



Dollhopf

600 Years in the Baking

Dollhopf Women

This is the 18th essay in a series addressing the life and times of our Dollhopf grandmothers.

3rd Great-Grandmother Margaretha Graisinger (1802-1863)

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

Birth: 18 Mar 1802

Place of birth: Glashütten (4 miles southwest of Mistelbach)

Parents: Johann Graisinger and Margaretha Neuner

Marriage: 03 Oct 1824

Husband: Eberhardt Dollhopf (21 Jan 1789 – 22 Nov 1843, 54), farmer, mayor

Age at marriage: 21

Number of known children: 10

Residence: House #19

Death: 13 Apr 1863

Age at death: 61

Cause of death: Bilious fever which lasted for five days.

I wish I could report that Margaretha would see better days than her mother-in-law Catharina, but alas, she did not. Margaretha was 14 during that 1816 "Year Without Summer," so she experienced food scarcity and hunger as a young teenager. It would not be the last.

Margaretha and Eberhardt lived through a period of profound social change, even though this change came slowly to Mistelbach and the larger region of Franconia. They witnessed the end of feudalism.

Well, almost. Unbelievably, it was not until the mid 1800s that feudal serfdom finally, although not entirely, ended in Franconia – almost 70 years after the French had abolished serfdom in the French Revolution of 1789.

Change came slowly to this society [Franconia], though not necessarily because of peasant resistance [to change] – the legal and institutional framework of the state impeded change as well. To be sure, servitude, the serfdom (*Leibeigenschaft*), had been abolished in the Kingdom of Bavaria in 1808. Franconian serfs had to wait until a decree of July 24, 1818, as the area had been part of the Grand-Duchies of Würzburg and Aschaffenburg in 1808. These reforms granted some 5% of the population their personal freedom and abolished all obligations of a personal nature.

But they did not address the issue of *Grundlasten*, obligations connected with the ownership of real estate, such as unpaid labor services, the unpaid service obligations (*Fron*), noble hunting and grazing rights, which often made consolidation of holdings impossible, and the tithe, still often collected in kind, which forced peasants to time their harvest to the schedule of the tithe collector. The patrimonial privileges (*Patrimonialgerichtsherrschaften*) of former imperial estates



The Old Peasant Women, Giacomo Ceruti (1698-1767). Margaretha lived a tough life. She had ten babies – four died before the age of two. Only two lived beyond the age of 30.

in northern Franconia were not only an important source of income for the local nobility, which insisted on its right to local justice (*Gerichtsgefälle*), but, more importantly, a place where justice was dispensed, not always impartially, by an employee of the local lord.¹

Despite that decree of July 24, 1818, Margaretha and Eberhardt were still subject to feudal ordinances administered by the local courts of the local lords. As noted above, the peasants were still required to fulfill the obligations of *Grundlasten* ("land fees") established in the Middle Ages:

- They had to tend to the farms belonging to the church and local nobles before they tended to their own. This could amount to two to three days per week, out of a six-day work week. This was not paid work; this was a form of taxation.
- They had to work without pay on public works projects such as roads, bridges, and the maintenance of the church and church lands. Again, this was forced labor.
- They were not allowed to graze their animals, or hunt, on land owned by the nobility; nor were they allowed to collect firewood from the forests, mostly owned by the nobility. The church and nobility still controlled almost 60% of the land in Protestant Franconia.
- They were required to pay a tithe to the church – one tenth of their animal and crop production – chickens, eggs, dairy products, meat, grains, etc., collected in kind.

Changes came more quickly to the German principalities to the north – especially the abolition of fiefs, giving peasants outright ownership of their land:

Prussia abolished serfdom with the "October Edict" of 1807, which upgraded the personal legal status of the peasantry and gave them ownership of half or two-thirds of the lands they were working. The edict applied to all peasants whose holdings were above a certain size and included both Crown lands and noble estates. The peasants were freed from the obligation of personal services to the lord and annual dues; in return landowners were given ownership of 1/3 to 1/2 of the land. The peasant owned and rented the lands that were deeded to the old owners. The other German states imitated Prussia after 1815.²

It is likely that Eberhardt and Margaretha were the first Dollhopfs to own their house – not occupy it as a fief or lease from feudal margraves. They would have been granted one half to two thirds of the land the Dollhopfs had been farming for centuries; the rest would remain in the hands of the nobility – or sold by the nobility to them or other farmers.

As monumental as this transfer of property was, I do not yet know the precise date when this occurred. Again, because of the stranglehold of the old courts in Franconia and elsewhere in central Germany, these changes were slow to come to Mistelbach.

