



# Dollhopf

600 Years in the Baking

## Dollhopf Women

*This is the 20<sup>th</sup> essay in a series addressing the life and times of our Dollhopf grandmothers.*

### Great-Grandmother Elizabeth “Lizzie” Bender (1857-1951)

**Birth:** 20 Mar 1857

**Place of birth:** Jersey City, New Jersey

**Parents:** Georg Bender and Barbara Mai

**Indentured to Harmony Society:** Age seven.<sup>1</sup>

**Marriage:** 12 Dec 1876

**Husband:** Johann Bär Dollhopf (24 May 1852 – 28 Mar 1934, 81), cooper (barrel maker), carpenter, furniture maker

**Age at marriage:** 19

**Number of known children:** 12

**Residence:** (1865-1876) Harmony Society, Economy, Pennsylvania (PA)

**Residence:** (c. 1880-1888) 118 High Street, Pittsburgh, PA

**Residence:** (c. 1888-1947) 22 Iona Street, Pittsburgh

**Residence:** (1947-51) Woodville State Mental Hospital

**Death:** 31 Aug 1951

**Age at death:** 94 (longest lived to now)<sup>2</sup>

**Cause of death:** Arteriosclerotic Heart Disease

The 14 generations of grandmothers in the previous blogs were Franconians – all born in or around Mistelbach. Elizabeth, or as she was commonly known, Lizzie, was not from Franconia; she was born in Jersey City, New Jersey. But her parents were indeed German immigrants, both from the region of Hessen, the area surrounding Frankfurt, Germany. Americans are generally familiar with Hessen because of the history of “Hessian” soldiers – mercenaries who fought on the side of the British in the American Revolution.



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

The term “Hessian” is an American synecdoche for *all* Germans who fought for the British, since the majority, about 65%, came from the principality of Hesse. In fact, the soldiers came from a number of German principalities,

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<sup>1</sup> “Indenture” means to legally bind someone over to an apprenticeship, a practice common in medieval Germany...and 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

<sup>2</sup> If you are from the Ed and Mildred side of the family, then your oldest grandmother to date is Mildred May Schmidt Dollhopf, who died on July 15, 2020 at the age of 103, a week short of 104.

including Franconia.<sup>3</sup> Surprisingly, at least two of our Mistelbach distant cousins fought in the American Revolution on the side of the British – Heinrich Pfaffenberger (c. 1752-1778) and Johann Bär (1760-?).<sup>4</sup>

Lizzie's parents George and Barbara were born in villages only 50 miles apart. They migrated to America at different times and met in New York City. Her parents:

**Georg Bender** (1833-?), born in Niederdorfelden, Hesse, about 9 miles northeast of Frankfurt. We don't know why or exactly when he immigrated to New York City, although it was obviously before he married Barbara in 1856. We don't know if he came alone or with family.



**Georg Bender (1833-?)**, our 2<sup>nd</sup> great-grandfather. These “his and her” photos appear to have been taken in the same studio, but that is not substantiated. They do not appear together in any photo. We have no traceable records of Georg after he indentured the twins Elizabeth and Mathilde to the Harmony Society in 1864 and 1865. It is likely that this photo was taken c. 1864.



**Barbara Mai (1832-1922)**, our 2<sup>nd</sup> great-grandmother. She was committed to the Hudson County Lunatic Asylum c. 1864. I presume this photo was taken prior to her committal.

**Barbara Mai** (1832–1922) pronounced “my” in German, her father changed the name to May in America, since May resembles “Mai” and that’s how it was pronounced in America (*Mai* is German for the month “May”). Barbara was born in Kirschhausen, a village that was owned by the historic Catholic Abbey of Lorsch, about 40 miles due south of Frankfurt.<sup>5</sup> Unlike our other ancestors, the Mai family was Catholic. (To be clear, all our ancestors were Catholic before the Reformation c.1517-1550.) Barbara and her older brother Georg departed Le Havre, France, aboard the ship *Helvetia* and arrived in New York City on October 11, 1851. For reasons unknown, her parents and

<sup>3</sup> A “principality” could be a kingdom, a duchy, a grand duchy, an imperial territory, a free city, etc.

<sup>4</sup> See *Blog #13: Dollhopfs and the American Revolution*.

<sup>5</sup> In 1991 the ruined abbey was officially listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

five younger siblings immigrated in 1845, six years before she did. Best guess as to why Barabara came later: she was indentured to another family, as was often the case with young girls in peasant villages, and could not leave until she reached the majority age of 19.

We don't know where or how Barbara and Georg met. Our story picks up when they were married on September 7, 1856, in the First German Presbyterian Church on Rivington Street in New York City. This church (organized in 1852 and dissolved in 1872) was on the Lower East Side in an area at the time called *Kleindeutschland* ("Little Germany").

More to the point, the church was in a Hessian neighborhood, as Germans tended to segregate themselves block by block in New York according to the German territories from which they immigrated. This would not be unexpected. Even though they were all Germans, there were distinct cultural and language differences among the many principalities.

In the 1850s alone more than 800,000 Germans passed through New York City. By 1855, the year before they were married, New York had the third largest German population of any city in the world, behind Berlin and Vienna.<sup>6</sup>

After they married, Barbara and Georg moved across the Hudson River to Jersey City, New Jersey. At the time this was a German farming community. Today the land is occupied by Liberty State Park, next to the Statue of Liberty. Barbara's parents settled there in 1845.

On March 7, 1857, only six months after they married, Barbara gave birth to twins Lizzie (our great grandmother) and Mathilde. She had three more children: John Henry in 1858, Jane in 1861, and Barbara in 1863.

