Dollhopf

600 Years in the Baking

Pandemics and War. A Tale of Dollhopf Survival.

If you have been affected by the COVID-19 virus, if a family member, or someone close to you, is sick, or has died, our thoughts and prayers are with you. If you are grieving, we grieve with you. That's what families do. If you are on the front lines – a "first responder" as many of our family members are – thank you for your life-saving work.

The coronavirus pandemic is a defining moment of our time. It has already killed more people than the wars in Vietnam and Korea. *Combined*. The unemployment rate is the worst since the Great Depression. Schools are closed. Businesses are failing. Lethal at worst, inconvenient at best, stressing and depressing.

This is bad. But our grandparents endured worse.

As we are confined in our homes, faced with the tedium of homeschooling, telecommuting, masking, and scrounging for toilet paper, I think of a time when *all* of our Dollhopf ancestors were fighting for their lives. Not just a few, all of them. Nowhere to "shelter in place," no food, no money. Toilet paper hadn't been invented. A disease that wiped out entire families in a matter of days. Invading armies who looted, raped, and murdered. Neighbors who did the same.

I've been tracking Dollhopf misery in Mistelbach since the peasant farmer Hans Dollhopf obtained a small plot of land there in the year 1430. For 600 hundred years Dollhopfs have endured calamity, but mostly escaped devastation. Except for once.

This past century for the Dollhopfs has been relatively good. To my knowledge no family member has been killed in any war (with the notable exception of our German cousins in WWI and WWII). We have relatives who served, and continue to serve, in the armed forces, but thankfully no casualties. We did lose loved ones to the Spanish Flu[1] pandemic of 1918, notably the Conrad Dollhopf family. Conrad, who also lived on Spring Hill, was a cousin of our great grandfather. Mother, father, and son died within days of each other.

The pandemic that our Dollhopf ancestors faced in 1634 could not have been contained by wearing a mask; it was spread by fleas carried by rats – rats that thrived in the wake of war.

Before the 1900s the Dollhopfs bore the brunt of peasant hardships including infant mortality, poverty, disease, war, and oppression. But there would be nothing comparable, as devastating to our family, as the Thirty Years War. Prior to that war there were numerous Dollhopf families in Mistelbach. Only one family survived.

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[1] The Spanish Flu did not originate in Spain. It started on a pig farm – animal to human viral migration – in Haskell, Kansas. It should have been called the American Flu. It is called the Spanish Flu because the Spanish government was the first to raise the alarm and publicize the danger. No other country in WWI wanted to be responsible.

The Thirty Years War largely escapes our attention in the US. It was fought four hundred years ago, from 1618 to 1648, "somewhere else." We bear no scars of that conflict in this country. Think of the devastation of our American Civil War, and memorials to it, and you begin to understand the indelible mark that the Thirty Years War left on Germany.

In a German poll taken Immediately after WWII, Germans *still* identified the Thirty Years War as the most devastating conflict in their history. Germany lost between 10 to 12% of its population in WWII; in the Thirty Years War it lost 20%. In central Germany – specifically the Franconian region that includes Mistelbach – the total was 50%. Mistelbach lost *more* than 50%.

Indeed, Mistelbach was close to the epicenter of that war – Bohemia, today the Czech Republic. Mistelbach was situated on the fault line between the tectonic forces of religion, politics, and economics. It was caught, as one contemporary author wrote, "between the anvil and the hammer." Our ancestors were not combatants, they were victims. Trampled for the spoils of war, they then had to defend themselves against a pandemic so severe that more than half of their family, friends, and neighbors would die. So severe that Mistelbach was mostly abandoned for decades.

I can't begin to address the full panorama of the Thirty Years War. Historians have devoted entire careers to its study and analysis. I will, however, localize the conflict to Mistelbach and the effect that it had on our great

Plundering and Burning a Village. *This is a contemporary etching of the Thirty Years War by Jacques Callot. It was one of a series of 18 etchings known as the "The Miseries and Misfortunes of War," arguably one the best-known set of prints produced in the 17th century. Half of the population of Mistelbach – our great-grandparents – perished. https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/DO10.1963.11/*

grandparents.

There are many excellent histories of the Thirty Years War, one of the first and most famous is the German philosopher Friedrich Schiller's *The History of the Thirty Years War*, written in 1790. It is still available at amazon.com.

For our first-hand accounts we are mostly indebted to Pastor Stephan Böhner, who served the Mistelbach parish of St. Bartholomew from 1629 to 1638, the height of the war years. He later served as the Archdeacon (dean of

priests) in the larger neighboring town of Bayreuth in 1652.[2] In 1655 he is listed as superintendent and "court preacher" in Bayreuth, a position of high authority. The Mistelbach church books contain his extensive notes about the war.[3]

Another important source for this research was *Mistelbach: die Chronik eines Hummelgaudorfes* (Mistelbach: the Chronicle of a Hummelgau Village) by Stephan Hartnagel, 2003. Stephan lives in Mistelbach (but shockingly is not related to us).

The Thirty Years War was fought from 1618 to 1648, although arguably these dates are more arbitrary than not, more for the convenience of historians. There were more than a *hundred* wars fought in Europe in the 1600s. Conflagrations large and small flared up everywhere there was land to be conquered, treasure to be stolen, religious convictions to die for, and egos to be fed.

Today we think of war mostly as two-sided – good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, us vs. them. In wars that we remember most closely, the "sides" were easily identifiable: North vs. South, Allies vs. Axis, US vs. North Vietnam, et al.

The Thirty Years War, however, was a giant free-for-all. The Peace of Westphalia, which marked the end of the war in 1648, took more than seven years to negotiate and included representatives from 109 regional kingdoms and principalities. At one time or another they had all been in the fight. The War engulfed scores of locally led armies, sometimes on the same side, sometimes on opposing sides, and many times switching sides! And these were just the 109 principalities who showed up for peace talks.

The Thirty Years War is often narrowly depicted as a struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism. Religious intolerance was an important trigger, but it was by no means the only cause of the war. It was a fight over land, dynasties, sovereignty, and vengeance. It was ***not*** a holy war fought by the peasantry, or by the "citizen" soldiers of one country against another. It ***was*** a war fought by excessively savage mercenaries, recruited from all corners of Europe. It was war for hire. The spoils of war went to those princes and military commanders who could afford to pay mercenaries – and they paid for them mostly by extorting peasants and plundering their villages.

And therein lies the reason for Dollhopf suffering.

Prelude to War

In 1632, at the height of the Thirty Years War, Mistelbach was a farming hamlet of 35 houses and 259 people. The houses and barns, in typical medieval fashion, were clustered around the parish church. The farm fields surrounded the village, interspersed with meadows and forested areas.[4] Today the village retains much of its medieval character, although many of the fields have given way to suburban homes.

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[2] As a reminder, Bayreuth was the regional "capital" of this part of Franconia. In the 1600s it had about 250 houses compared to Mistelbach's 35. Mistelbach shares a mile-long border with Bayreuth. The area was part of the Holy Roman Empire, a loose confederation of hundreds of small kingdoms.

[3] A trivia note: Pastor Stephan Böhner's first baptism as a Pastor was Johannes (aka Hanss) Dollhopf, our 8th great grandfather. His father Cuntz was the only Dollhopf to survive the war. Pastor Böhner's entry in the church book of 1629: "On March 9 I performed my office as a baptizer for the first time, and baptized Conrad Dolhopff's first-born son by the name of Johannes, who was born at 7 o'clock in the morning. Requested to the Christian work of the Holy baptism was Johann Hagen, alias "der Schwarze". [Meaning Johann Hagen served as godfather.]

[4] This is different from farms in America, where the houses and barns are situated on, or next to, the farmer's fields.

The church of St. Bartholomew, in the center of the village, sits atop a high hill overlooking the valley through which the Mistelbach stream flows. Its steeple can be seen for miles.

In the Middle Ages the valley had four mills (*mühle*) powered by the stream – the Dorfmühle, the Zeckenmühle, the Schnorleinsmühle, and the Poppenmühle. The mills, which produced flour for bread (some were sawmills as well), were the vital economic engines – the "factories" – of their day. Peasants worked *and* lived in the mills; the mill was both factory and home. In the course of 600 years, we had great-grandparents who were born and lived in each of these mills.

Mistelbach also had a castle with a substantial farm of its own. The local family of knights who owned the castle, the *von Mistelbachs*, died out in the late 1500s. In 1632 the castle was owned by the Margrave in Bayreuth. The peasants had to farm the castle land in addition to their own and pay taxes to the Margrave.[5]

All was peaceful, more or less.

A photo of Mistelbach appearing much as it might have in 1632. St. Bartholomew is in the center, the Mistelbach stream flows through the valley along the tree line immediately in the background behind the church. The Dollhopf house is in the lower right-hand corner, the second-floor windows lit by the sun. You can see the roof and chimney of the small kitchen addition that was added in 1971. The village mill, owned by the Dollhopfs from 1499 to 1649, is barely visible in the valley just above the right rear rooftop of the church. You will have to zoom in to see the building with smoke coming out of the chimney. In front of the church is the church barn, and to the immediate right of the church, in the shadow, is the three-story schoolhouse.