German peasants everywhere were frustrated about the pace of change. Continued frustration led to the German Revolutions of 1848, a series of loosely coordinated uprisings and rebellions to force uniform changes and put an end to feudal practices.

In the mountainous areas of upper Franconia [home to Mistelbach] and on the sandy plains around Nürnberg, the peasantry was worse off than in lower Franconia and quite prepared to take matters into their own hands. Dissatisfied with the laws on June 4, 1848, as they did not

¹ James Chastain, Peasants in Franconia: <https://www.ohio.edu/chastain/ip/peasfrk.htm>

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_serfdom

grant them the right to hunt, to cut wood freely, nor abolish the tithe, they put a few castles of the nobility to the torch in the fall of 1848.³

I do not know which castles in Franconia they torched, but not the one in Mistelbach. It was reported that our Mistelbach ancestors were largely peaceful, refraining from the violence that occurred in many other surrounding villages. But tempers did boil over as described in the Chronicle:

1848: In this revolutionary year, Mistelbach also had its intoxication of freedom and equality. One fine day the whole congregation, with their leaders, advanced to the front of the parsonage and besieged it. Pastor Hermann was asked to shut down the church, close the school and, above all, hand over the money tills in the rectory, otherwise the rectory would be demolished. However, there were no acts of violence or crime in this area due to the proximity of the district capital.

This crowd – the whole congregation! – gathered in front of the Dollhopf house since it was across the street from the parsonage. Was Margaretha part of the mob?

I would guess yes. She was 46 years old at the time, and I am sure she was tired of the grind, sick of the poverty, intolerant of medieval practices. Her husband died five years previously, only six months after the last of their ten children died as an infant at the age of one. In fact, *she buried the last four of her babies*, all died before the age of two. Their graves lied beneath the feet of the angry congregation as they stood in the cemetery beside the parsonage. I am sure she was ready to lay siege to the church, as it was the church that embodied the oppression of the peasants.

We don't know if Pastor Hermann met the demands of the crowd. Probably not, the church survived.

As it turns out, Pastor Hermann was not very popular, another reason why the congregation would have been so enraged and ready to storm his house. He was the Pastor in Mistelbach from 1832 to 1868; he previously served a church in Obereisenheim, a village in Lower Franconia near Würzburg. His first wife, with whom he had six children, died there. He married again, either in Obereisenheim or in Mistelbach, and with his second wife he had 20 children – 26 children living in the Mistelbach parsonage.

At a time of tremendous food insecurity, the people of Mistelbach had to provide for the pastor's family first; it was part of their tithe. This probably did not endear him to his congregation.

Apparently, Pastor Hermann kept to himself, probably for good reason. According to the Mistelbach Chronicle, beginning around 1857 he no longer cared for the congregation. Baptisms, marriages, and funerals were handled



Barricades in Berlin during the 1848 German Revolution, contemporary etching from The German School. Riots and armed rebellions broke out all over Germany, but it was relatively quiet in Mistelbach. Our rebel ancestors confronted the pastor in his parsonage, but that was it.

³ Chastain, *ibid.*

by a succession of vicars (assistant pastors), who also lived at the rectory. I can guess why there was a succession with 26 children in the house.

Or maybe, after the congregation besieged the parsonage, he didn't want to see them anymore:

Margaretha married Eberhard when she was 21; he was 35. Why did he wait so long? Although we don't know for sure, he was probably waiting until he could reasonably assure a prospective wife that he could support a family.

There also might have been intense pressure from the town council to delay or altogether prevent marriage. Because of worsening economic conditions, local governments throughout Germany were making it difficult for couples to marry. They wanted to discourage population growth because of the widespread poverty and food insecurity.

Another complicating delay for his delay of marriage: his house burned down in August of 1822, and it appears that he was living with his cousin Johann Dollhopf at House #55. It took about a year to build the new house #19, so I'm sure Eberhard was more than preoccupied tending his fields and building a house at the same time.

Why Eberhard chose Margarethe, 14 years younger and a resident of a village four miles from Mistelbach is not clear. His parents had died, so it was certainly not an arranged marriage. Eberhard served as sheriff during these years, perhaps he enjoyed greater freedom in choosing a bride. Perhaps there were not enough eligible bachelorettes in Mistelbach.

Eberhard and Margaretha married on October 23, 1824, about a year after he finished the new house. The young couple could certainly enjoy a new, larger home built of stone, but it likely did not erase Eberhard's pain in losing everything in the fire. The house that burned down had occupied lot #19 since 1634, when almost all of the houses were destroyed in the Thirty Years War, although I don't know how many times the house might have been rebuilt in those two hundred years. Before the 1800s houses were mostly made of wood and daub, and it is hard to imagine that a wood house would have survived 200 years without rotting.

