammon

First marriage: 09 Jan 1588

First husband: Johannes d. Elter (“the elder”) Holl (12 Nov 1560 – 11 Jul 1603). He was our 10th great-grandfather through their daughter Barbara.

Age at first marriage: ~23

Residence: House of Johannes Holl (other than the mills, we have no record of house numbers before 1622).

Number of known children with Holl: 6

Second marriage: 08 Apr 1605

Second husband: Cuntz Dollhopf, (11 Aug 1581–1635, 54) miller/tailor. He was our 10th great-grandfather through their son Cuntz.

Age at second marriage: ~40

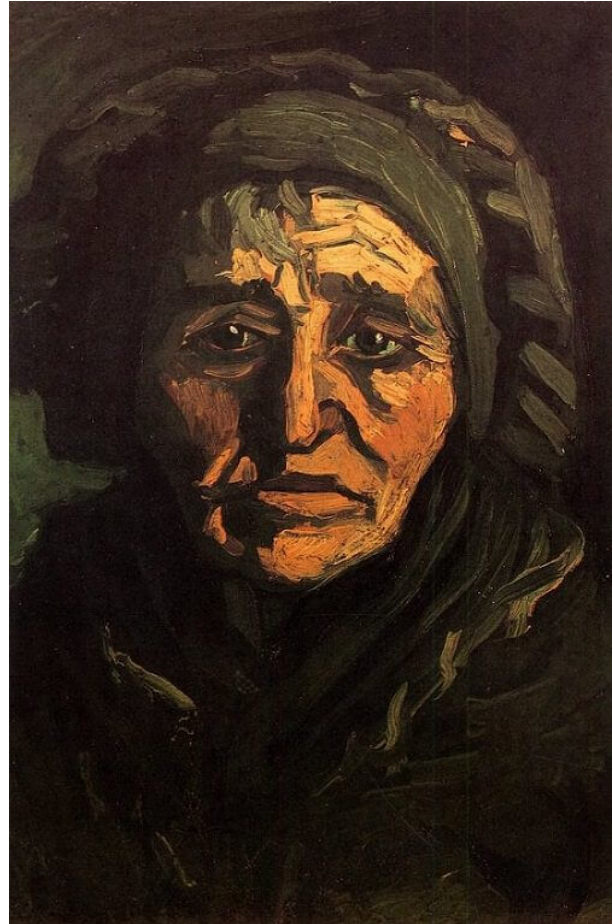
Number of known children with Dollhopf: 1

Residence: most probably House #23, the former house of Hans Vogel, or house of Johannes Holl.

Death: 29 Apr 1634

Age at death: ~69

Cause of death: Unknown, but died during a time of war and plague.



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.

The seventh great-grandchild of Maria and Johann–Margarethe Bär (1829-1891) – married the seventh great grandchild of Maria and Cuntz– Johann Dollhopf (1830-1856) thus making her our 10th great-grandmother twice.

During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) Mistelbach was invaded, plundered, and mostly burned to the ground at least twice, in 1632 and 1634, possibly thrice, by mercenary soldiers.¹ These mercenaries – hired guns from Croatia² – murdered indiscriminately, raped, raided, torched houses, butchered livestock, stole food stores, and destroyed crops. If that wasn’t enough, they brought with them the plague.

Maria and her husband Cuntz did not survive the war, but their son did.

¹ See *Blog #9: Pandemics and War.*

² Croatia is in the Balkan Peninsula, south of Hungary and next to Serbia.

Her funeral service in 1634 was interrupted by Croatian horsemen riding into the village who were reconnoitering Mistelbach in advance of the foot soldiers. The church book does not report the cause of her death, although it does not appear to have been at the hands of the soldiers or caused by the plague. It was reported that the plague broke out in Mistelbach on September 7, 1634, four months *after* she died. She was about 70 when she died, an old woman in those times.