Shortly after the birth of their last child Barbara, the marriage quickly fell apart. Fourteen months after the birth of Barbara, in May of 1864, Georg indentured Mathilde, and in January of 1865, eight months later, he indentured Lizzie, to the Harmony Society in Pittsburgh. Both were age seven at the time. Why they were indentured nine months apart is a mystery.

He likely put the three younger siblings up for adoption because they were too young to be indentured. Barbara, their youngest, was only one.

Around that same time, Barbara was committed to the Hudson County Hospital for the Insane, also known as the Hudson Lunatic Asylum. One could assume that her husband Georg committed her, although both of her parents and all six of her siblings were still living in 1864.

Why she was committed to the asylum is also a mystery. The 1870 census of the Hudson Asylum "inmates" (this is how they were listed in the census) categorized her as "insane," as were nearly all of the inmates. The 1880 census, when she was 48, indicated that she was suffering from dementia.

In those times, "insanity" was a catch-all term for undiagnosed or unknown mental health issues, including alcoholism. Psychology was not yet a science – Sigmund Freud was born in 1856 and had not yet published *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which he did in 1899.

We do know from descendants of her siblings that several of her brothers and sisters suffered from alcoholism, and that both twins Lizzie and Mathilde were known to suffer from severe alcoholism (Mathilde's death certificate indicates psychosis due to alcohol as a contributing cause of death). It is highly likely that Barbara possessed the alcoholism gene. Her alcoholism was treated as insanity.

Alcoholism was seen as a personality defect, or weakness, and deemed shameful and embarrassing. The family story surrounding the cause for the abandonment of the children was that George and Barbara died in a house

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<sup>6</sup> By the end of the 1890s Kleindeutschland was in decline as most of the second-generation immigrants moved uptown to the Manhattan neighborhood of Yorkville, or out of the city altogether.

fire. Of course, we know that this was not true for Barbara, and probably not for George because he was present to witness and sign the indenture contracts. The “fire” was a cover story.

One did not have to be insane to be committed to the Asylum. Often, they were people who, for whatever reason, were considered a burden to the family. Once committed to the Asylum, patients were almost *never* released, and after they died most of their bodies were never claimed. A mass grave was discovered in 2002 near the site of the Asylum, containing an estimated 10,000 bodies, unearthed during construction on the New Jersey Turnpike. This created a scandal that I documented in *Blog 5: Barbara Mai – A Sad Story*.<sup>7</sup> Past and forgotten.

The Asylum had been built on a rock outcropping called Snake Hill, on land now occupied by Laurel Hill Park adjacent to the Secaucus Train Station at Exit 15-X of I 95.

She spent 57 years as an “inmate” at this notorious hospital. They lived in mostly overcrowded conditions, two to four people per small rooms. She died there on December 20, 1922, at the age of 90. Her remains are likely beneath Exit 15-X.<sup>8</sup>



*Lizzie's younger siblings: John Henry Bender born 27 Dec 1858 (center), Jane Bender born 25 Jan 1861 (right), and Barbara Bender born 28 Mar 1863 (left). This photo likely dates from c. 1865, probably just before or after their mother was committed to the Hudson County Insane Asylum. Why weren't Lizzie and Mathilde in this photo with their siblings?! And where are the parents? Perhaps Lizzie and Mathilde had already been indentured by their father. John Henry was adopted by Elizabeth Ott of Beaver County, PA, an employee of the Harmony Society. In 1884 he married Mary Elizabeth Schwartz in New Galilee, Beaver Township, PA.*

*Although we don't know for sure what happened to Barbara and Jane, there are two young girls of matching ages that appear in the 1870 US Census living at the Roman Catholic Girls Orphans Asylum in New York City on Madison Avenue. (We know that their mother Barbara Mai was Catholic, and the youngest girl Barbara was baptized at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Jersey City.) Jane eventually made it to Ambridge, home of the Harmony Society, where she married Louis Senn in 1884. We are not certain what happened to Barbara, although a woman named Barbara Bender died in Allegheny City (Pittsburgh's North Side) in 1889.*

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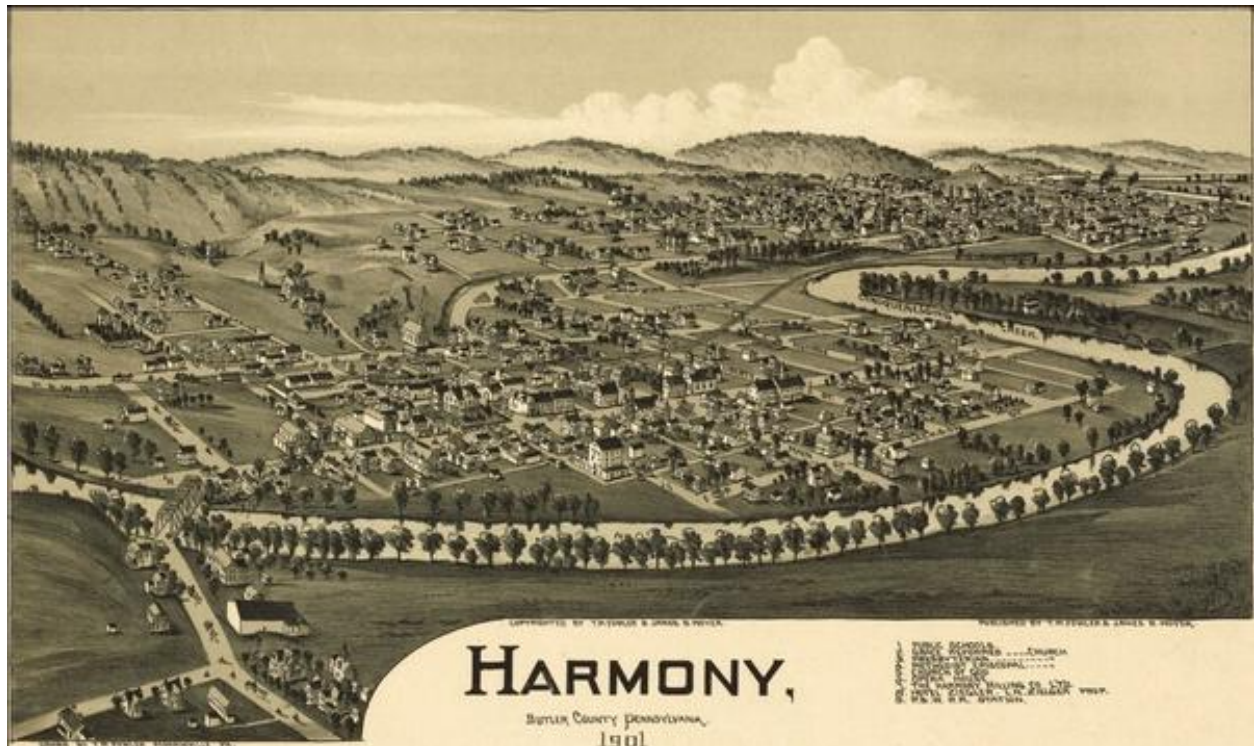
<sup>7</sup> A documentary film about the scandal can be found at: <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1056133/>.