For sure our ancestors occupied lot #19 for those 200 years, and whatever they had accumulated in that house disappeared in the fire. I can't help but selfishly wonder what family records might have been lost – Bibles, letters, legal documents, et al. We would know so much more about their lives if such precious documents, if they ever existed, had not been lost.

Obstacles to marriage and bearing children clearly didn't work with Margaretha and Eberhard; they produced ten children, the most up to this date of any of our ancestors.⁴ Their children:

1. **Catharina Margaretha** (07 Jul 1824 – 26 May 1881, 56), the church book reported that she "died a spinster," i.e., unmarried.⁵ She did have an illegitimate son, Johann, who used the last name Dollhopf. It was not uncommon in these times for woman to have illegitimate children because of marriage prohibitions. She lived with her sister Margaretha in the neighboring village of Gesees. She died of consumptive fever (tuberculosis).
2. **Margaretha** (28 Oct 1825 – 18 Jan 1883, 57), she married a man with same last name, Johann Dollhopf. He was her 2nd cousin, a bit unusual. They shared the same great grandparents – Johann Dollhopf and Kunigunde Seuffert. Margaritha had five children, three of whom died as young children. She lived in

⁴ That we know of. In the 1500s, when the Dollhopfs were millers, the family of our 12th great grandmother, whose name we don't know, might have been larger. But because the church was not yet keeping records, we can't confirm.

⁵ A spinster is obviously one who spins wool or other material. All peasant women were likely spinners; it was a household chore. The term eventually came to mean an old woman who never married (but kept on spinning).

Gesees, where her older sister joined her. She died of dropsy (congestive heart failure) at the age of 57.⁶ Her godmother was Margarethe Bär from the Schnorleinsmühle, the woman who would become the mother-in-law of her younger brother Johann (#5 below).

3. **Conrad** (26 May 1827 – 01 Mar 1832, 4) died at age 4 of a cough.
4. **Barbara** (10 Aug 1828 – 05 Dec 1858, 30) married Conrad Weiss from the village of Streit, had two children before she died at the age of 30.
5. **Johann** (22 May 1830 – 06 Dec 1858, 28), our 2nd great grandfather, had four illegitimate children with Margarethe Bär before they married in July of 1856, and then he died two years later of tuberculosis at the age of 28.
6. **Johann** (29 Sep 1832 – 10 Feb 1851, 18), unmarried, died at 18 also of tuberculosis.
7. **Anna Catharina** (26 Oct 1834 – 28 Dec 1835), died at 14 months of a cough.
8. **Barbara** (08 Feb 1837 – 23 Jan 1840), died at two of diphtheria.⁷
9. **Pankratius** (08 May 1839 – 12 Feb 1841), died at 20 months of a fever and a rash.⁸
10. **Conrad** (07 Apr 1742 – 18 May 1843), died at 13 months of convulsions.



Burying the Child, victims of the Irish Potato Famine, 1845-1852. Painting by Lillian Lucy Davidson (1893-1954). This haunting depiction of desperate Irish peasants could very well be one of German peasants, who also suffered the devastating result of starvation and disease in the same generation.

The mortality rate of these children revealed the depth of their poverty. For 18 years, from the age of 22 to 40, Margarethe was pregnant every other year. Only five of her ten children survived childhood, only two lived beyond the age of 30. Her last four babies all died before the age of two – Anna Catharina, named after her mother, died at 14 months, Barbara died at 24 months, Pankratius at 20 months, and Conrad at 13 months. Margaretha outlived all but two of her children.

How sad.

⁶ It was called “dropsy” because afflicted people tended to drop things. When the body retains water and swells, due to the heart congestion, it affects the brain causing neurological side effects. Such side effects can cause a person to be prone to dropping things.

⁷ Diphtheria is a highly contagious bacterial disease-causing inflammation of the mucous membranes, hindering breathing and swallowing.

⁸ Pancratius is a name honoring Saint Pancratius, a third century Roman martyr of the early Christian church. The name comes from the Greek and means *the all-ruling*. Until the 19th century it was also called *Pankraz* in German. His feast day is May 12.

All died from highly communicable diseases – symptoms of crowded, unsanitary, living conditions. Interestingly no one died from dysentery; they were all respiratory illnesses. These diseases are caused by close contact with infected people, a fact of which our grandparents were probably and sadly unaware.