It had been 63 years since the signing of the Treaty of Augsburg in 1555, in which Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, established the principle of *cuius regio, eius religio, or "*whose realm, his religion." This principle meant that local noble rulers like the Margrave in Bayreuth could determine for themselves whether their villages were to be Lutheran or Catholic. Charles V did not dictate the religion of his kingdom, a seemingly magnanimous gesture,

[5] A margrave was a rank of nobility above a count, but below a duke.

but one that wouldn't last long. In 1528, Georg the Pious, the Margrave of Bayreuth and "ruler" of Mistelbach, made the switch to Lutheranism. (The peasants didn't decide.) And so the small Mistelbach parish of St. Bartholomew became "Lutheran," a mere ten years after Martin Luther nailed the 95 theses to the door of the castle church in Wittenberg.[6] A relatively quick transition!

In the year the church switched, Cuntz Dollhopf, our 12th great-grandfather, owned the *Dorfmühl*e (village mill). The mill was located a stone's throw from the church. "Cuntz" (pronounced *koontz*) is a nickname for Conrad.[7] Cuntz inherited the mill from his father, Cuntz Übellein Dollhopf, who inherited it from his father, Übellein Dietrich Dollhopf, who acquired it 1499. The mill was owned by the family for 150 years until it was abandoned in the Thirty Years War.

A photo of the Dorfmühle (village mill) taken before WWI. Our Dollhopf ancestors owned the mill from 1499 until 1649. It was acquired in 1499 by our 14x-great-grandfather Übellein Dietrich Dollhopf. After 1649 it was owned by our maternal line ancestors including the Neukam and Schiller families. I don't know when the structure you see in this photo was built, likely in the 1600s. Our ancestors both lived and worked in the mill. The Mistelbach stream flows immediately behind the house. It turned a waterwheel affixed to the right side of the building. To the left of the mill is the barn. The family that currently lives in the now remodeled house has displayed artifacts from the mill on the rear wall of the barn. See Appendix B for photos of the building today.

[6] Wittenberg is located in Saxony, about 170 miles north of Mistelbach.

[7] For English speakers *Cuntz* is an unfortunate part of speech called a "false friend." In linguistics, a false friend is a word in a different language that looks or sounds similar to a word in English but differs significantly in meaning.

The year 1528 is still 100 years before the Thirty Years War, but it is important to our story to understand the extent of the Dollhopf family in Mistelbach.

According to church records of the time, mill owner Cuntz was a "pious and industrious" man, who also held the position of *Gotteshaus Master* (God's house master), meaning church warden, or property manager. In those days the church (in addition to the castle) owned farmland, and the peasants had to work that land as well as their own. The Gotteshaus Master managed the church buildings, farm, and financial records. Cuntz was manager in the years when the church began keeping baptism, marriage, and burial records, starting in 1555 following the decree of the Council of Trent.

The village mill must have been a lively place in the 1500s. Cuntz, whose grandfather had purchased the mill, had four children, *at least* 30 grandchildren, and scores of great-grandchildren. I don't have an exact count of the great-grandchildren, but his oldest son Georg had 19 of his own, so let's put the estimate of great-grand kids at about 50.

Cuntz's four children:

1. George *der Ältere* (the older) (1539-1600), who had 10 children.[8]
2. Cuntz (~1545-1581), our 11x-great-grandfather, who had 6 children.[9]
3. George *der Mitte* (the middle) (~1550-?), who had no known children of his own.
4. George *der Junge* (the younger) (1556-1623), who had 14 children.

I could list all 30 of Cuntz's grandchildren, but I'm sure your eyes would glaze over. (Most of them were named Cuntz or Johann, anyway.) Let's just say that there were a lot of Dollhopfs running around Mistelbach at the turn of the century in the year 1600.

Of these four sons, 30 grandchildren, and scores of great-grandchildren (remember, this is village of only 259 people) only one Dollhopf family survived the Thirty Years War.

Our great-grandfather John from Pittsburgh has about 40 living descendants today. Imagine if we were all wiped out by the coronavirus, save for one family.

Here's what happened to Cuntz's four children:

- George *der Ältere* became the Gotteshaus Master succeeding his father and served in that position for 30 years. He was also described as a pious and God-fearing man. (I have come to recognize that most of the Gotteshaus Masters were described as "pious and God-fearing." Came with the job, I guess.) He married Magdalena Hüter on September 26, 1564. Of his ten children, only two boys survived to adulthood – Hans and Georg. Hans left Mistelbach and Georg stayed, but died of the plague. None of his ten children, or 19 grandchildren, survived in Mistelbach. The church records tell the story of Georg's death on November 6, 1600:

  "When he was riding home from Bayreuth he fell from his horse, the horse ran away; he, however, was found dead in the field in the morning of November 6, and he had been a pious and Godfearing man. He was Christian-like and properly buried in the ground on November 8."

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[8] *Der Ältere, Mitte, and Junge* were "nicknames" that were actually a part of the church records. There had to be *some* way to tell them apart.

[9] The church at the time recorded only the baptisms of the three sons named Georg. For a number of years, it was assumed the George *der Ältere* was our 11x-great-grandfather, but research of the civil land records in 2017 revealed that there was a fourth son, Cuntz, who as it turns out, was our actual 11x-great-grandfather.

- George *der Mitte* moved to Bayreuth and in 1579 married a woman named Kunigunda, who already had children. Her last name is not known. He did not have any children of his own.

- George *der Junge* married Barbara Hübner on June 26, 1577. It is not known exactly when his father Cuntz died, but this Georg, the youngest child, inherited the mill. In 1623, his son, yet another Cuntz, became owner. That Cuntz died during the war, childless. Georg *der Junge* and Barbara had 14 children, seven of whom died as children. None of the seven surviving to adulthood were alive in Mistelbach after 1648.

- Cuntz, our 11th great-grandfather, the second oldest son, inherited some fields from his father, and obviously decided to become a farmer. In the 1600s his sons and grandsons were tailors, so he might have been a tailor as well. Cuntz married Margaretha Gross on August 16, 1570, and they had six children. They might have had more save for the fact that Cuntz died on September 7, 1581 at age 31, less than a month after the birth of his sixth child. His wife, Margarethe, stuck with six young children, soon married another farmer, Hans Vogel.[10]

Of the six children, only his last – (also named) Cuntz Dollhopf, our 10th great-grandfather – would survive at least a portion of the war. During a raid in 1635 he burned to death in his barn.

[If you are having trouble keeping track of everyone because they're named Cuntz or Georg, I understand. I've drawn a chart in Appendix C to more clearly illustrate the relationships.]

And this Cuntz had only one child before he died, yet again another Cuntz, our 9th great-grandfather, the only Dollhopf of his generation to survive the war in Mistelbach.

What happened during this turbulent time?

The Thirty Years War

The Thirty Years War began in 1618 in Prague, only 166 miles from Mistelbach. Today, Prague is the capital of the Czech Republic. In 1618 it was the seat of the kingdom of Bohemia, a largely Protestant region that was ruled, oddly enough, by the Hapsburg Dynasty, which was Catholic. The Habsburgs did not force Catholicism on their subjects (remember the Treaty of Augsburg, above) until Ferdinand II was named King of Bohemia in 1617. He was a rigid proponent of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and immediately halted the construction of new Protestant churches in Bohemia, and began making noise about taking back the Protestant lands.

This, understandably, did not sit too well with certain members of the wealthy Protestant nobility. They decided to show up at 8:00 AM (the time was recorded for all posterity) on May 23, 1618 at the Chancellery in Prague to preempt a meeting of the Bohemian Assembly, and "discuss" their concerns.

Words led to words, and before you could say "all for one and one for all," the cry of the Protestants, the Protestants threw two of the Catholic Assemblymen and their secretary out of the third-floor window. Even though it was 70 feet high, they survived. According to Protestant accounts of the incident, they fell into a dung heap. According to the Catholic reports, they were caught by angels. (Real fake news.)

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[10] Cuntz's premature death threw us off the genealogy trail because the church records for the next several generations list all of his widow Margarthe's descendants as "Vogels," not Dollhopfs. We would have never been able to identify our Dollhopf ancestors before this era save for the fact that the pastor at this time, Christoph Haffner (pastor from 1577 to 1608), made note in the church books that the name of the children was actually Dollhopf, even though the subsequent baptisms and marriages were recorded as Vogels. Saved by the Pastor.

This act of defiance was known as the *Third Defenestration of Prague* (this happened twice before, go figure).[11]

This in turn did not sit well with the Catholic King Ferdinand. He recruited an army, the Protestants recruited an army, and before you could again say "all for one and one for all," eight million people were dead, half of central Germany.[12]

Over the next thirty years, countless battles were fought from the Mediterranean to the Baltic. Catholic against Protestant, Protestant against Catholic. Catholic against Catholic, Protestant against Protestant. In the end it was decidedly not about religion, it was about *realpolitik* – power, land, and wealth. The central prize was the land owned by the Church – about 15% of European land was owned by the Catholic Church. If you could force areas into converting to Protestantism, you could acquire that land. If you were Catholic, you wanted to keep it, or get it back. At least 109 small and large kingdoms formed and reformed alliances based mostly on who had the greatest likelihood of winning at any given time.