Plünderung eines Dorfes ("Plundering a Village") by Sebastian Vrancx, 1573–1647. This is a contemporary painting by Flemish painter Vrancx of the horror of the Thirty Years War. Note the horsemen slaying the peasants, murdered people strewn about, a woman stripped of her clothes, two children hiding in the root cellar (see inset below), woman under the tree being raped, another woman being dragged by her hair, two others lying on the ground having been assaulted, , two houses burning in the background. This was the scene in Mistelbach. As if this carnage was not enough, the plague broke out after the attack.

As noted in the previous section, Mistelbach was hardest hit by the plague in the years 1585, 1595, 1602, and again in the 1630s, all during Maria's lifetime. Beginning in September of 1634, the year Maria died, the plague raged in Mistelbach according to the Chronicle. The plague was spread by flea infested rats, although they did not know this at the time. Many thought it was food borne. Here is an excerpt from the church book:

Hans Roht brought bread from the baking oven³ back to his home, and all who cut a piece from it – the whole family – died: Hans Roht himself; his son Hans, a diligent, pious and obedient man of 29 years; his wife Margaretha, who had still been able to confess;⁴ and his three daughters.⁵

In the year 1634 there were 56 burials listed in the parish records (this would have been a third to one half of the village). Then the records abruptly stop and do not pick up again until August 24, 1638, four years later. But even when the record keeping resumed, there were significant gaps for the next 20 years. We don't know why, perhaps the records were lost. Maybe the pastor took the books back to his house and they were burned or otherwise destroyed. Maybe the pastor fled and there was no one keeping records. Maybe soldiers made off with them or threw them in a ditch. Alas, we will never know.



A closeup of the above painting showing two children hiding in a root cellar.

In later years many books were written about the war in the Bayreuth area. In the book "Die Fantaisie" by J. Reicher, published in Bayreuth in 1796, it was reported:

Shortly afterwards the plague broke out in Mistelbach; 138 inhabitants fell victim to it, among them also the castle farmer Hans Gebhart with his whole family. Only 121 inhabitants are left in the village.

According to this report, Mistelbach in 1634 had 259 inhabitants (138+121). More than half, or 138, died of the plague. By my rough estimate we lost more than 30 great-grandparents.

What was the scene in Mistelbach after the devastation of 1634 at the hands of the mercenary Croats?

In addition to the above painting, we get a picture from an official report filed 14 years later in 1648 at the Royal Court of Bayreuth. It documented that 21 houses in Mistelbach were destroyed, which would have left 14 standing, although reports during the conflict indicated that only eight houses were left standing. Eyewitnesses reported that the smoke was so thick in the valley that the raiders did not notice those eight houses. We'll never know the exact details; they're lost in the fog, or should we say, smoke, of war.

Following is a roster of the Mistelbach landowners at the time and an account of their property. Where known I bracketed our relationship to that individual, but admittedly there is some guess work here, since dates sometimes do not align. Here was the report:

From an official report, written only after the end of the war (1648), to the Margrave's administration in St. Johannis [site in Bayreuth of the administration building], the following remarkable information is to be taken.

The houses and barns, with the entire harvest, of the following subjects were burned down:

³ Peasants did not have an oven in the house. Instead, there was a separate structure in the village with a stone or brick oven of which villagers owned a share. In the 1858 inventory Johann Dollhopf owned a 1/13 share of the village oven.

⁴ She was able to say confession before she died – evidence that even though they were Lutheran, Catholic rituals persisted.

⁵ Church book passage reported in the Mistelbach Chronicle.

Fritz Dünph, Hans Schlehenstein, Hans Holl, [our 10th great-uncle], Albrecht Küffner, Wolf Schabtdach [10th great-grandfather], Hans Wendel, Hans Ruckriegel [9th great-grandfather], Otto Jansch, and Peter Seyffert [10th great-grandfather].

The subjects above rebuilt their houses only five to nine years ago, poorly and makeshift. [Thus, they rebuilt in the years 1639 to 1643, more than five years after they had been torched.]