In the early 1800s many regions in Germany experienced major flu pandemics, but I do not know the specific years Mistelbach might have been affected. All of her adult children except for one died of tuberculosis; the children died variously from “cough,” diphtheria, convulsions, or “fever and a rash.” “Cough” (or for that matter “convulsions”) could include a wide range of diseases including whooping cough, pneumonia, or croop. All but one of the children died during the winter months.

As has been described previously in these blogs, there were many reasons for the extreme poverty – partible inheritance (smaller and smaller farms), oppressive taxes, the Napoleonic wars, crop failures, inflation. These conditions were coming together in a perfect storm in the years between 1800 and 1870.

How poor were they?

From the Mistelbach parish records of 1851 and 1852:

The number of poor people grows with every year, which is a very difficult task for the parish, which is not very well off. Therefore, the view into the future is not a pleasant one. The saddest condition is that the parish has no charitable endowments from the past,⁹ but all payments to the poor must be taken from the current parish budget, i.e. through parish contributions from each individual member, which weighs heavily on the inhabitants of the local parish in these difficult times.

From a travelogue published in 1852, when Margaretha was 50, we get a vivid picture of the wretched conditions and her plight (Eberhard died in 1843). The travelogue was written by Charles Tylor, an English Quaker minister, educator, and author. In the summer of 1852, he traveled through Franconia for the purpose of conducting research for lectures he would deliver in Yorkshire, England the following year.

On his way from Nürnberg to Bayreuth, he traveled through the *Hummelgau* – the hills and valleys surrounding Mistelbach – stopping for lunch in Plankenfels, a village about ten miles west of Mistelbach. In the passage below, Tylor tells us that after lunch he traveled the high road through Trübersdorf on his way to Bayreuth. Trübersdorf is four miles north of Mistelbach; he was close.

Margaretha, her three daughters – Margaretha, Catharina, and Barbara – and two sons – Johann and Johann – were living in house #19 at the time, that summer of 1852.

Tylor described the area as among the filthiest he had ever seen.

Here’s how he described that day’s travel:

In this day's ride the beggars were more numerous than ever, the majority being young children, and several of them scarcely better than idiots. Women were mowing grass with the men; and the villages were poor and filthy. This was especially the case at Plankenfels, where we stopped to obtain some noontday refreshment. A rude repast was all we could procure, bread of wheat and rye mixed, strong cheese, and salt.

⁹ In previous centuries the village church functioned much like a bank as well as a charitable foundation. It made “welfare” payments to desperate parishioners; but also issued loans, which they sometimes forgave. The church held various endowments for these purposes.

Dung heaps guarded the houses, which, with beggars, old and young, reminded us of Ireland. Here we emerged from the plateau into a more open country, and a little beyond Trübersdorf came into the high road between Bamberg and Baireuth [sic].¹⁰



Dung heap guarding the house. This is one of the oldest photographs of house #19 that Eberhard built in 1823 after the fire. Margarethe married Eberhard in October of 1824, when she was probably carried over the threshold in the picture (the front door is behind the tree in the center of the first floor). The stable also occupied the first floor, to the left of the tree-covered door. The cart to the left was for hauling dung, the heap of which can be seen immediately behind it. Behind the dung heap, affixed to the house, is a small wooden privy, or outhouse. The door to the stable is to the right of the small privy. Human dung was likely mixed with animal dung and carted to the fields for fertilizer. Standing in front is Eberhard and Margarethe's grandson **Johann Konrad Dollhopf** (1856-1947), and his third wife **Margarethe Hartung** (1868-?). Johann was the first cousin of our grandfather Edward. This photo was probably taken shortly after they were married in 1910.

True to his description, as pictured above, a dung heap similarly stood in front of the Dollhopf house as was customary in the territory, until the 1970s. Yes, 1970.

Were any of the Dollhopfs on the street begging? Hard to say. Perhaps not from House #19; but there is some evidence to suggest that there might have been some Dollhopf beggars down the street in House #55.

¹⁰ "A Historical Tour in Franconia, in the Summer of 1852," Charles Tylor, Brighton, November 1852.

There were two Dollhopf houses in Mistelbach in 1852, #19 and #55. As you might recall¹¹, #55 was built by Cuntz Dollhopf, our 9th great grandfather in 1662 after he obtained the land from the hospital in Bayreuth. That land was next to the village mill, which in previous centuries was owned by our branch of Dollhopfs. Other than a terribly faded post card from the turn of last century, I know of no picture of #55. It was torn down and replaced in the mid 1900s.