Important Battles

Even though the War started "next door" to Mistelbach, the initial battles were fought away from Mistelbach in northern and western Europe. But four major battles shifted the focus of the war back to Franconia, the region surrounding Mistelbach and Bayreuth. These four battles had dire consequences for our grandparents.

Battle of Alte Veste

In 1632, Albrecht von Wallenstein, a general of the Imperial (Catholic) Hapsburg army, was ordered by King Ferdinand to assemble his forces in Bohemia, immediately to the east of Mistelbach. He amassed an army of 43,500 men and *marched them through the Mistelbach* region on his way to Nürnberg, a major Franconian city 50 miles to the southwest of Mistelbach. There he prepared to do battle with the Protestant King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, who had marched his 44,500 men from, of all places, Sweden.

Why was the King of *Sweden* involved in this war?

For the first 12 years of the War, the Catholics – the Hapsburg Imperialists – mostly had the upper hand and appeared to be winning. This alarmed the Protestant factions, and the Swedes, being good Lutherans, were prepared to march 1,000 miles from Stockholm to defend the faith. But Adolphus and the Swedes needed help. And here is where it gets confusing. His help came from…

…*Catholic* France! Cardinal Richelieu wanted to ensure that France remained a dominant power in Europe, and the Catholic Hapsburgs were a threat to that power. He was only too pleased to form alliances with the Protestants to contain the archrival Hapsburgs, so he provided the financial backing for Adolphus to recruit and supply an army. Along with the Dutch, France provided more than two thirds of the funds necessary to maintain Adolphus' army, about 2.2 million *daler* (dollars), the currency of that time.

And now, even more confusing and amusing…the majority of the Swedish soldiers were not Swedes – they were Germans and Scots! Of his 44,500 men, 20,000 were Scots, the rest mostly German. They were mercenaries, and this, as we will see, was the cause for calamity in villages like Mistelbach.

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[11] Defenestration means "out of, or from, the window," as in they were thrown out of the window.

[12] "All for one and one for all," was indeed a saying that originated during the Thirty Years War. It was made famous by Alexandre Dumas in his historical novel, *The Three Musketeers*, a tale of the Spanish soldiers who fought in that war.

I told you this was a free-for-all mess.

Long story short: Adolphus the Protestant Swede met Wallenstein the Habsburg Catholic, on August 24, 1632 at the *Battle of Alte Veste* ("old fort") just outside of Nürnberg. Adolphus was outmaneuvered and outgunned, but not necessarily defeated, and he retreated to Fürth, Nürnberg's next-door twin city.

Battle of Fürth

Adolphus, who was in fact a brilliant commander, obtained much needed reinforcements in Fürth (he hired more mercenaries), and counter attacked Wallenstein one week later on September 3rd at the *Battle of Fürth*.

It was again a victory for the Catholic Wallenstein, but only nominally. His troops were sick, suffering in part from the plague, and their supply lines from Bohemia had been cut off. While Adolphus disengaged and retreated south, Wallenstein, in an effort to regroup and resupply, retreated north. North meant *again transiting the Mistelbach region* to Leipzig, his home base, about 130 miles to the north of Mistelbach.

Battle of Lützen

Adolphus gathered even more reinforcements and followed Wallenstein to Leipzig where they engaged on November 6-16 at the *Battle of Lützen*, just outside of Leipzig. Adolphus won this battle but lost his life. He was shot in the head.

This period of time in 1632 marked the first devastation of Mistelbach. The second great destruction came two years later in 1634, shortly before the following Battle of Nordlingen.

Battle of Nordlingen

Victorious, the Swedes, now on a roll but without their commander, marched south to invade the Catholic stronghold of Bavaria. The Catholic King Ferdinand of Bohemia, fearful that the Protestants were now winning, entered the conflict joining the Catholic Hapsburgs. He also amassed an army in Bohemia, and *again transited the Mistelbach region* in the spring of 1634 to cut off the supply lines of the Protestant armies, and to join with Spanish forces who were coming to the defense of the Catholic Hapsburgs.

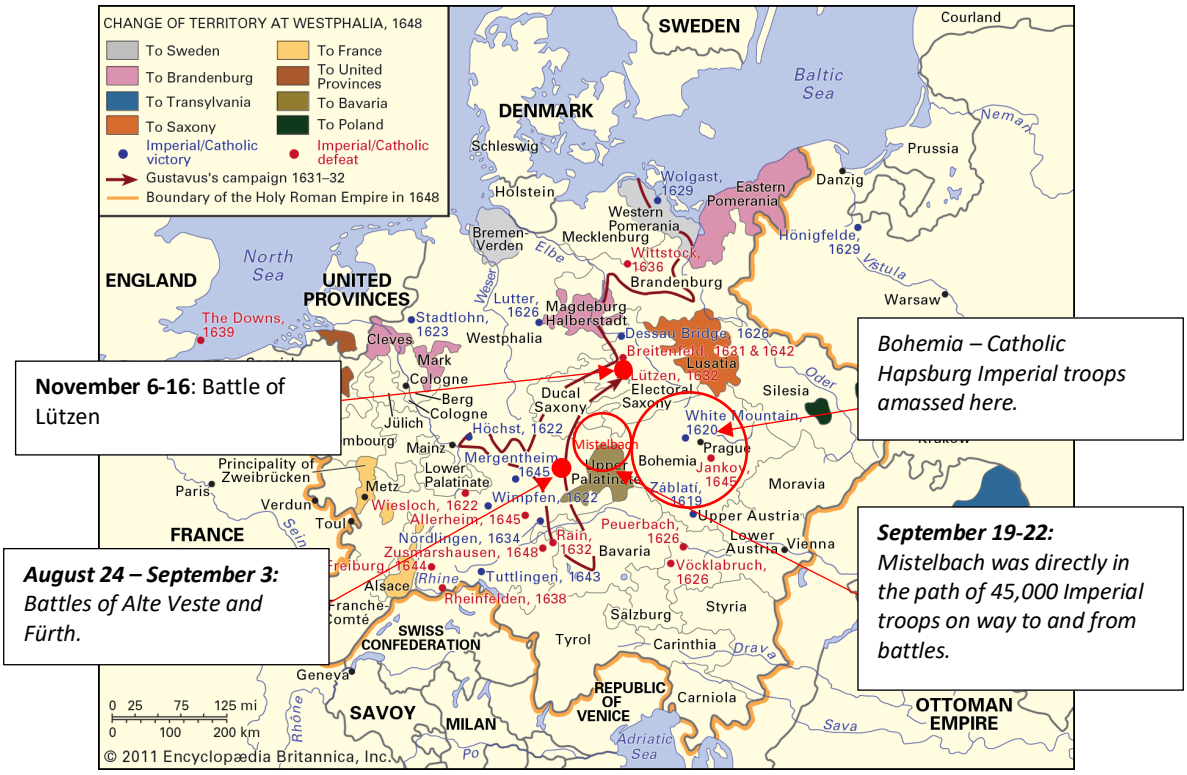
These forces met on September 5, 1634 at the *Battle of Nordlingen*, about 100 miles south of Mistelbach. Without their brilliant commander Adolphus, the Swedish forces were destroyed, and the Catholics again gained the upper hand. This back and forth went on for thirty years.

If you are finding this difficult to follow, you are not alone. This is why the war is largely ignored in the US.

But these four battles – *Alte Veste, Fürth, Lützen*, and *Nordlingen* – are essential to our story. In each instance the Catholic forces were traversing Protestant Mistelbach on their way to and from these conflicts. Each time they passed through, they pillaged, raped, murdered, and torched. And the havoc they raised was part of a larger military strategy, known as "*bellum se ipsum alet."* It was one of six factors that led to the devastation in Mistelbach:

1. **Franconia was a crossroads**. Mistelbach and its neighboring villages were located on important trade routes – an east/west route connecting the imperial city of Frankfurt in the west to Prague in the east; and a north/south route connecting the trading center of Nürnberg in the south to the mining districts of Saxony and the seaports of the Baltic in the north. All roads led through the Mistelbach and Franconian region.

2. **The combatants were mercenaries**. The Thirty Years War was fought almost exclusively by soldiers for hire. It was not fought by peasants, unless they were defending their village. There were peasants that fought as mercenaries, but there is no evidence that any Mistelbachers did. The mercenaries were not fighting for a cause or for their homeland. They were fighting for money and the spoils of war. They could have cared less about the peasantry. The ransacking of Mistelbach was mostly incurred by hired guns from Croatia, led by an Italian general.



November 6-16: Battle of Lützen

August 24 – September 3: *Battles of Alte Veste and Fürth.*

Bohemia – Catholic Hapsburg Imperial troops amassed here.