<sup>8</sup> The Asylum was moved and renamed the Hudson County Hospital for Mental Diseases in 1927, and by 1931 its numerous buildings had been razed.

“Lizzie” likely had a jarring and terrifying childhood. One can only imagine how she might have suffered at the hands of an alcoholic or mentally ill mother, and a father who chose to abandon them. The circumstances must have been dire to cause the Georg and Barbara to abandon five young children.

The utopian Harmony Society, where the girls were indentured, was located in present day Ambridge, PA, on the Ohio River, about 18 miles downstream from Pittsburgh. The Society was founded in 1785 in Ippingen, Germany, by Johann Georg Rapp. In short, they believed that Jesus Christ’s return was imminent, and that one’s life had to be spent preparing for that return. Rapp and members of the Society migrated to the US in 1804 because of persecution by Lutherans.

They initially purchased land near Zelienople, PA, in 1804, then moved to Indiana in 1815, and back to Western Pennsylvania in 1825. The Harmonists, as they were called, were chaste and hard-working, establishing a large industrial village on the banks of the Ohio. Because they did not believe in having children, they apparently recruited, or at the least accepted, orphaned children.



*The utopian industrial village of Harmony, now Ambridge, PA, in a 1901 drawing. The Ohio River is in the foreground; Pittsburgh lies 18 miles upstream to the right. By 1901 the industries of Harmony were in steep decline – the founders had long since passed away, and most of the members had died (there were no descendants to assume ownership because they did not believe in having children!). By 1906 all of the land and financial assets of the Society were sold off by the few remaining members.*

How and why her father George traveled 500 miles to Pittsburgh to indenture the twins to the Harmony Society is a puzzling. It might also be the case that Jacob Henrici, the Trustee of the Society who indentured the girls, or Daniel Schreiber, his assignee, visited the family in New Jersey on one of their many known trips to the New York area to recruit workers. The three younger siblings were also given up for adoption, eventually they found their way to Pittsburgh. How, we don’t know. Perhaps Henrici or Schreiber brought them to Pittsburgh as well, too young to be indentured, so they were adopted by local families.

What did Georg say to the Lizzie and Mathilde as he handed them over to these strangers? What did he tell them about their mother? What was going to happen to their brother and sisters? Were they ever going to see Mom and Dad, or their brother and sisters, again?

The fright and fear of the unknown had to be overwhelming for two seven-year-old girls. They were placed in boarding houses at the Society, each living with four to six unmarried older adults – as was the custom among Society members.

The indentured girls eventually, if not right away, worked as maids. There were relatively few children at the Society since the Society members, believing that the second coming of Christ was imminent, thought it was unnecessary – and also sinful – to have children.

The four to six unmarried adults lived as “families,” although there were exceptions as the census shows there were some married couples. However, when a married couple decided to become members of the Society their marriage was dissolved, and they handed over their earthly possessions to the Society. Perhaps the married couples shown in the census were pre-dissolution.

Another mystery: Mathilde was indentured on May 19, 1864, and Lizzie on January 12, 1865, – eight months apart. Why? Were they separated? Did Georg make two trips to Pittsburgh? Or did Schreiber make two trips to New York?

On the following page is a *photo* of Lizzie’s indenture contract, followed by a transcription:

Mathilde’s indenture was identical, except for the date. Whether or not as seven-year-olds they were housed together or in separate houses is not known. The Society did have a school, so we know they likely saw each other at school if not at the place where they were housed.

We know nothing of their time at the Society. The 1870 US Census, taken when they were 13, indicated they were residents of separate houses. Lizzie was living in house #24 with two older men and two older women, all over the age of 45. Mathilde was in house #30 with six older adults and another indentured girl her age.

Living nearby, in dwelling #26, were John (aka JN) Schmidt, 25, his wife Ann (Anna Barbara Hacker), 26, and their four-year-old daughter Barbara.<sup>9</sup> Ann Barbara was our great grandfather Johann’s older stepsister. As previously described this couple was very close to our great grandfather; JN was the godfather of our great uncle.

In October of 1871, when Lizzie was 14, a 19-year-old teenager showed up at the Society Johann (John) Dollhopf, only three days off the boat from Mistelbach via Bremen, Germany and Baltimore, Maryland. He had followed his older stepsister, her husband, and his step cousin George Holl, all three of whom immigrated to the Society the year before in 1870. Why they immigrated to the Society I do not yet know.