By the time he died in 1843, Eberhard had increased the landholdings of House #19 to about 30 acres. It was not all arable land; two thirds of his holdings were woods and meadows. But it was the largest farm yet in the 400 years that we have been following the Dollhopfs. In 1852 there were six adults living at #19, more than enough to run the farm, and most likely more than enough to produce sufficient food to live on – even though the farm was still described in the church book as a *soldengut*, or “subsistence level farm.”

The other Dollhopf house, #55, was a *very* small farm. I suspect that it was less than a third the size of #19. In the 1830s and 40s #55 was occupied by Johann Dollhopf, Eberhard’s first cousin, and his wife Margaretha Reuschel. Johann and Margaretha had nine children at #55, living on a farm that probably couldn’t sustain even four people.

We can deduce that they were having difficulty at this house, because of the nine children (four boys, five girls), three died as infants, four emigrated to the US, and the two remaining, both girls, moved to other villages.

The four that left for America include:

1. **Johann** (16 Aug 1821 – 04 Dec 1890, 69), who left Mistelbach in 1848 at the age of 27, and according to US Censuses, was living in Baltimore in 1870, and in Catonsville, Maryland in 1880. He married a woman named Margaret (no surprise there) and we know they had at least one child, Amy, born about 1855. Johann is buried next to his wife in Catonsville, which is near Baltimore.
2. **Anna** (17 Apr 1833 – 26 Sep 1916, 83) left for America in 1854 at age 21, with her sister below and a cousin, Katharina Schilling. In America she married Friederich Bär from Hanover, Germany (no relation to the Bär family in Mistelbach). They settled in Cumberland, Maryland where they had six children. Anna is buried in Cumberland.
3. **Barbara** (12 Jun 1835 – ?). Left for America at age 19 with Anna above, and cousin Katharina Schilling. They sailed from Bremerhaven, Germany aboard the ship *Aeolus*. (See *Blog #3: Coming to America*, for a description of their journey.) We can surmise that they traveled to Baltimore to be with their older brother, but this is not confirmed, I don’t know what happened to Barbara; I have no further records.
4. **Johann Conrad** (06 Jul 1823 – ?) , the second oldest brother, stayed in Mistelbach a bit longer. He married Margaretha Weigel and eventually inherited house #55 in 1866, where they lived and had nine children as well – tragically *all but two of the nine* died as infants or young children. After the deaths of seven of his children, and presumably his wife, he left for America in 1873 when he was 50, with his last remaining daughter, nine-year-old “Kate” (Catharina). The other surviving child, his oldest son Conrad, followed two years later in 1875 at the age of 24. Father Johann and Kate apparently immigrated to Pittsburgh because Kate appears there in the 1910 census with husband Oscar Richards and three children. In the 1920 Census they were living in Detroit, which is where she died and was buried in 1943. We don’t know what happened to father Johann Conrad. His son Conrad settled on Spring Garden Avenue in Pittsburgh, near our great-grandfather, John Dollhopf. (His great grandson Ewald Dollhopf lived in McCandless Township, and later retired to the Daytona Beach area.)

Johann Conrad was the last of the Dollhopfs to occupy house #55. When he left for America in 1873 with nine-year-old Kate he perhaps abandoned the house, because it does not appear in the records with a new owner until 1914, when Johann Pfaffenberger is listed as owner. The house was torn down and replaced in the mid 1900s.

¹¹ If you don’t recall, it’s understandable. There won’t be a test.

The Dollhopf descendants from house #19 – with the exception of our great grandfather – stayed in Mistelbach or the immediate environs. Descendants from house #55 all left for America. I am convinced that this was due in part to the size of their farm #55 was too small to support a family in those desperate times.

How desperate? In the years 1840 to 1866 Mistelbach lost *a third* of its population, in later years eventually half, and many houses were indeed abandoned:

The first emigrant to leave Mistelbach was Johann Weidenhammer [probably Eberhard's 3rd cousin], who left on the Feast Day of St. Peter and St. Paul [June 29, 1839]; he was followed by at least 180 people, and from 1840 to 1866 entire families often left, even some with eight children. These names no longer appear in Mistelbach – Bickel, Rogner, Roßner, Schabtach, Gehauf, Weigel and Birkel... thus the number of inhabitants sank down to 450.¹²

It's hard to imagine what it would be like to have a third of your neighbors leave, many of them abandoning their houses. I'm sure that many, including our great-grandparents, were asking themselves, "Should we stay, or go?"

From the church book in the year 1845 we get an interesting glimpse into the lives of two emigrant families that left Mistelbach. I include this passage because it is an example of how revealing the church books could be:

Söldenbauer [owner of small farm] Johann Lüchauer [probably third cousin of Eberhard], house #22, emigrated with his wife, three sons and three daughters, landlord and master baker Johann Weigel with his wife, one son and four daughters.