September 19-22: *Mistelbach was directly in the path of 45,000 Imperial troops on way to and from battles.*

This map depicts the Thirty Years War troop movements of Gustavus Adolphus, leader of Protestant forces, and the precarious location of Mistelbach between the Protestant and Catholic armies. The battles of Alte Veste, Fürth, and Lützen were fought in the late summer and fall of 1632. The Catholic troops transited Mistelbach on the way to and from these battles, and laid waste to most of Franconia.

3. **Plundering was a military strategy.** The generals employed a strategy known as *bellum se ipsum alet*, or "the war will feed itself" (*Der Krieg ernährt den Krieg*). This strategy originated with the Romans (hence the Latin) but found its zenith in the Thirty Years War. The strategy was this: mercenary forces were to be fed with food they stole from the villages and paid with the money they extorted from the peasants or the goods they pillaged. The commanders paid their armies by instructing them to take what they needed from the peasants. This led to mass starvation, poverty, and pandemics.

4. **The military leaders were vicious**. Every war has its evil villains, and in our case the mercenaries were led and inspired by two of the worst, the Bohemian commander Albrecht von Wallenstein and his Italian general Caretto di Grana. They were particularly vicious in their contempt for the peasants, and ruthless in their destruction. They were known to encourage murder and rape.

5. **Religious hatred was in the air**. On at least one occasion Mistelbach was torched by neighboring Catholic villages in acts of vengeance.

6. **The plague followed the war**. As typically happens in any war, disease soon followed because of 1) the dead human and animal carcasses that attract rats and other vermin, 2) the destruction of housing, 3) the resulting crowded living conditions, 4) poor sanitation, 5) lack of food, and 6) no medical care or treatment. The plague ran rampant through entire villages.

The years 1632 to 1634 were the worst. On three separate occasions Mistelbach was occupied and destroyed, although looting and pillaging would continue for decades – years of despair and desolation for our grandparents.

Plünderung eines Dorfes *(Plundering a Village) by Sebastian Vrancx, 1573–1647. This is a contemporary illustration. Note the children hiding in the root cellar (to this day you can still find such cellars in Mistelbach). Villagers are being slain, animals lying about, women being assaulted, and houses burning in the background.*

Following is a specific account of the tragic events in Mistelbach, as recorded by village pastors during the war, and by various other officials after the war.

Tuesday, August 24, 1632

This is the date of the *Battle of Alte Veste*, about 50 miles from Mistelbach. It is difficult to know if or when our great-grandparents knew of this battle, or if they were expecting trouble. No newspaper, TV, radio, or internet. Most couldn't read or write. What they did know came from traders passing through town, or what they heard

from other villages. They knew there was a war. It had been raging for 14 years, but it was always happening somewhere else, and to their knowledge there was no particular reason at this time to flee.

Nothing happened in Mistelbach on the day of the battle, but here was the tranquil scene: on that late August summer day, they were likely busy with their crops. Mistelbach farmers practiced, as was the custom, three-field crop rotation. In the fall they planted cereal crops such as winter wheat, barley, or rye; in the spring, on another field, they planted legumes such as peas, lentils or beans (legumes restore nitrogen to the soil); the remaining field was left fallow. In August they were harvesting not only the cereal crops planted the previous fall, but also the legumes. In addition, most houses had a small vegetable garden and a few fruit trees. If the weather was good the crops would be plentiful, and they would have enough to eat. But it was always a struggle.

The village mill was at its busiest, since the harvested grains were ready for the production of flour. The mill had two enormous stones, driven by a water wheel powered by the Mistelbach stream, that ground the grains necessary for bread, the village's most important food source.

The mill was owned, in the year 1632, by our great uncle, Cuntz Dollhopf (yes, another Cuntz) and his wife, Maria Lang. The mill has been in the family for 133 years. Cuntz was 40, Maria was 55. They were childless, but Maria had been married previously to Hans Jäger, and had five children.

In a mere four weeks the mill would cease to operate. It would be torched and abandoned. Cuntz died on July 21, 1635. Where and how we don't know, and we don't know what happened to Maria and her five children.

Cuntz's first cousin, also named Cuntz Dollhopf (I told you, consult the chart in Appendix C), our 10th great-grandfather, were probably living in house #23. He was 41 at the time, and married to Maria Sporrer, who was considerably older at age 67. She had been previously married to the farmer Johannes Holl, and had five children. Cuntz and Maria would have just one child together, also named Cuntz, our 9th great-grandfather.

Cuntz, our 10th, was a farmer and a tailor, and had succeeded his great uncle as *Gotteshaus Master*. 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."

They too had stewardship campaigns.

This generous contribution, singled out in the church records, provides a clue to Cuntz's relative wealth. A florin was a gold coin that varied considerably in value depending on the region of Germany. Historians estimate that a florin today would be worth between $140 and $1,000 – 20 florins between $2,800 and $20,000. According to accounts of the day, a day laborer earned one florin every three weeks, so Cuntz's gift represented more than a year's worth of wages – 15 months to be exact – and this was a *contribution*! It is all the more remarkable given the fact that peasants were required to give a tithe, or ten percent, of their crops and earnings to the church, essentially a tax since it was mandatory. His contribution of a year's wages was *in addition* to that tithe.

He was indeed a peasant, and it was highly unlikely that he could have amassed such a relative fortune as a tailor, although he was 48 when he made the contribution, and perhaps over the years he was a diligent saver. Perhaps the extended Dollhopf family, as owners of the village mill, were wealthy, but there is no other record of such a contribution from other Dollhopfs, and it is also unlikely that a sizeable inheritance would have passed through two generations from Cuntz's grandfather (his uncle Georg had inherited the mill). There is a good chance that he and his wife Maria Sporrer might have inherited the money or an equivalent value of land from her father, Hans Sporrer, who was a judge and tax assessor in the nearby town of Lindenhardt. A judgeship was a relatively lucrative position.

Or maybe Cuntz was just a remarkably generous man.

The painting of the church vault (ceiling) was no small undertaking. It wasn't getting merely a coat of fresh paint; it was getting decorated with a series of portraits and murals. The church was renovated in the summer of 1632. We know this because the renovation contract still exists, an agreement with the royal court painter Elias Brendel and his son Friedrich.[13] They were hired to decorate the ceiling and walls with portraits of the four evangelists and twelve apostles. Above the pulpit the Brendels painted scenes from the Bible. (The contract also stipulated the church pews were to be painted green.) In a remarkable twist of fate, his bill for this work was paid the very day before Mistelbach was attacked on September 20, 1632.

Cuntz must have been an upstanding individual because in 1631 the church in turn granted him a loan of 10 guilders, which he paid an annual interest rate of five percent. We don't know the reason for the loan.

Three years later, in a raid on the village, our generous Cuntz would die trying to extinguish the fire in his barn. His son Cuntz, 25 years old on that day in 1634, would be the only Dollhopf to survive the war.

A view of the interior ceiling of St. Bartholomew Church in Mistelbach. A gift of 20 florins from Cuntz Dollhopf in 1629 enabled the court painter Elias Brendel and his son to embellish the ceiling. The balcony paintings were added a later date. The bill for the painting work was paid on the day before Mistelbach was attacked and set fire on September 20, 1632. The church was spared along with eight of the villages 35 houses.

[13] A court painter was one who typically worked for a royal family on salary. We assume that Brendel worked for the royal family in Bayreuth. Obviously, they accepted work on the side as well.

Hans Ruckriegel and wife Anna Stahlmann, our 9th great-grandparents, lived in house #19, directly across the street from the church. This house would eventually be acquired by Cuntz's 3rd great-grandson, Johann Dollhopf in 1789. Hans was 33 and Anna was 35. They had been married for eight years and had three boys – Georgius, who was 8, and twins Cunz (sic) and Hans, who were eight months old. (Cunz was our 8th great-grandfather.)

In four weeks, their house would also burn to the ground.

Of the 35 houses in Mistelbach on August 24, 14 were occupied by our great-grandparents (those that we can confirm). There is further research yet to be done, but I estimate that of the other 20 houses, 15 were occupied by ancestors.

In addition to the two Cuntz Dollhopf and one Hans Ruckriegel families, the following were our known direct grandparents living at the time in Mistelbach (we had many uncles and aunts as well). Again, each of the following individuals were our great-grandparents. I indicate by underline which of their children would in turn become our great grandparent:

- The above-mentioned tailor's son, Cuntz Vogel Dollhopf, also a tailor, was 25. We don't know the name of his wife, who died of the plague in 1636.[14] They were living with their son Hans, age 3, and daughter, Ursula, age 1. Ursula would die seven years later of the plague. Cuntz would have three more wives, but no more children. More about this Cuntz later.

- Hans Neukam, age 41, was a miller living in one of the other three mills in Mistelbach, the *Zeckenmühle*. He too was a tailor. He wife Margarethe was 38, and they had three children Dorothea, age 12, Albert, 8, and Nicolas, 6.

- Hans Wedel, 42, and wife Elizabeth Brendel, 39, with children Georg, 18, Margaretha, 14, and Conradus, 6.

- Georg Wolf, 47 and daughter Margaretha, 14.

- Balthasar Baumell, 29, and wife Anna 37. Apparently, they fled Mistelbach for the village of Forkendorf, where they had two children, Hans and Walburga.