Perhaps Johann stayed, at least temporarily, in dwelling #26, with his stepsister and brother-in-law – only two doors away from where Lizzie was living.

JN Schmidt, George Holl, and our John were *küfer* – “coopers” or barrel makers. The Society was home to many businesses: clothing mill, sawmill, silk production facilities, brick works, tannery, distillery, brewery, farm, hotel, storehouses, and eventually, even oil wells! Nearly everything they produced was sold by the barrel, so the cooper’s shed was a busy place.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> From the 1870 US Census.

<sup>10</sup> The cooper’s shed, where barrels were made, has been restored and today is part of the Old Economy Museum.

**THIS INDENTURE,**

MADE the 12<sup>th</sup> day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty five Witnesseth, That Elisabeth Bender aged seven years nine months and twenty one days, by and with the consent of her Father George Bender hath put, and by these presents doth voluntarily put herself an Apprentice to the Trustees of the Harmony Society with them to serve after the manner of an Apprentice, from the date of these presents, until she the said Elisabeth Bender arrives at the full age of eighteen years; during which term the said Apprentice the said masters faithfully shall serve in all lawful business, according to her power, wit and ability, honestly, orderly and obediently in all things demean herself towards her said masters during said term. And R. L. Baker & Jacob Henrici Trustees the said masters doth for themselves their successors, heirs, executors and administrators, covenant and grant to and with the said Apprentice, that they the said Elisabeth the said Apprentice in the art and mystery of a House Keeping shall and will teach and instruct, or cause to be taught and instructed in the best manner that they can; also, during all the said term shall and will provide and allow unto the said Apprentice, competent and sufficient meat, drink, washing, lodging and learn her to read and write and all other things necessary and fit for an Apprentice. And at the end of said term, shall and will deliver to the said Elisabeth 2 suits of clothes one of which to be new, also a Bed.

In Witness Whereof, The parties have hereunto interchangeably set their hands, and affixed their seals, the day and year first above written.

SEALED AND DELIVERED }  
IN PRESENCE OF }  
Daniel Schreiber } Elisabeth Bender }  
George Bender } George Bender }  
R. L. Baker & Jacob Henrici Trustees } R. L. Baker & Jacob Henrici Trustees }

**Lizzie's Indenture Contract of January 12, 1865.** For an unknown reason, her sister Mathilde's contract was drawn up four months later. They spent their childhoods at the Society from 1865 to 1876.

THIS INDENTURE

Made the 12<sup>th</sup> day of January in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty five. Witnesseth, That Elizabeth Bender... aged seven years nine months and twenty one days, by and with the consent of her Father George Bender hath put, and by these presents doth voluntary put herself an Apprentice to the Trustees of the Harmony Society... with them to serve after the manner of an Apprentice, from the date of these presents, until she said Elizabeth Bender arrives at the full age of eighteen years; during which term the said Apprentice the said masters faithfully shall serve in all lawful business, according to her power, wit and ability, honestly, orderly and obediently in all things demean herself towards her said masters during said term. And R.L. Baker & Jacob Henrici Trustees the said masters doth for themselves their successors, heirs, executors and administrators, covenant and grant to and with the said Apprentice, that they the said Elisabeth the said Apprentice in the art and

mystery of a Housekeeping shall and will teach and instruct; or cause to be taught and instructed in the best manner that they can; also, during all the said term shall and will provide and allow unto the said Apprentice, competent and sufficient meat, drink, washing, lodging, and learn her to read and write. and all other things necessary and fit for an Apprentice. And at the end of said term, shall and will deliver to the said Elisabeth 2 suits of clothes, one of which to be new, also a Bed.

In Witness Whereof, The parties have hereunto interchangeably set their hands, and affixed their seals, the day and year first above written.

SEALED AND DELIVERED  
IN PRESENCE OF

*Daniel Schreiber*

*Elisabeth "X" (her mark) Bender<sup>11</sup>*  
*George Bender*  
*Baker and Henrici Trustees*

On March 9, 1874, when he was 21, John received a letter of recommendation from Harmony Trustee Jacob Henrici, wishing him well as he was intending to travel to join his uncle Johann Bär, who immigrated to Wisconsin in the 1850s and there established a furniture business in the town of Neosho, near Milwaukee. At the time, Lizzie was 16.

A month later John wrote to Henrici to inform him that he made it safely to Wisconsin, but that his luggage was delayed. (Some things never change.) John remained in Neosho for two years and there learned the cabinet and furniture making trade from his uncle.

John returned to the Pittsburgh area in 1875 or 1876. I assume that he was anticipating Lizzie's release from her indenture in March of 1875 at the age of 18. They married on December 12, 1876, at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, in the "South Hills," directly across the Monongahela River from downtown Pittsburgh.

After he left the Harmony Society, John was listed in the Pittsburgh City Directory as a carpenter. In subsequent directories from 1877 through 1897 he is listed as a "cabinet maker" at various locations, mostly on Spring Hill.



*Nelson, Keenan & Dollhopf Co, ad from the Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette, Friday, May 15, 1903, page 3,*

In 1898 he started the company "Dollhopf & Platz, Cabinet Makers," with a business address at 632 Penn Avenue in Pittsburgh. In 1903 he launched a new furniture business: "Nelson, Keenan, and Dollhopf Co.," specializing in "made to order, reupholstered, repaired, or refinished furniture."

"Let's talk it over...that's our business" was their catchphrase; they were located at the intersection of 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Brady Street, near the Brady Street Bridge.