Both families belonged to the wealthiest of the village, and the departure of the former is all the more to be lamented, since it was not only through hard work, but also through leading a religious life did they establish a good reputation.

In the family of the innkeeper Weigel, a foul household and poor child rearing were predominant; the mother of the family was extremely devoted to drink and the father and mother of the house were among those members of the community who had not communicated for a number of 15 to 20 years.

As impoverished as they were, they were still part of a small, tight-knit community, and I am sure that a decision to leave Mistelbach was a painful one. We, in the 21st century, are accustomed to living in neighborhoods where people come and go. We move comparatively frequently, whether because of school (we usually go "away" to college), marriage, job, change in job, change in spouse's job, need for a bigger house, need to downsize, or retirement.

Not so in the peasant village of Mistelbach. Families not only stayed in the same house for their entire lives – families stayed in the same house for *generations*. A Dollhopf has been living at #19 for eight generations, and before that at least four generations of the Hagen family, who were also our ancestors.

The peasants leaving Mistelbach weren't faceless, anonymous neighbors. They were "family," knit together not only because of the proximity of their houses, but also because of blood relationships, social class, and religious and economic ties. They were related, even if they did not know it (two people would not necessarily know they were 4th cousins, for example).

They were all farmers. Their ancestors tended the same fields for generations. They attended the same school. They went to the same church and worshipped the same God. For *centuries*.

They celebrated together, they mourned together. They went to each other's baptisms, weddings, and funerals, and they endured the same military invasions, weather disasters, crop failures, and diseases.

¹² Mistelbach Chronicle.

After centuries of relatively isolated inhabitation and intermarriage, it is highly likely that by the middle of the 19th century nearly everyone in the village was a cousin of some degree. Our 2nd great-grandfather Johann Dollhopf married his third cousin Margathe Bär. This was common.

Not only were they closely knit blood relatives, they were also closely knit religious relatives – due to the church custom of “godparents.”

The role of godparent arose in the earliest Christian churches when infant baptism supplanted adult baptism. Infants required adults to “vocalize” a confession of faith on their behalf, and to serve as religious proxies – spiritual parents – to ensure the child’s religious upbringing.

Originally the natural parents fulfilled this role. St. Augustine, one of the early Church Fathers, suggested that adults other than parents could be witnesses and confessors on behalf of the child, and thus it became common practice by the 7th century. The pope, at the Synod of Mainz in 813, prohibited natural parents from being godparents. It is not clear why this was the case, other than perhaps the implicit sentiment that it takes a village to raise a child.

Godparents played an important role in clarifying kinship and social relationships. Choosing a godparent for your child had important and discrete social purposes. The role of godparent was to:

- Sacramentalize (make holy) – and thereby affirm – family relationships and close personal friendships among adults.
- Extend and more clearly delineate marital taboos. Godparents were often brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, and cousins, and not only was it forbidden to marry a natural parent, but also one’s godparent.
- Provide for the additional protection and safeguarding of one’s children. In a society where death was always just around the corner, having godparents was a means to ensure the care of children.
- Foster trust among adults, which served the purpose of more closely knitting people together internally within villages, and externally with other villages. This solidified not only familial, but also important economic, and political bonds.
- Ensure the practice, and affirm the importance of, religious instruction.¹³