The Mistelbach houses of the following inhabitants were burned down and are still in ruins today [14 years later] because the inhabitants and their families are no longer alive:

Hans Streitberger, Hans Seeser [10th great-grandfather], Hans Pilscherlein, Hans Reicholt, Georg Dollhopf [first-cousin 12th removed], Nikolaus Flach, Hans Küffner [10th great-grandfather], Erhardt Fick [10th great-uncle], Hernann Schmidt [son of Hermann 1530-1603, 11th great-grandfather], Hans Gradel, and Hans Vogel [second husband of Margaretha Groß, our 11th great-grandmother, see preceding section]. The entire Dollhopf estate burned down, which still today remains dry and desolate in 1649.⁶

Mistelbach was of course not the only village destroyed in this war. Within a ten-mile radius of Mistelbach there were 18 farming villages, most of which experienced a similar fate. Because of marriage patterns in the Middle Ages it would not surprise you that we had ancestors living in all 18 of those villages, many of whom lost their lives at the hands of the mercenaries.

Maria buried her first husband, Johannes Holl, who died prematurely at the age of 42 in 1603, leaving her alone at age 38 with five young children, all under the age of 13. The plague struck three times in her life, taking family and friends when she was 20, 30, and 37, during which time it is estimated that 20% of the local population perished. After she died in 1634 the plague struck Mistelbach a fourth time, *wiping out more than half of Mistelbach*. It is possible that both her first husband (in 1603) and her oldest son and his entire family (in 1634) died from the plague, a brutal form of suffering and death.

Survivors of this carnage fled to the woods or other villages. The Dollhopf mill was destroyed. Mistelbach, decimated and abandoned, remained desolate for an neatly an entire generation. The church and eight houses were all that remained.

For the next several decades until the late 1600s Mistelbach suffered from intermittent raids of thieves and roving gangs who were forced by the devastations of war – primarily the lack of food – to beg and steal.

Maria was born in Lindhardt, a village 10 miles south of Mistelbach. Her father was a judge, so she was of a higher social class, although not by much. Peasants rarely married outside of their class, and her first husband, Johannes *d. Elter* (“the elder”) Holl, was the son of a weaver and tailor, which was one of the lower-class trades, so perhaps the class differences in this instance didn’t matter. Or maybe she was a rebel. Or an outcast.

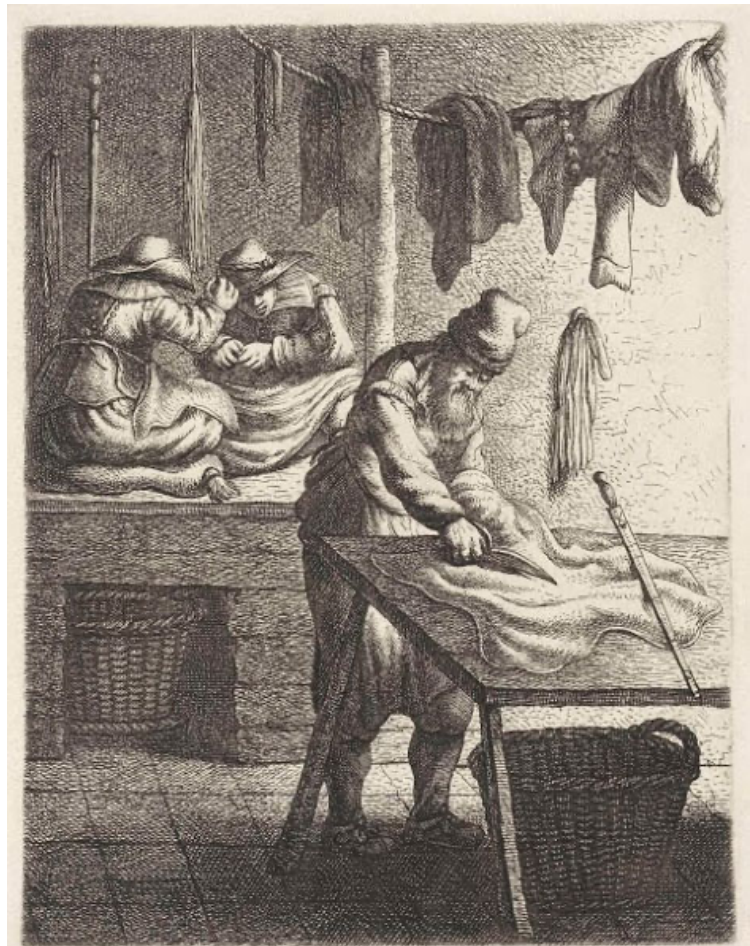
She married Holl in Mistelbach on January 19, 1588, when she was about 23 and Johannes 28. Contrary to popular belief, peasants did not marry in their teens; mid to late twenties was most common. Peasants were not in a hurry to marry or have children since the average small farm could not support large families, and sons had to wait until it was determined what property or trade they would inherit in order to justify starting a family. In this era the town council ultimately granted permission to marry, based largely on whether the couple would be able to sustain themselves.