He left Nelson, Keenan, and Dollhopf, in 1909, when Eugene Keenan, one of the partners, died of a stroke at the age of 33. John continued for a while pursuing business on his own – the letterhead of his 1910 business stationery read:

"John Dollhopf, Cabinet Maker, Repairing, Refinishing, and Upholstering – Antique Furniture Repairing a Specialty."

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<sup>11</sup> Elisabeth signed with an "X" because she could not yet write her name.



By 1916 he had joined, according to the city directory of 1916, the Dauler, Close, and Johns Furniture Company of Pittsburgh, Pa. In 1920 he is listed as an employee of a department store, perhaps the same Dauler, Close Furniture business.<sup>12</sup>

During the years 1895 to 1910 he appeared to have enjoyed a modicum of financial success, and an energetic professional and social life. The 1900 Census indicated that he owned his house free of a mortgage.



*The German United Evangelical Independent Church of Spring Hill, built in 1902. It was located on Rhine Street, four blocks from where John and Lizzie lived on Iona Street. This picture was taken after the roof had collapsed. It was razed by the City of Pittsburgh in 2010.*

In 1902 he was a founding member of the German United Evangelical Independent Church of Spring Hill, located on Rhine Street, a few blocks from his house. (I have heard the story that he donated the stained-glass window above the altar.) The church conducted services in German until the 1930s, but as the German population moved to the suburbs of Pittsburgh – many to Ross Township and the North Hills – the congregation dwindled. It was dissolved in the late 1980s and the building was abandoned. It was razed shortly after the roof collapsed in 2010.

He was elected a director of the Spring Hill Premium Building and Loan Association of Allegheny City in December of 1904, and shortly thereafter was elected to the board of the German Literary Society.

In the late 1880s and 1890s, Spring Hill – named for its many springs – was a booming Pittsburgh

suburb of German shop keepers and tradesmen.<sup>13</sup> It is hard for us to imagine such an idyll since today it is a struggling inner-city neighborhood, but in the day it was an enclave of the new homes of mostly German immigrants and their large families seeking to escape the confines of the city – to live the American dream.

Apparently, it was *the* place to raise kids. According to the 1900 Census, there were more than 30 children living on Iona Street, where John and Lizzie built their house, and Iona Street was only two blocks long!

What was Lizzie doing during this time?

Contributing to the population boom. In the year 1900, when she was 43, there were eight children living at home ranging in age from five to 22. (She had given birth to ten, but two died as infants.) And she still wasn't finished – she would have two more children, twins, born in 1901 when she was 44!

Johann Heinrich "Henry," the first of their 12 children, was born eight months to the day after they were married in August of 1876. I am not entirely certain where they were living at the time. In the Pittsburgh City Directory John is listed at 93 Third Street, located on the North Side of Pittsburgh near the intersection of Third and East Street (the area was razed in 1976 to make way for Interstate 279). In 1880 they lived at 118 High Street, near Spring Garden Avenue, in the valley between Spring Hill and Troy Hill.

By 1887 they were living at 22 Iona Street in a house built by John. Lizzie would live there for 64 years.

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<sup>12</sup> The Dauler, Close, and Johns Furniture Company was a notable manufacturer of fine furniture, and their work today can be found on the antique market. I have been looking for a signed piece of furniture to no avail (yet!).

<sup>13</sup> Note that Spring Hill was part of Allegheny City, a separately incorporated town until it was annexed by Pittsburgh in 1907. All of what is today known as the North Side was Allegheny City.

Her children:

1. **Johann Heinrich** (12 Aug 1877 – 08 Dec 1935, 58), also known as “Henry” or “HJ,” married Wilhelmina “Minnie” Hildenbrand in the same church his parents were married, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church on the south side of Pittsburgh. He was named after his mother’s brother Johann Heinrich Bender.<sup>14</sup> They had three children: Henrietta (died at four months), Viola Anna, and Pearl. HJ was a butcher for A&P and died at the age of 58 from cirrhosis of the liver.
2. **William Frederick** (17 Jul 1879 – 22 Jan 1919, 39), “Will,” worked in his father’s shop until about 1907, when he left town, abandoning his wife, Margaret “Maude” Schlotz, and their four-year-old daughter Edna Elizabeth. He apparently traveled west because he died in Sacramento, CA at the age of 39. Maude filed for abandonment and divorce in absentia in August of 1917.
3. **Johanna Elizabeth** (22 Dec 1881–08 Nov 1963, 81), “Jennie,” married Richard Schulz, a motor inspector for Westinghouse Electric. They had four children: Ralph, Albert, Esther, and Raymond, and lived in Chalfant, East Pittsburgh, near the original Westinghouse factory.
4. **John Nicholas** (28 Jan 1884 – 16 Sep 1915, 31), “John” or “JN,” never married, lived with his parents, and worked as an upholsterer in his father’s shop. He died at age 31 of tuberculosis.
5. **George** (06 Nov 1886 – 11 Jan 1927, 40), married Viola Ott, and had one daughter, Dolores. For several years he lived at 1606 Walz Street, near his parent’s home on Iona Street, in a two-family house that was owned by his younger brother Edward. He worked on the loading dock at Burrell Scientific; a business begun in 1917 and located in the same building as his father’s furniture shop. He brought his brother Edward to work with him on the loading dock, and Edward remained with the company for his entire career. George was also a fireman and was tragically killed in a fire truck accident on January 11, 1927. The truck hit a construction ditch, he was thrown from the front seat hitting a pole, his skull crushed. Later investigations by the newspaper revealed the truck had faulty steering.
6. **Edward** (18 Mar 1889 – 26 Jul 1982, 93), known as “Eddie,” our grandfather, married Susanna Born. In the 1910 Census he was living at home with his parents; his occupation was listed as “helper in a blacksmith shop.” He later spent his entire career working as a salesman and office manager for Burrell Scientific, where his brother George had been a shipping clerk. They had five children: Edward, Ruth, Lois, Roland, and LaVerne. He and Susan moved their family to the “suburbs” of West View, Ross Township, in 1926.
7. **Albert** (10 Aug 1891 – 28 Sep 1957, 66), “Al,” was the black sheep of the family, and according to family stories and newspaper accounts, an alcoholic. He never married and lived with his mother until 1947, the year she was committed to the Woodville Asylum. Al, who played the piano and had a great voice, was a veteran of WWI at the age of 26, serving as a machine gunner in the Battle of the Meuse-Argonne in the fall of 1918.