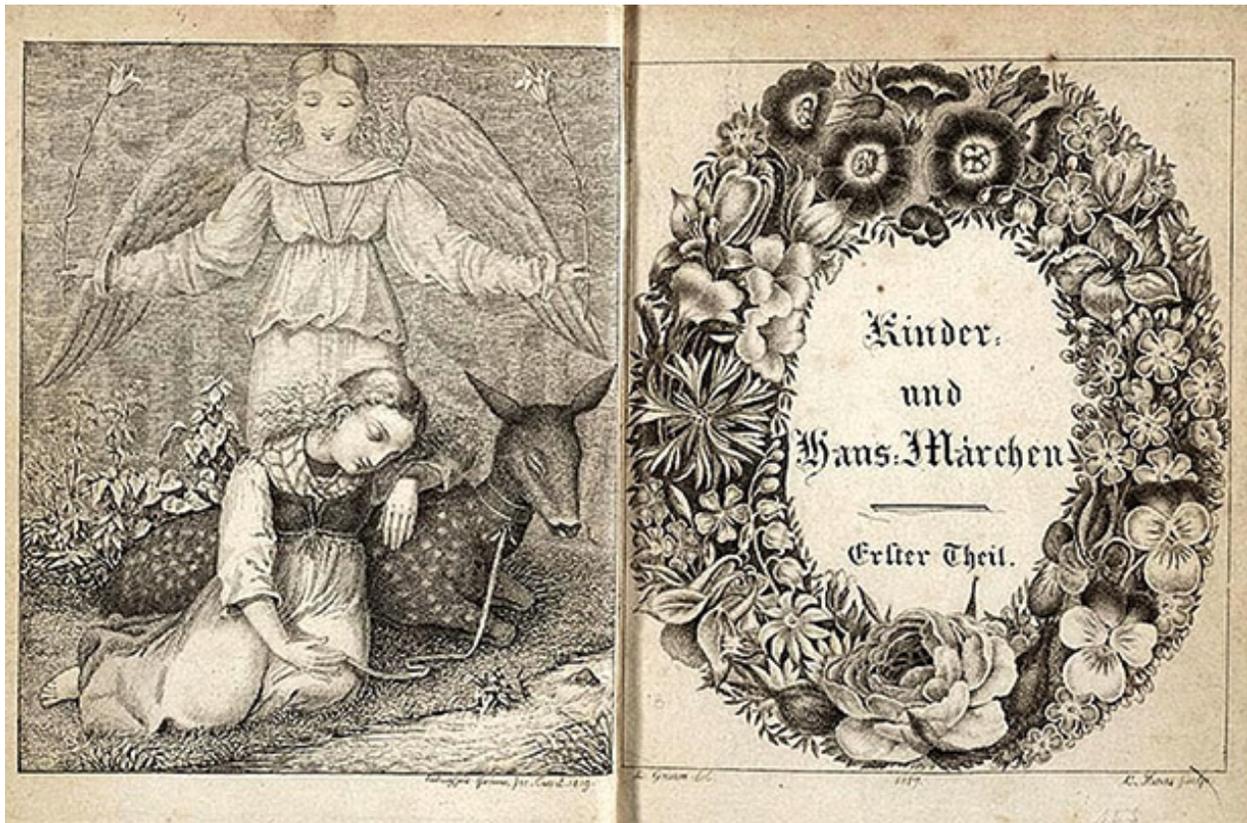
Godparents found their way into German medieval folklore, where they possessed magical and life changing powers – think of the fairy “godmothers” of Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty in the Brothers Grimm fairy tales, to name just a few.

Godparents were so important that children were always named after their godparents, whether they were family members or personal friends. Our Mistelbach ancestors were *always* named after their godparents without exception. This practice continued even after John Dollhopf immigrated to Pittsburgh, although after his fourth child (of 12) he seemingly dropped the practice. (See *Blog #17 Naming Conventions*.)

Following are the children of Margaretha and Eberhard, listed with their godparents and the child’s relationship to the godparent, painting a picture of medieval kinship. These descriptions of the godparent are found in the church book. I clarified the relationship in brackets:

¹³ These ideas are more fully developed in “Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe,” by Joseph H. Lynch, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986.

| Child: | Godparent: | Relationship |
|-------------------------|------------------------|---|
| 1. Catharina Margaretha | Catharina Hermesdörfer | Widow of Farmer Hermesdörfer from Oberpreuschwitz. [I would guess a friend.] |
| 2. Margaretha | Margaretha Bär | Wife of Peter Bär, master miller at the Schnörleins Mill. [A friend, but she would also become the mother-in-law of Johann #5 below.] |
| 3. Conrad | Conrad Graisinger | Youngest son of Johann Graisinger, master weaver in Glashütten, brother of the child's mother [uncle]. |



Fairy godmother looking over young girl, from the front cover of the book **Kinder-und Hausmärchen** (“Children’s and Household Tales”) by the Brothers Grimm. Frontispiece and decorative title page are from an 1819 edition, illustrated by Ludwig Emil Grimm with engravings by L. Haas. This is one of the first editions of Grimm’s Fairy Tales. Godparents were revered and had magical powers. Stepmothers and stepfathers were reviled – mirrors of medieval society. <https://www.history>

| | | |
|------------|--------------------------|--|
| 4. Barbara | Barbara Greisinger [sic] | Surviving youngest daughter of the deceased master weaver Johann Greisinger from Glashütten, sister of the child's grandfather, represented by the local midwife [great aunt]. |
| 5. Johann | Johann Dollhopf | Farmer in Eckersdorf, brother of the child's father [uncle]. |
| 6. Johann | Johann Völkel | Local peasant farmer [friend]. |