- Johannes Schwarz Hagen, 35, and wife Barbara Herdegen, 32, who died the following year, likely of the plague, and six children: Conrad, 7; Georg, 6; Cunigunda, 5; Cunz, 2; Cunigunda, 1, and Johannes, who would be born the following May of 1633. His mother Barbara died five months later in October. Six motherless children.

- Lorenz Richter, 29, and wife Elizabeth, 26. They had two children – Barbara, who would not be born until 1642, and Margaretha. We don't know when Margaretha was born, but she married Johannes Hagen, the boy we just listed in the preceding paragraph.

- Christoph Nützel, 40, and wife Apollonia Moss. They left for the village of Altenstadt with son Hans, 5.

- Hans Klein Seuffert, 31, and wife Margaretha Popp, 28, who died in October of 1634 of the plague. They had one son, Conradt, 7.

[14] Despite the fact that *most* church records from these years survived, many in fact did not, either because they were lost, destroyed, carried off, or the information never recorded because Mistelbach was abandoned.

The following village occupants were cousins, not grandparents…

- Georg Dollhopf, the above Cuntz's first cousin. George was 46, his wife Magdalena Steinach was 39. She died in 1634 of the plague. They had six children: Barbara, age 20; Margaretha, 19, Hermann, 17; Georg, 15; Otto, 13; and Margaretha, 8. We know that George was killed, or died, in 1635, later documents report that no one from the family survived the war.

- Hans Dollhopf, another first cousin of Cuntz. We don't know his wife's name, or how many children he might have had. He did not survive.

Of course, none of the above great grandparents knew they would have descendants in common ten generations later. They were just trying to survive.

Then all hell broke loose.

Sunday, September 19, 1632

Returning from the Battle of Fürth were 28 horsemen, mercenary soldiers from Croatia under the command of the Italian general Caretto di Grana.[15] They were a patrol of the Imperial Hapsburg forces under Albrecht von Wallenstein, scouting the territory in advance of the Imperial foot soldiers.

The cavalrymen likely made a frightful impression on our grandparents – mounted atop large horses clad in bulbous fur hats and heavy red capes, shouting in a foreign tongue, lances and muskets at their side.

According to Pastor Böhner, Mistelbach was sacked and plundered, and the inhabitants fled, hiding in the woods and meadows. At this point the plundering must have been relatively minor, since 28 horsemen would only be able to carry away only so much booty. But much more terror was coming.

A militia of peasants from Bayreuth, seeking to defend their homes, caught up with the horsemen in the adjoining village of Mistelgau, just on the other side of Mistelbach. They shot and killed one of the horsemen, and buried him there.

How the Bayreuth militia knew of the horsemen, we don't know. Either the horsemen had already been to Bayreuth, or perhaps the villagers somehow knew in advance of the Imperial troop movements. Mistelbach is four miles from Bayreuth, and Mistelgau is two miles further. If they were on foot, it would have taken the militia the better part of three or four hours to catch up with the horsemen.

A 17th century etching of a Croatian cavalryman. There were an estimated 30,000 hired as mercenaries in the Thirty Years War.

[15] Beginning in 1625, Wallenstein would recruit more than 20,000 cavalrymen from Croatia, a country in the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia.

After killing one of the horsemen, and thinking they had scared them off, the militia returned to Bayreuth. The Mistelbachers came out of hiding and returned to what was left of their homes.

But soon they learned that the Imperial foot soldiers had joined the horsemen in Mistelgau. As was written at the time, the Mistelbachers were now "caught between the hammer and the anvil" – Imperial troops to the west and the Bayreuth militia to the east.

Events unfolded in an insidious way. Peasants from the nearby Catholic villages of Waischenfeld and Hollfeld, in a terrible act of treachery, saw this as an opportunity for religious revenge on their Lutheran neighbors in Mistelbach. They falsely reported to the Bayreuth militia that the Imperial troops in Mistelgau numbered only 300, and were setting up camp, not expecting to do battle. This was a lie. The actual number was much higher – as many as 7,000 troops were now in Mistelgau.

Given this false and misleading information, the leader of the Bayreuth militia, *Hausvogt* (sheriff) Hans Marr, decided to conduct a surprise attack, and ordered the militia back to Mistelgau. He led his militia musketeers to an open field near the Lüchelbach, a stream near Mistelgau. There they encountered the Croatian troops, who, because of their vast numbers, immediately surrounded the small militia, "strangling, slaughtering, and shooting down the best young and old citizens."

The sheriff "tore out on his horse" in retreat back to Bayreuth leaving behind 32 dead, seven of whom were buried on the battlefield at the Lüchelbach, the other 25 in the Mistelbach cemetery.

At the same time, and working with the same false information, the "Mistelbachers joined forces with peasants from the neighboring village of Gesees. They too attacked the Imperial troops and repelled them twice, but then succumbed, and the Croats torched the village of Mistelbach."

From Pastor Böhner's report:

> "The screaming and terror caused the women and children to scatter. Three peasants were shot and killed – Johann Streitberger, the blacksmith and a 'pious man,' Nicol Nützel (our 9th great uncle), another pious man, and Albert Beer, a peasant from Gesees. Several women and men were wounded. A son of Neukam and a son of the castle farmer were taken away by the enemies as prisoners, whether they lived or not, God only knows."

It was later reported that Mistelbach was also attacked by the Catholics from the nearby villages of Hollfeld and Waischenfeld. Along with the Croatian soldiers they looted, ransacked the rectory, and set fire to the buildings that weren't already burned down.

Monday, September 20, 1632

The following day, at two o'clock in the afternoon, the Italian General Caretto di Grana arrived in Bayreuth from Mistelgau with the mercenaries. He demanded 10,000 *taler* from the city as extortion.[16] The city refused, so he ransacked the town and burned it down.

Georg Leopold, the mayor of the nearby town of Marktredwitz and an important chronicler of the War in Bayreuth, wrote explicitly about the raping of women…"the soldiers have lived inhumanely with the womenfolk."

[16] *Taler* is a medieval German silver coin, the root word for our English "dollar."

A map of the larger villages surrounding Mistelbach. Note that Mistelbach is situated between Mistelgau, where the Croatian troops were quartered, and Bayreuth, location of the Bayreuth militia. The Catholic villages of Hollfeld and Waischenfeld are located to the west of Mistelbach. In the upper left corner is Landkreis (county) Kulmbach, site of the Plassenburg Castle, where peasants hid from Caretto di Grana, but were routed and killed. Listed in Appendix A are the Dollhopf ancestors living at the time throughout the region, in 18 smaller villages within a ten-mile radius of Mistelbach. An inch on the above map is about four miles. The inset at the bottom right shows the region in relation to Bavaria. To the immediate east of this map is Bohemia, epicenter of the Thirty Years War.

After devastating Bayreuth, the soldiers attacked the neighboring town of Kulmbach to the north, which at one time was the "capital" of the Bayreuth region. Kulmbach was home to the Plassenburg Castle, historically the residence of the Bayreuth royal families.

Leopold's account of the Kulmbach debauchery is illustrative of *bellum se ipsum alet:*

> On the way through the Franconian Alb[17] Caretto di Grana, arrived outside the city of Kulmbach. The city was able to assert itself, knowing that Bayreuth had already been struck by misfortune. The citizenry did not dare any serious resistance and opened the gates to di Grana and handed over the keys of the city to him.

Despite getting the keys to the city, di Grana demanded a ransom of 8,000 taler. He demanded similar sums from all of the cities and villages in the region because this is how he paid his troops. In addition to the "ransom" money, the troops were instructed to pillage everything they could.

Leopold continues:

> Since Kulmbach could only raise 1,300 taler of the required ransom of 8,000 taler, the city was plundered. The booty of the plunderers was large, since many noblemen and also some of the country people had sequestered themselves with all their possessions behind the city walls, which they believed to be safe. Now everything was looted. Even the cattle and the horses were welcome prey for the soldiers. As a special reprisal, di Grana had all noblemen, clergy, margrave officials, and councilors arrested and imprisoned in the castle.

The entire region fell victim to the same fate. When di Grana left Bayreuth after burning it down, he took 23 respected inhabitants with him as hostages until the rest of the other ransoms were paid. Also, all supplies of grain, wine and beer were looted. The fate of the prisoners was tortuous.

The citizens not only hid behind the city walls, they also sought refuge in the Plassenburg Castle, which stood atop a high mountain, thinking that it would protect them from the Croatian troops.

Johann Braun, the parish priest of the village of Melkendorf wrote in his diary:

> On Tuesday, September 21, the city of Kulmbach also fell into the hands of Caretto's troops. The citizens of Kulmbach and the farmers of the surrounding area fled to the Plassenburg Castle.
>
> This was a wretched and pitiful spectacle to see how a great heap of people, men and women, loaves of bread, pillows, cradles with the screaming little children inside, field crops, articles of clothing and innumerable other household goods were dragged along with them; so they climbed up the steep mountain in a hurry, sweating and panting. Endless was the line of carts and wagons that went up and down to the castle, loaded with food, wood, and vessels of all kinds.
>
> [It was of little use…] Caretto di Grana would not spare any person, and killed everyone, even the babies in the pregnant women's wombs, and ruined and devastated the whole country with fire and sword.