According to his brother Ed, Albert thought the government “owed him a living” – a significant pension – because of his military service. He held a variety of jobs after the war – meat shop salesman, mover, truck driver – but he spent a significant amount of time unemployed. He served at least two stints in prison, the first in 1930 for disorderly conduct. In June of 1947 he was sentenced to prison for beating his mother, Lizzie, who at the time was 90 years old, blind, and crippled (apparently, he caused the crippling). The newspaper reported that the reason he hit her is that he couldn’t stand her coughing. Shortly after the beating Lizzie was admitted to the Woodville Asylum in Collier Township where she died four years later. Her house, 22 Iona Street, where Albert supposedly returned after his stay in prison, was in dilapidated condition, and was condemned and torn down by the City of Pittsburgh in 1954. The story is told that to settle his gambling debts, he sold off the entire contents of the house, including all the furniture that his father – the furniture maker –

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<sup>14</sup> It was a German custom to name one’s child after the godparent. See *Blog 17: Naming Conventions*. Lizzie and John did this for their first four children, apparently dropping the custom with their fifth.

made. A farmer came to the house, loaded his wagon with the furniture, and left. Albert died three years later in 1957.<sup>15</sup>

8. **Emma** (04 Oct 1893 – 08 Jan 1894, 3 months), died as an infant.



**Dollhopf Family (?) c. 1905 – 1910.** I do not know if a picture exists of the John and Elizabeth Dollhopf family. This picture is of a large gathering with children at a location known as “Haslage’s,” a park area on Haselage Avenue on Spring Hill, a few blocks from Iona Street. John Dollhopf is circled. It would seem likely that Lizzie and at least a few of their 10 children and six grandchildren (at the time) would appear in this photo. I would guess the picture is c. 1910 when Johann was 58 years old. Is Lizzie in this picture?

Can you identify the rest of the Dollhopf family? Following are John and Lizzie’s children (their grandchildren in parentheses) and their ages in 1910. Henry Dollhopf, 33 and wife Minnie, 29 (Viola, 3, Pearl, 1); Will Dollhopf, 31, and wife Maude, 33 (Edna, 7); Jennie Dollhopf Schulz, 29, and husband Richard, 32, (Ralph, 5 (he died around this time), Albert, 4, Esther, 1); John Nicholas Dollhopf, 26; George Dollhopf, 24, Edward Dollhopf, 21; Albert Dollhopf, 19; Elanora Dollhopf, 15; and Flora Dollhopf, 8. I wish I knew who all these people were....zX&\*&

9. **Elanora Edna** (16 Apr 1895 – 26 Dec 1982, 87), married John Mohr and moved into the house at 20 Iona St. next door to Johann and Lizzie. Her four children – Catherine, Lawrence, Helen and Robert – were born there, as was Kathleen Kenny, her granddaughter, who lived there until she married in 1958.

10. **Louis Frederico** (16 Dec 1897 – 27 Dec 1897, 11 days). Died after 11 days.

<sup>15</sup> This story was told to me by Lois Dollhopf Harris in 1999.

11. **Flora Helena** (12 Apr 1901 – 15 Apr 1996, 95), never married, presumably lived at 22 Iona Street until it was torn down. In the 1920s she took a job as a candy packer at the Clark Bar factory on the North Side behind what is now PNC Baseball Park. Her niece, LaVerne Dollhopf, Edward's youngest daughter, visited Flora in a nursing home in the 1980s, and Flora greeted her with, "I hate your father Eddie, and I hate you too," and immediately kicked her out. Alas, one big happy family....
12. **Ralph Louis** (12 Apr 1901 – 12 Apr 1901, 1 day), Flora's twin, died shortly after birth.

The years 1890 to 1910 must have been the salad days for John and Lizzie – new businesses, new home in the suburbs, founder of a new church, an active civic life. After he left Nelson, Keenan, and Dollhopf, the following years proved to be far more difficult for them, at least financially.

In a letter of 1910, addressed to George Holl, his boyhood friend from Mistelbach whom he followed to the Harmony Society in 1871, John wrote:

Business in Pittsburgh has been pretty slow for almost the past four years. Everything is so expensive. Meat, for example, which one used to buy for \$.10-\$.15 per pound has risen to \$.30 cents and everything else in like manner.<sup>16</sup>

In a follow-up letter of 1911:

Dear friend, with this number of people [referring to his ten children] you can imagine that it is impossible to amass wealth, but I am content with what I have. Dear friend, I have no other news to share, except to say that business is slow, and everything is expensive. They say there will be many improvements here in Pittsburgh by next year, but I am waiting to see if that's true.<sup>17</sup>

But...he seemed to be the optimist:

Dear friend, I along with my wife and children are all healthy and content so far, thank God, and hope that you are the same. Health is the greatest thing in the world, although mankind doesn't understand that. When they are healthy, most people want to possess millions of gold dollars and keep their descendants thousands of years in plenty, so they don't have to work. But the Almighty makes his own judgment on that.<sup>18</sup>

In 1922 Lizzie's mother Barbara Mai Bender died at the Hudson County Insane Asylum in New Jersey at the age of 90, apparently alone and destitute. Lizzie was 65 years old when she died. Did Lizzie know? Did she even know that her mother had been living all those years? The "story" told to me by Lois Dollhopf was that Barbara and George died in a house fire. Was that the story that Lizzie understood to be true? Maybe she never knew....