⁶ This is the village mill and farm of Cuntz Dollhopf (1581-1635), although it could include all land owned by the Dollhopfs. The mill remained desolate for 15 years until Hans Neukam took it over in 1649.

The average peasant family had 3.3 children (children who survived to adulthood), which is almost the exact average of our 15 known generations of Dollhopfs.

Holl's father and eldest son were tailors, so it is highly likely that he was a tailor as well, since trades were inherited like property. He was certainly a farmer, as most peasant men farmed in addition to practicing a trade. Maria had five children with Johannes Holl:

1. **Magdalena** 18 Aug 1589 – ?, left Mistelbach.
2. **Conradus** 11 Mar 1592 – 12 Oct 1634, was a tailor. He married Anna Lay. He and Anna, and their nine-year-old daughter Margaretha, all died on the same day, Thursday, October 12, 1634, one month after the plague broke out on September 7, and five months after Maria died. Although not confirmed, it is likely all three died from the plague...but they could have been murdered.
3. **Conradus** 09 Oct 1594 – ?, likely left Mistelbach.
4. **Barbara** 16 May 1597 – ?, our 9th great grandmother, married Simon Hauenstein (1589-1645) our 9th great grandfather on 14 Feb 1620. They had six children. Her 7th great granddaughter was Margarethe Bär, mother of Johann Bär Dollhopf, who immigrated to America.
5. **Johannes** 17 Sep 1599 – ?, likely left Mistelbach.



Kleermaker (Dutch: "tailor") by Jan Georg van Vliet, 1635, etching on paper. This etching is from the time when Cuntz was a tailor, the first Dollhopf to become a tailor and the trade that would be passed from father to son for the next four generations. Maria's first husband, Johannes Holl was a tailor, and Cuntz might have been his apprentice. Note the two men sewing while sitting on the table with their legs crossed (apprentices?). There is cloth on the table as well as hanging. The baskets under the tables are for textile scraps. <https://nationalclothing.org/712-how-medieval-and-renaissance-clothing-was-made-bonus-%E2%80%93-tailor%E2%80%99s-tools.html>

When Holl died, the children in the house at the time were Magdalena, age 13, Conradus, age 11, Conradus (same name), age 9, Barbara, age 6 (our 9th great grandmother), and Johannes, age 3.

Maria was left alone with five young children. Her husband's parents were dead, her father was dead, and her mother had remarried and was living in Mistelbach but was 63. Maria would not have been able to care for the children and the farm unaided.

She married Cuntz Dollhopf a year and nine months later on April 8, 1605. Cuntz was 23, Maria was 40. Good for her! I am thinking that this was a marriage of love – why would a 23-year-old man marry a woman nearly twice his age with five children?

As we explored in the previous blog, it is likely that Cuntz was apprenticed to her husband and had been working in their home for nearly a decade as a tailor. So their marriage was not necessarily a big surprise.

Cuntz was a real find, an incredibly generous man. He had to have been to adopt five children at the age of 23. He was born on August 11, 1581, and died in 1635, tragically putting out a fire in his barn. He was a farmer, tailor, and warden of the church. Pastor Böhner described Cuntz in 1629 as “a pious, honest, and conscientious man, who gave the *Godeshaus* (“God’s house”) 20 florins, so that the vault of the church should be painted.”