[17] The *Alb* is the Franconian Switzerland, or mountainous area west of Mistelbach.

Present day photo of the Plassenburg Castle in Kulmbach. It is easy to see why the peasants thought they would be safe. But they weren't.

> Therefore the surrounding area was plundered and many beautiful spots, castles, villages and mills were set on fire…. Caretto di Grana left Bayreuth, took the regiments around Kulmbach and returned to Wallenstein's main army. His troops arrived in Bamberg with the good booty they robbed from the Bayreuth area.

Over the next five days it was reported that "many other villages in the region were plundered, burned down, hewn down, cattle driven away, and many women raped."

Including, the next day, in Mistelbach.

Tuesday, September 21, 1632

On Tuesday, after plundering the Plassenburg Castle, Caretto di Grana showed up in Mistelbach.

> …the beautiful princely castle of Mistelbach was burned down as were the barns belonging to it with about 100 shocks of grain, hay and fodder, three wagons and two ploughs, as well as the sheepfold, the inn, the bathhouse, the blacksmith's shop and the lansquenet's[18] house; 30 cattle were driven away. All this still lies abandoned and desolate.[19]

Caretto di Grana was known to be the most malicious and greedy of mercenary commanders. He was eventually relieved of his command because of his treachery. His commanding general Wallenstein once wrote about di Grana, "I swear that I would rather go to a hospital than have him with me, and from day to day I like him less."

> What Wallenstein disliked about Caretto was his material greed, which exceeded the tolerable measure many times over. "Ruthless striving for power and enormous greed combined with blatant selfishness and great cruelty in a rare mixture of servility and impudence identified this

[18] Also known as a *landsknecht*, a professional soldier.
[19] This report was written in 1648, 14 years later. The castle would not be rebuilt until 1763.

Italian adventurer as one of the most repulsive characters among the careerists of his time, who nevertheless - or precisely because of this - had a brilliant career ahead of him."

But Caretto was generally regarded as incompetent among "army commanders notorious for diabolical malice and greed."

Of the extortion money that Caretto collected to feed his armies, none knew where it really went. If Caretto, like other officers, was dragging hostages along with him to secure the collection in lieu of arson, he demanded correspondingly high prices from their relatives for their ransom, only to demand even more if the money could be raised.[20]

Our villain: Caretto di Grana [~1590-~1651], the Italian general of terrible reputation who ransacked Mistelbach.

Wednesday, September 22, 1632

The devastation continued in other villages. Of particular sadness was the fate of our 10th great-grandfather Hans Weigel who lived in the nearby village of Destuben. Hans was 52 years old. His wife Elizabeth Münch was 46. She would die in 1636 of the plague. They had ten children, who, if they were all living on this fateful day, would have been Conrad, 25; Heinrich, 24; Hans, 22; Magdalena, 21; Kunigund, 20; Margaretha, 18; Catharina, 17; Georg, 15 (our 9th great-grandfather); Hans, 13; and Erhard, 10.

On this Wednesday afternoon, Hans was "run through with a saber by an Imperial soldier in his garden and buried on the spot."[21]

I wonder if any of his children witnessed this. If the Imperial soldiers were rampaging through the village, I have to assume that the terrified children were huddled in the house. Or perhaps hiding in the woods.

We'll never know.

The above accounts describe the first episode of devastation that befell Mistelbach. 21 of 35 houses, including the castle, the schoolhouse, and most of the barns were destroyed. More than half of the population would soon be dead, either at the hand of the enemy, or by the plague. These were our great-grandparents.

The next several years saw more looting and pillaging, but not from marauding mercenaries, rather from roving gangs.

From Pastor Böhner's church records we learn:

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[20] http://www.30jaehrigerkrieg.de/caretto-carretto-carretti-caretti-claretti-francesco-antonio-marchese-de-savona-e-finale-e-grana-conte-di-millesimo-marquis-de-grande-marqui-de-grane-gran-grane-v-corretto-coretto-und-g/

[21] Kalb, K.H.: Ein Streifzug durch die Geschichte Bayreuths und seine Umgebung (in the Bayreuther Hausbuch, 1984)

Peasant begging for his life in Thirty Years War. Artist unknown.

Also, among the Mistelbachers there were bad boys, who, armed with long knives stole bedding, household utensils, meat, bacon, wine, and beer. They stole, ate, and drank. They killed chickens and geese, stabbed sows, dried the meat, and carried it to Nuremberg and sold it. These thieves stole from their neighbors. It was unexpected and they stole from honest people under the name of the enemy. They are thieves above all thieves and are well worthy to be hanged on the highest gallows. Most of the villages in the surrounding countryside lay in ruins and ashes. Bushes grew on fields and meadows. Farming seemed no longer to be worthwhile. Wild animals took over so much that the wolves even came into the village. More than half of the population had been killed by war, hunger and plague; some villages had no more inhabitants, all had become deserted. The entire Dollhopf estate is desolate.

I would hate to think that members of these roving gangs were Dollhopf relatives, but alas, if most of the inhabitants of the day were our relatives, then it is most likely.

Saturday, April 29, 1634

Two years later, in the spring of 1634, evil again visited Mistelbach.

As related above, King Ferdinand amassed yet another army in Bohemia to battle the Protestants. His armies would also transit, and again terrorize, the region of Mistelbach on the way to the Battle of Nordlingen.

On the way, our great-grandmother's funeral was terrorized. From the church notes:

> On the funeral day of Maria Tolhopf (our 9th great-grandmother, wife of Cuntz), April 29, 1634, during the funeral sermon, the poor mourners, together with the preacher from the church, were chased away by arriving horsemen. The mourners hid here and there [in the woods] seeking protection. Pastor Böhner sought his safety in the meadow.

The mourners, seeing the troops approach the village, carried the casket into the woods to hide. Apparently, it was a false alarm since no further looting or pillaging was reported.

But five days later…

Thursday, May 4, 1634

The horsemen returned to Mistelbach and torched the village for the purpose of revenge.

According to the Croats, a Protestant military commander had torched a village in the Catholic Palatinate.[22] The Croats captured our first cousin (10x removed) Hans Gebhart, the caretaker of the Mistelbach castle farm, and sent him on a mission. They ordered him to go to Bayreuth and tell the people that Protestant villages burn just as well as Catholic villages. The Croats did this as a threat, demanding ransom from the people of Bayreuth. Bayreuth did not come up with the money, so Mistelbach paid the price. Here is the report from Pastor Böhner for that night of May 4:

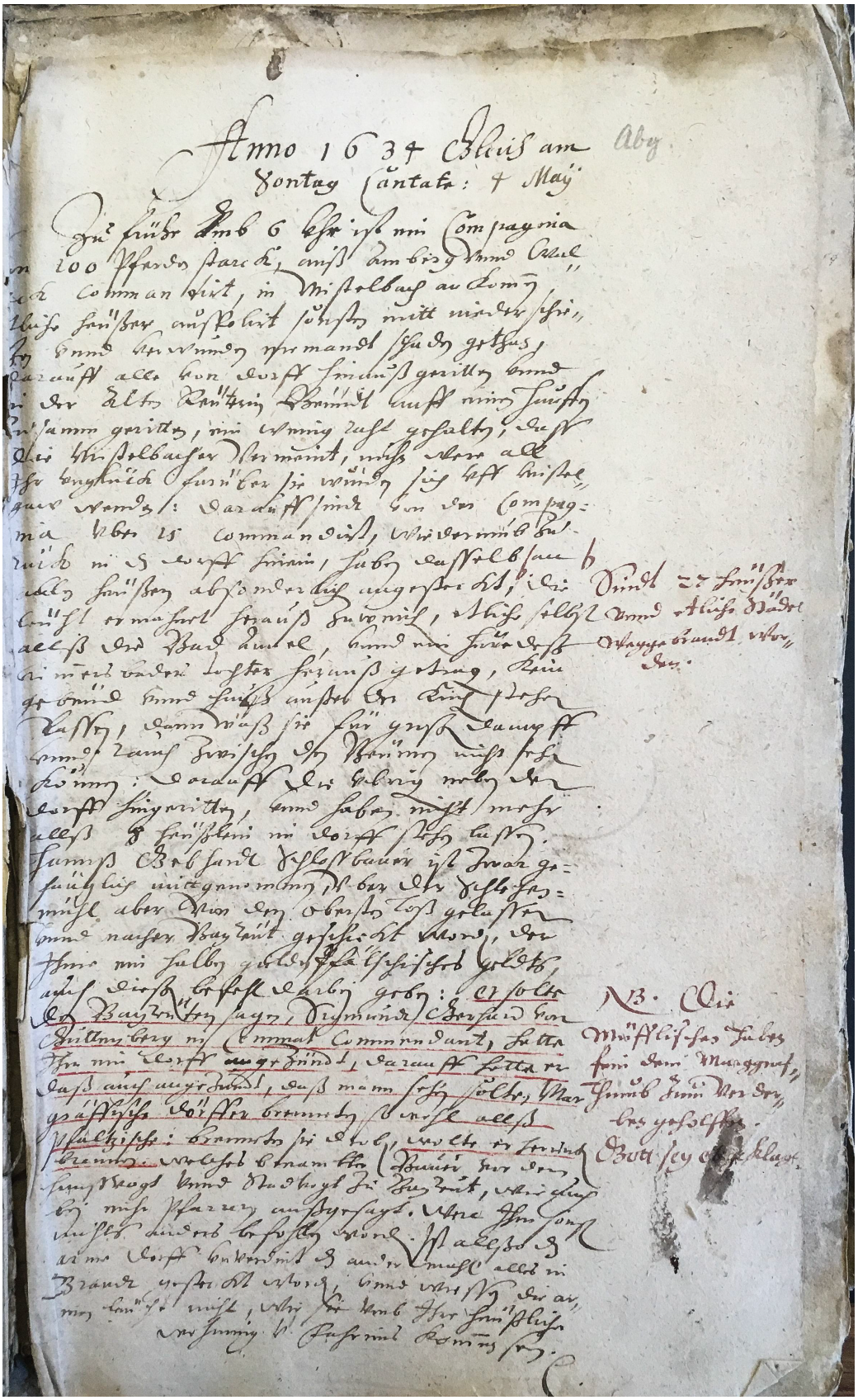
> Around 6 o'clock at night a company of about 100 horses strong[23] arrived in Mistelbach and robbed a number of homes, however, no one was harmed. They rode out of the village. The people of Mistelbach thought that their suffering was over. However, 15 horsemen from the company were detailed and returned to the village and set homes on fire. 27 homes and many stables burned down, many of which had been rebuilt since the prior devastation two years earlier.
>
> The horsemen did not leave any home or building standing – except for the church and the buildings that they could not see because of all the smoke between the trees. They did not leave more than eight little homes standing. Hans Gebhardt, (our first cousin 10x removed) the castle farmer, was taken as a prisoner, and was released by the colonel near the *Schlehenmühle* and sent by him to Bayreuth with half a guilder of Palatine money.
>
> He was ordered to tell the people of Bayreuth that Sigmund Gerhard von Guttenberg, a commander from Kemnath, had set their village on fire, and therefore we will set Mistelbach on fire to prove that Protestant villages burn just as well as Palatine villages. Hans Gebhardt told this to the sheriff in Bayreuth and to me, the parson. He had not been ordered to say anything else.
>
> So the poor village of Mistelbach was innocently all set on fire and the poor people did not understand why they were deprived of home and belongings.

Our poor cousin Hans Gebhart survived, but in five months he and his entire family would meet with disaster.

[*Following is the page from the church book of 1634 with Pastor Böhner's handwritten account of the 100 horsemen. It is written in medieval German script, so it is difficult to read. You will see the date of "Anno 1634 May 4" in the heading, and the number of horsemen "100" in the second line*.]

[22] The Palatinate is a primarily Catholic region in the southwest of Germany.

[23] 100 horsemen would be overwhelming. The village center of Mistelbach is no larger than a baseball infield.



Anno 1634 Cleiß am Abz
Montag Cantate: 4 May

Die früh vmb 6 ehr ist mir Compagnia
in 100 Pferdt starck, auß dem Dorff vnnd Schloß
Cleiß commandirt, in Mistelbach zu kommen,
Cleiß fürsehr außkundt schafft mitt nidergelegt,
Es kombt der Feindt jemandt gethan,
darauff alle von der Statt Glocken vnnd
in der Alten Pfarrkirchen Thürnl zusamm geleitt, wie wenig zuhalten, dessen
Orts Mistelbacher Bermant, wüß aber alle
ihre Englisch Feuer vor sich weeg sie hetten bringen
gute Wordt: Darauff sind von der Compag-
nia über 15 commandirt, Widerumb hin-
ein nach Mistelbach, haben daselbsten
selbe fürsehr abgemerckht angetroffen, die
Cürassi ermahnt drauß herumb, Cleiß selbst
alles der Statt Thor, vnnd wie fürsehr
sie weiter vorm Thor gestanden, Kein
gewehr vnnd Fuchs auff der Erden
Lassen, dann wäß sie für grosse Laugst
vnnd Forcht bewegt, Ihr Pferdt nicht
können: Darauff der Feindt weg der
Statt zugeritten, vnnd haben nicht mehr
allen 8 Fürsehrn in der Statt Thor
sambt Cleiß Landt Reitter ist zwar ge-
fänglich eingenommen, ist der Reitter-
meister aber von den obersten loß gelassen
vnnd nacher Burgkaut geschickt worden, der
ihme mit selber gebührlicher Reuerentz gebetten,
alle diese Brieff darby gethan: Er solle
den Burgkmeister sagen, Die vnnder Cleiß ligen
Ihr mit Corpo ausgrindt, darauff Ihr
dasß auffgebrochen, dasß man sich Ihrer
gefänglich bemächtigt, Ihre alles
Pluchiß: Brennen sie etwo, welche es thun
Brennen, welches Brennen (Feuer für den
sein Wegs vnnd Nachgelassen, wie dann
ihr mehr Pfarren aufgesagt. Ihre Thor
nicht anders besetzt haben. Als bald
ihme Corpo Underricht, andern muß alles in
Brauch gestellt werden, vnnd wirdt der ar-
mey Cürassi müssen, wie sie dann für Fürsehrn
Commandirt werden sein.

Dindt 2 Fürsehr vnnd etliche Bauern Pferdt

NB. Die Mußkitiers haben Ihre Pferdt hinder den Mayerhof, Ihre Gewehr vor den Thor gestellet. Gott sey Lob gelobet.

The Plague

Mistelbach and the surrounding area were hit hard by the plague in 1634, which followed the devastation by the marauding armies. The plague was also known as the Black Death or the Pestilence. The German word for plague is *pest*, and the Mistelbach church books noted pest many times as the cause of death.

The bacterium *Yerinia pestis* causes plague in three forms – bubonic, septicemic, and pneumonic. To the Mistelbachers however, the plague was the plague.

The plague can be transmitted by any number of means. Pneumonic plague is spread through aerosolized droplets (similar to COVID). Other forms of transmission include touching infested surfaces, physical contact, and oral ingestion.

But the most common means of transmission, and the likely cause of the outbreak in Mistelbach, was flea infested rats. After contracting the plague from the rats, it would then spread via human lice. Where there are dead bodies, there are rats. Rats feed on dead animals *and* dead humans. And there were plenty of both in the aftermath of the Mistelbach carnage.[24]

It is also well documented that troop movements hastened the spread of the plague, as these large armies, tens of thousands at a time, migrated across Europe. They carried the plague.

Unlike today's COVID pandemic, the plague spread slowly in waves over years, but just like COVID, in pockets. People did not travel around the world in planes, trains, and automobiles. They sailed on voyages which took years, or they traveled by horse or foot. Epidemiologists theorize that the plague occurred somewhere in Europe *every year* between 1346 and 1671 – over three hundred years – and that it wiped out 30 to 60% of Europe's population.

According to church records, Mistelbach was hardest hit in the years 1585, 1595 and 1602, and again in the 1630s.

Thursday, September 7, 1634

Those living in close quarters with each other – families – were especially vulnerable, and the disease would often take out entire families at a time. From Pastor Böhner's notes:

> On September 7, 1634, the first victim of the plague was buried in Mistelbach, the 18-year old daughter of Hans Gebhardt [our poor cousin]; the one who had been taken prisoner four months before. His wife died right after, then he himself, followed by his 6-year-old daughter and his 11-year-old son.

The pastor, as well as the villagers, would not have known how the plague spread, though they did know that it accompanied war. The pastor thought that it was spread by consuming bread:

> Hans Roht brought bread from the baking house 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;[25] and his three daughters.

[24] Although not the focus of this piece, rat infestation was a common occurrence in Mistelbach, as there have been reports over the years of crop failure because of tremendous rat infestation.
[25] Assuming she was able to say confession before she died.

In the year 1634 there were 56 burials listed in the parish records. 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 the records. Maybe soldiers made off with them or threw them by the wayside in a ditch or in the field. Alas, we will never know.

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, he 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 or at the hands of the mercenaries.

Aftermath

Needless to say, it was a disaster the likes of which Mistelbach had probably not seen since the Hussite Wars of the early 1400s, and would never see again, not even during the World Wars of the 20th century.

What was the scene like after the devastation of 1634?

We get a picture of Mistelbach from an official report filed 14 years later in 1648 at the Royal Court of Bayreuth. It documented that 21 houses were destroyed, which would have left 14 standing, although reports during the conflict indicated that only eight houses were left standing. We'll never know the exact details, they're lost in the fog of war, but it is remarkable that we have as much information as we do.