John died on March 28, 1934, age 81, at 5:45 in the afternoon. My father Roland Dollhopf was told that he fell down the stairs in his house and hit his head (22 Iona Street was built on the side of a hill and had a long staircase). His death certificate, however, indicated the cause of death as *chronic myocarditis* (heart disease).

The informant for John's death certificate was his son Albert – curiously not his wife Lizzie. Why?

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<sup>16</sup> These letters, addressed to George Holl, were discovered by Scott Holl, George's great-grandson. Scott took the time and effort to locate me through Ancestry.com and sent copies of the correspondence. As it turns out, Scott is a distant cousin, and is a professional genealogist working at the St. Louis Library.

<sup>17</sup> Actually, this did indeed turn out to be true. After Allegheny City was annexed by Pittsburgh in 1907, plans were proposed to improve the roads, sewers, and utilities. We have pictures of the neighborhood in 1911 documenting the substantial street improvements.

<sup>18</sup> To think if he had made those millions of gold dollars, none of us today would have to work!

Here is a sad fact: When asked for the purpose of providing information for the death certificate, Albert did not know the name of his father's father or mother, or the town in Germany where his father was born. Albert did not know his own grandparents. Either this was profound ignorance on the part of Albert, or perhaps his father never told him.

In the spring of 1947, Lizzie, age 90, blind and crippled, was still living at 22 Iona Street with unmarried Albert. Because she was coughing all the time, and because he was drinking all the time, Albert beat her, apparently on numerous occasions. Albert was sentenced for the abuse on June 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year. Following is the newspaper account from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:

*Man Who Slapped Mother, 93, Jailed*

For slapping his 93-year-old blind and crippled mother, Albert Dollhopf, 56, of Iona Street was sentenced to 45 days in jail by Judge Malcolm McDonald in criminal court yesterday. The charges against Dollhopf were brought by the Humane Society on complaint of neighbors, who said the defendant had frequently abused his mother. A sister of Dollhopf, Flora, testified that Dollhopf was drunk and was annoyed by his mother's coughing. The charge against Dollhopf was simple assault and the sentence given is the maximum under the law."

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Tuesday, June 24, 1947

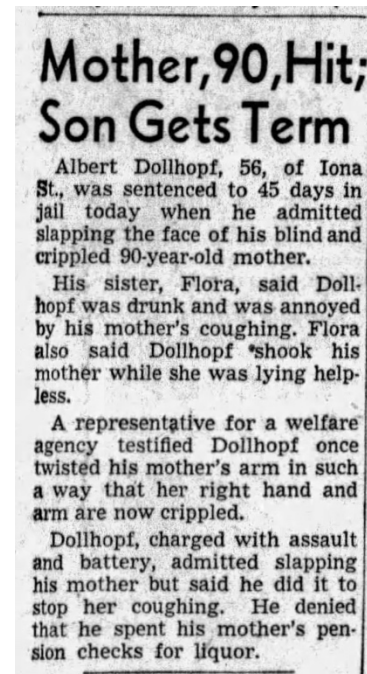
If the neighbors were complaining of the abuse to the Humane Society, it must have been a very sad situation.

Although I don't know for certain, 46-year-old unmarried Flora was likely living with them, and I assume, or rather hope, that she was caring for her blind and crippled mother. Flora's older sister Elanora, 51, lived next door at 20 Iona Street with her husband John Mohr and their daughter Catherine Elanora Mohr and husband Vincent Kenny....so at least there were family members nearby.

We don't know the exact dates of the abuse, or when it began, but apparently the family, or the Humane Society, decided that Lizzie could not remain at home any longer. Three days before Albert was sentenced, on or about June 20, 1947, Lizzie was admitted to the Allegheny County Hospital for the Insane, also known as the Woodville State Mental Hospital, in Collier Township.<sup>19</sup>

Why didn't any of her other living children take her in? Living at the time were Jennie, Edward, Elenora, and Flora.

Originally founded as the Allegheny County Home for the Poor in 1854, the Woodville Hospital was owned and operated by the county until May 31, 1939, when it was taken over by the State of Pennsylvania along with 11 other county owned mental hospitals.<sup>20</sup>



*The Pittsburgh Sun  
Telegraph, June 23 1947.*

<sup>19</sup> We know the exact date because her death certificate stated she resided at the Woodville State Mental Hospital for four years, two months, and 11 days.

<sup>20</sup> When the state took control of the hospital, the Allegheny County Institutional District continued to manage the "poor" section of this facility. This arrangement continued until 1958 when the state assumed complete control of all administrative duties. In 1983 the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare proposed closing the hospital, but instead closed the much smaller Dixmont State Hospital. The hospital was finally closed by the state in 1992. At the time it closed the hospital housed 460 patients – each patient was evaluated and either sent to Mayview State Hospital or placed into community care programs.

The hospital had a ward for the mentally insane and a section for poor people. I don't know where Lizzie resided; she might have been declared "insane" because of alcoholism. Otherwise, she would have been declared indigent.

She remained at the Hospital for a little over four years until she died on August 31, 1951, at age 94. The brief newspaper obituary reported that she was survived by three daughters, two sons, 13 grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren, and 3 great-great-grandchildren.

Did she die lonely and forgotten, like her mother Barbara?