This gift turned out to be more than a mere coat of paint; he commissioned a work of art – Biblical scenes painted on the ceiling by the palace court painter from Bayreuth. 20 florins was the equivalent of almost two years’ worth of wages. So Cuntz either inherited the money or was an *extremely* conscientious saver.⁷

Because of her relatively advanced age of 40 when she married Cuntz, they only had one child, when she was 42:

1. **Cuntz** (27 Jul 1607 – 30 Dec 1683, 76), our 9th great grandfather.

We don’t exactly know where Cuntz and Maria lived with their six children. We do know from inheritance records that Cuntz did not own a house. His father died a month after he was born, at which time they were probably living at the mill. His mother then married Hans Vogel and they moved into the Vogel house with Cuntz Jr. and his five siblings. The children assumed the name Vogel, which they used for the next two generations.

We know from town records that the Vogel house was one of the many destroyed in the war, but it is not clear whether this occurred in 1632 or 1634.

If Cuntz was indeed an apprentice to Maria’s first husband, it would be reasonable to think that he moved into the Holl house.

Maria died at the age of 69 the day before her funeral on Saturday, April 29, 1634. In 600 years of record keeping, hers is the only Dollhopf funeral described at length in the church books. Following is the entry that was made five days after the carnage – a photograph of this entry from the church book appears at the end of this blog:

In the year of 1634, right on Sunday Cantate, May 4. Early at 6 o'clock [AM] a company, about 100 horses strong arrived in Mistelbach, plundered (robbed) a number of homes, however, they did not harm anyone by shooting or wounding. Afterwards all of them rode out of the village, and gathered at the old Reutter's place to get their next orders. The people of Mistelbach thought their suffering was over, that the soldiers were going to turn their attention to, and plunder, the nearby village of Mistelgau.

However, 15 of the soldiers were turned around and sent back to Mistelbach, where they set homes on fire. 27 homes and many stables burned down. They did not leave any home or building standing except for the church and what they could not see for all the smoke between the trees. Then the other remaining soldiers also rode into the village and did not leave more than eight little homes standing.

Hans Gebhardt, the farmer of the fields belonging to the castle, was taken as a prisoner, but released by the mercenary colonel near the Schlehen Mill and sent to Bayreuth with half a guilder of Palatine money with the order to tell the people in Bayreuth that Sigmund Gerhard von Guttenberg, the commander in Kemnath [a Lutheran region that included Mistelbach and Bayreuth], had set the Palatine [the Pfalz, a Catholic region] villages on fire, and therefore they will set Mistelbach on fire; for them to realize that the [Lutheran] villages of the Margrave burn just as well as Palatine [Catholic] villages. If they burn there, they will burn here.

⁷ See *Blog #9: Pandemics and War*.

Farmer Gebhardt told this to the *Hausvogt* and the *Stadtvogt* (“town-” and “state- administrators or officials”) in Bayreuth and to me, the parson. He had not been ordered to do or say anything else. So the poor village of Mistelbach was innocently all set on fire and the poor people do not understand why they were deprived of their homes and belongings.

And so Mistelbach was all but destroyed out of revenge and intended as a warning. Our ancestors were innocent pawns in a war beyond their control and comprehension.

Perhaps it was a blessing that she died when she did, because five months later her oldest son Conradus Holl, his wife Anna, and their daughter Margaretha, age 9, all died on the same day, October 24th. They could have died of the plague, or more plausibly murdered by roving gangs as all died on the same day. We don't know.

So ended a life endured in the most turbulent of times. Imagine if we could talk to her today.

During this carnage, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, the Mayflower Pilgrims, having landed on Cape Cod in November of 1620, were establishing a colony in the New World.

Next in the series on Dollhopf women: 9th great-grandmother “No Name”, another woman whose name we unfortunately don't know.

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New Haven, CT
January 2, 2023.

On the following page is a photo of the entry in the church books that described the above events.