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|---|
| 7. Anna Catharina | Katharina Dollhopf | Wife of Stephan Dollhopf, farmer at the Finken Mill [father's oldest brother, uncle]. |
| 8. Barbara | Barbara Greusinger | from Glashütten, single [aunt]. |
| 9. Pankratius | Pankratius Kreissinger | Eldest son of Johann Kreissinger [sic], farmer in Glashütten [likely great uncle]. |
| 10. Conrad | Konrad Kreissinger | Master weaver and peasant farmer in Glashütten [friend], represented by Mr. Dörfler, local <i>precentor</i> . ¹⁴ |

Six of the godparents were relatives; four were close friends. Three were from Mistelbach, seven from neighboring villages. All of the brothers and sisters of Eberhard and Margarethe, living at the time, were named godparents with the notable exception of Eberhard's oldest brother Stephan, who was 15 years older than Eberhard.

Interestingly, Eberhard owned a significant amount of land in common with his brother Johann, but not with his brother Stephan. It seems odd that Eberhard's oldest brother was left out of the picture. Did they not get along? Family quarrel?

Eberhard must have been a go-getter. After inheriting the farm at the age of 19, he proceeded to nearly triple the family's land holdings, and he served as *vogt* ("administrator, sheriff, or mayor") for a considerable amount of time.

It might have been easier to acquire land in his times because so many people were leaving Mistelbach for America and abandoning their property, but we don't know. (See *Blog #18: Land Owned*). At the time of his death in 1843 his farm was about 30 acres. He died prematurely from nervous pneumonia at the age of 56, only six months after the death of his one-year-old son Conrad.¹⁵

Wife Margaretha was only 41 at the time of his death. The following children were living in the house at the time: Catharina, 19; Margaretha, 18; Barbara, 15; Johann, 13; and Johann, 11. They were on their own now, shouldering the responsibilities of running a substantial farm.

How did they do it? Margaretha must have been a strong, independent woman. She did not remarry, and she held on to the farm for another 15 years, passing it to the older son Johann (our 2nd great grandfather) in 1858.

To be fair, while her three oldest girls eventually left the house, she still had two young men – Johann and Johann – to help her run things. But that didn't last long. Her youngest son Johann died in 1851 at the age of 18, and her older son Johann, our 2nd great grandfather, died only six months after she bequeathed the farm to him in 1858. Both Johanns died from tuberculosis.

When our great-great-grandfather Johann died at the age of 28 in 1858, Margaretha was 56. She and her widowed daughter-in-law Margaretha Bâr were left to run the farm without the benefit of a man. Daughter-in-law Margaretha (our great-great-grandmother) quickly remarried Johann Hacker from the neighboring village of Oberwaiz and moved there in June of 1859.

Margaretha would have been left alone at #19, which seems improbable, but not impossible. She was a survivor and had been holding on to the house since Eberhard died in 1843, but she was no longer the owner since she passed the house down to son Johann in 1854.

¹⁴ A precentor was a person who led congregations in singing, essentially the church music director.

¹⁵ "Nervous pneumonia" could be mycoplasma pneumonia, affecting the central nervous system.

We know that her daughter-in-law, now living in Oberwaiz, eventually rented the property to farmer Georg Zimmerman until her son Johann Konrad inherited the farm in 1914.

Margaretha's two oldest daughters, Catharina and Margaretha, her only surviving children out of ten, lived together in nearby Gesees. It would make sense that she would move in with them. Margaretha died four years later in 1863 from bilious fever.¹⁶

Margaretha kept the farm going for another 15 years after her husband Eberhard died. She gave birth to 10 babies, five died as toddlers, she buried three more as young adults.

Tough woman.

Next in the series on Dollhopf women:
2nd Great-grandmother Margarethe Bár

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New Haven, CT
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Dollhopf house #46 in the neighboring village of Gesees. Margaretha's two oldest daughters shared this house in Gesees. Catharina, her oldest daughter was unmarried with one illegitimate child. Her second oldest, also named Margaretha, married her 2nd cousin whose name was unbelievably Johann Dollhopf. They had five children. Margaretha moved into this house with her two daughters in 1859. She died four years later in 1863 at the age of 61. Photo: Mark Dollhopf, August, 2022.

¹⁶ Bilious fever is associated with excessive bile or bilirubin in the blood stream and tissues; symptoms include jaundice, a yellow color in the skin or sclera of the eye. It was also diagnosed as typhoid fever. The term is obsolete and no longer used but was used by medical practitioners in the 18th and 19th centuries for any fever that exhibited the symptom of nausea or vomiting in addition to an increase in internal body temperature and strong diarrhea. Modern diagnoses for the same symptoms would include a wide range of conditions and infections.
Wikipedia