LaVerne Dollhopf, who was 20 years old in 1951, remembers visiting her grandmother only once in her lifetime. (She remembered because the house did not have an indoor bathroom, and she had to use an outhouse.) My father Roland never remembered meeting his grandmother, even once. He was 23 when she died. Did any of her 13 grandchildren, or 20 great grandchildren, visit her?

I was told by Roland and LaVerne that they never celebrated holidays – including Thanksgiving and Christmas – with extended family at 22 Iona Street (at least not with the Edward Dollhopf family). This was not a close family.

Lois Dollhopf revealed that they were a family deeply divided by alcoholism – teetotalers vs. the sots and they suffered many bitter disputes.

Perhaps a sign of poverty, or of neglect, Lizzie was buried along with John and six of their children in unmarked graves in St. Paul's Cemetery on Troy Hill, Pittsburgh.



Allegheny County Hospital for Insane—Woodville—Front View.

*Allegheny County Hospital for Insane, aka Woodville State Mental Hospital, originally founded as the Allegheny County Home for the Poor in 1854. It was taken over by the State of Pennsylvania in 1939. Lizzie was committed here in June of 1947, shortly after she was assaulted by her son Albert. According to the newspaper account of the assault, Lizzie was blind and crippled at the time. The facility was closed in 1992 and has since been demolished. At its peak it housed 3,200 patients.*

Their house was condemned by the city in 1954 and razed. It remains an empty lot to this day.

Lizzie's twin sister Mathilde, also an alcoholic, eerily suffered a similar fate. Four years after her husband Frederick Pflaumer died in 1925, she was committed to the Mayview State Mental Hospital (originally known as the Marshalsea Poor Farm) in Bridgeville, PA. She spent the last 18 years of her life at this mental hospital, dying on March 27, 1947, due in part to "alcohol psychosis."

Did she too die alone and forgotten?

From the evidence it is likely that twins Lizzie and Mathilde inherited AUD (Alcoholism Use Disorder), which runs in families. Genetics indeed plays a role, abetted by environmental factors. There were other known alcoholics in the family of Lizzie's mother, Barbara. (Barbara also had a twin sister, Margarethe, so twins ran in the family as well.)

Barbara's brother owned a saloon in Newark and among her siblings there were arrests for disorderly conduct, numerous divorces, abandonments, name changes – not definitive proof of alcoholism, but strong indicators. There are Mai descendants working on this story, but perhaps we will never know the true extent of the disease.



**Woodville State Hospital in 1952.** Lizzie was committed to this hospital in 1947 and died there in 1951. In 1952 the Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph ran a photo exposing the overcrowded conditions. This was the men's ward, which was so crowded that men had to go to bed in shifts so that staff could squeeze beds together once their occupants settled in for the night. Did anyone visit Lizzie? <https://pgdigs.tumblr.com/page/7>

An ignominious ending – widowed, beaten, crippled, blind, committed to an insane asylum, house condemned and razed, buried in an unmarked grave.

I am sad that they are buried in an unmarked grave.

Did no one care? Could no one afford a marker?

For heaven's sake, there are *eight* Dollhopfs buried at this grave site.

Lizzie met a fate similar to her mother, who was condemned to the Hudson County Insane Asylum in New Jersey, and buried in an unmarked grave. Both were victims, perhaps, of a disease over which they had little or no control.

I prefer to imagine John and Lizzie in happier days, in that era appropriately named the Gay Nineties. Boom times for America and the Dollhopf family.

John and Lizzie – an immigrant peasant and his wife, daughter of immigrant peasants, pursuing the American dream – twelve children, a mortgage free house of their own in the suburbs, a neighborhood full of children, his own incorporated business, a director of the bank, founder of a church, active in the social life of the community.

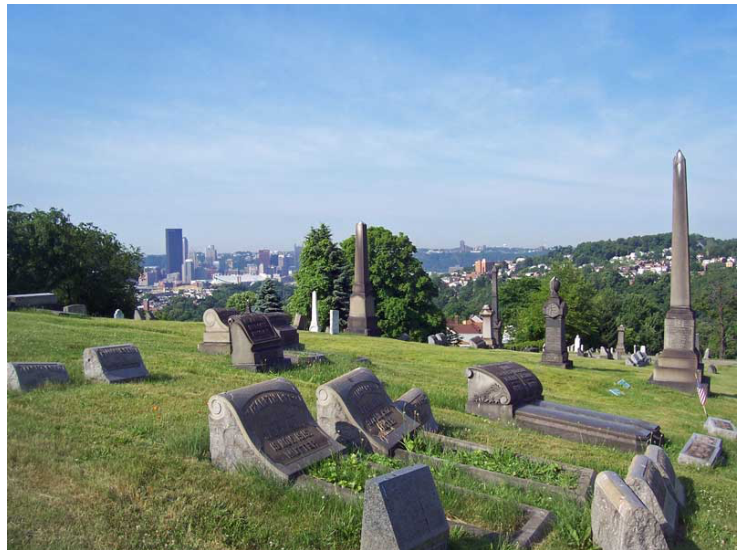
I believe that if their parents had ever known, they would have been proud.

They were the first generation to rise from medieval feudalism. Their German ancestors had been tied to the land for centuries.

How grateful I am to have inherited their hopes and dreams.

Next in the series on Dollhopf women:  
Grandmother Susanna Born

Mark R. Dollhopf  
New Haven, CT  
January 2, 2023.



***St. Paul's (aka Weithershausen) Cemetery, Troy Hill, Pittsburgh is located at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Mt. Troy Road in Reserve Township. The Cemetery is atop a hill overlooking downtown Pittsburgh.***



***John and Lizzie Dollhopf, and six of their children, are buried in unmarked graves in the space between Hans Dollhopf on the left and Marjo Anderson Dollhopf on the right. August 4, 2019.***