Following is a roster of the Mistelbach landowners and an account of their property. Where known I inserted our relationship to the individual listed, 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 of the Bayreuth 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:
>
> Fritz Dünph, Hans Schlehenstein, Hans Holl, (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).
>
> These subjects above have rebuilt their houses only five to nine years ago, poorly and makeshift.
>
> But the Mistelbach houses of the following inhabitants were burned down and are still in ruins today because the inhabitants and their families no longer live:

> Hans Streitberger, Hans Seeser (10th great-grandfather), Hans Pilscherlein, Hans Reicholt, Georg Dollhopf (12th removed-first-cousin), 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 11th great-grandmother). The entire Dollhopf estate burned down, which still today remains dry and desolate in 1649.[26]

Mistelbach was of course not the only village that collapsed under the weight of this war. Within a ten-mile radius of Mistelbach there were 18 farming villages. Because of marriage patterns in the Middle Ages it would not surprise you that we had great grandparents living in all 18 of those villages.

In Appendix A, I list those villages and our known great grandfathers who were living there in 1632. I can only rely on church records, which may or may or not be entirely accurate or complete, so I am certain that I do not have a complete list. (I'm not sure anyone could ever have a *complete* list, but it is extensive.) I discovered 36 direct male ancestors. The wives' names are mostly not in the records.

If Mistelbach was typical for the region, then we indeed lost more than half of our grandparents to war and disease in the 1630s.

The Peace of Westphalia

How did the war end? The carnage in Mistelbach occurred 14 to 16 years after the war started, and the war would continue *another* 14 to 16 years. It was, after all, the *Thirty* Years War.

I am not a historian, so far be it from me to offer a concise statement of the resolution of the Thirty Years War. There were many moving parts in a peace process that took seven years to negotiate among scores of aggrieved parties.

This much can be said:

- The principle of *Westphalian sovereignty* was established – that each nation state has sovereignty over its territory and domestic affairs and should not be subject to external interference or control. This remains an important principle to this day. Nations do not interfere in the affairs of other. (Well, they're not supposed to….)

- The Peace of Augsburg, negotiated in 1555, was affirmed. Local principalities could determine for themselves if they were Protestant or Catholic. This right was extended to include the Calvinists and other emerging Protestant splinter groups, those that were not included under the Peace of Augsburg,

- The Netherlands gained its independence from Spain, Sweden gained control of the Baltic, and France became a dominant power. Who knew.

What did all of this mean to our peasant ancestors in the small remote farming village of Mistelbach? Probably not much. They lost all they had, *most* lost their lives. The Treaty didn't restore or resolve anything for them.

[26] 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 Sole Survivor: Cuntz Dollhopf

So who was the survivor?

- Cuntz Dollhopf, the owner of the mill, died in 1635, exactly how we don't know. We also don't know when his wife Maria Lang died. Cuntz and Maria did not have children. The Dollhopf family lost the mill they had owned for 135 years.

- Cuntz Dollhopf, his cousin, our 10th great-grandfather (married to Maria Sporrer), as related above, burned to death in his barn in 1634. They had one son, Cuntz, our 9th great-grandfather.

- Cuntz (also known as Conrad) Dollhopf, his son, our 9th, was 11 years old when the war started, 28 when his father died in the barn, and 41 when the war ended. He was the only Dollhopf to survive the war. We'll call him Conrad The Survivor.

An Honorable and Industrious Man

Conrad The Survivor was a tailor. In the church records we learn that Conrad also acted as treasurer for the church, and, at least for the years 1662 and 1663, was the mayor of Mistelbach. It was noted that he was a smart and assertive person. In the church marriage agreement he is described as an "honorable and industrious man."

In 1634, Conrad had two children, Hanss and Ursula. Hanss was 6 and Ursula 4 when their grandfather was killed in the barn fire. Even more tragic, their mother died the next year in 1635. We don't know her name since there are many pages missing from the church records in this time period. It is likely that she died from the plague. Hanss would become our 8th great-grandfather. If you recall from the footnote on page 3 (and there is no reason that you would), this Hanss was the first baby baptized by our hero record keeper, Pastor Böhner.

Two years after he lost his wife, mother of Hanss and Ursula, he married a woman whose first name was Margarethe. We don't know her last name. They had two children – Georg, was born in 1639, but only lived for 16 months, and Anna who was born four years later in 1643. Shortly after Georg was born, Ursula died at age 7. This was still wartime. Times were tough.

Conrad The Survivor married two more times; all three of his first wives died at relatively young ages. He did not have any more children. Four wives and four children, but only two of the children survived – Hanss and his stepsister Anna.

Conrad and his son Hanss share an interesting distinction: They were the only two Dollhopf men in our direct line of 15 generations who married more than once. Conrad married four times, Hanss three. This was not due to divorce, but because their wives died prematurely given the horrible conditions.

Civil records note that he was granted tenancy to a small farm that was owned by the hospital in Bayreuth. The hospital (a church institution as all hospitals were) owned farmland just as the local parishes did. We don't know anything further about this transaction, other than it was a small tract of land that was adjacent to the Dorfmùhle. He sold this small farm to his grandson, also named Hanss, in April of 1679, when he was 72, for 50 guilders.

Conrad lived to the ripe old age of 76, another reason he likely married four times. We don't know the circumstances of his death.

To the End and After the War

As mayor, Conrad would have had his hands full. The ten years leading up to the Peace of Westphalia, and the immediate postwar years in Mistelbach were extremely difficult. From the Chronicle of Mistelbach we learn:

> From 1638 to 1648: Sad times, our village is teeming with devastating, wandering soldiers and wild gangs who chase each other back and forth incessantly. Friend or foe, that was all the same now. Everyone robbed the inhabitants and treated them with hostility, The villagers were in constant flight, even the forests no longer provided security since the enemy began to rush them with dogs. There was a great lack of people, even more cattle and livestock destroyed, the land remained largely unfarmed.
>
> In 1649, after the signing of the Peace Treaty of Westphalia, the great peace festival was also celebrated here. Better times followed under Christian, the Margrave of Bayreuth, and his grandson Christian Ernst.
>
> 1653 to 1672: Here in Mistelbach, however, it still looked rather bleak and desolate for a long time; among the inhabitants there was a rough, wild, immoral life; on Sundays and public holidays people indulged themselves, played, cursed, and got into fights; it had almost become a common fashion to challenge each other to a duel without fear. The consequences were strict police regulations "and such wicked people were publicly locked in crowbars at church doors."

Throughout it all, our Mayor Conrad remained an honorable and industrious man. But I am sure his patience was tried.

> After 1672: In the following years there were repeated hours of prayer, in which one prayed for protection from the plague. In 1683, the Margrave, in particular, to commemorate the siege of Vienna by the Turks, issued a decree: on every working day, at twelve o'clock, a bell was to be rung in all the cities, markets, and villages of the region. All inhabitants are to have devotions – in the country, at home, or in the field, at work, or on the way, as also the sick in their houses. All must call upon God for peace and protection.

The custom of ringing the church bells at 12 o'clock continues to this day in Mistelbach, almost four hundred years later.

Epilogue

During the week preceding Christmas of 2019, I had the occasion to stay at the Bergschloss in Mistelbach, a small inn and restaurant that is now sadly closed. The only inn in town. The year before I stayed there with my son Hans. The owner, Silke Hauenstein, died this past fall, and her daughter is selling the inn. We are related to the Hauensteins; Silke said she didn't know how, but it didn't surprise her because "everyone back then had so many babies!" Her daughter kindly opened the inn for me that week; I was the only person staying there.

Out of my bedroom window I could see the village mill, now the remodeled house, that our grandparents owned in 1632. The Mistelbach mill stream still flows by, just beyond the backyard.

I left my room each morning to walk to the bakery for coffee and *mohnkuchen* – poppy seed cake. In the predawn darkness I scrambled up the steep steps to the church and ambled past the Dollhopf house and the Mistelbach castle on the way to the bakery, all within a few blocks. The castle is not what you imagine. Today it is a three-story well-worn stone structure housing four apartments. No turrets, no moats, no damsels in distress.

As I passed the church I couldn't help but imagine what it would have been like on that Saturday morning of April 29, 1634….

I would be attending the funeral of my grandmother, Maria Sporrer Tollhopf, wife of Cuntz. She lived to the age of 69, old for those days. She had been married before to Johannes Holl and was 16 years older than her husband Cuntz. She already had five children when she married Cuntz.

Steep steps leading up the hill to St. Bartholomew church.

Cuntz was the manager of the church property, so I'll assume that they were fairly well known and respected, and that it would have been a decently attended funeral. The church didn't hold that many people; let's assume there were 60 or 70 villagers there – the Tollhopfs, Sporrers, and Holls – mostly family and friends. There was Cuntz Dollhopf the tailor and his family, Cuntz Dollhopf the miller and his family, Hans Dollhopf and his family, George Dollhopf and his family.

Come to think of it, it was probably a huge funeral.

During the sermon someone screams. Through the window Croatian soldiers are seen on horseback coming out of the woods, closing on the church. The congregation would have known what was coming. Two years earlier the village had been pillaged and torched by the same horsemen. They had been through this before.

If I were a man, I would probably tell my wife to take the children and run, run to the woods and hide. According to Pastor Böhner, that's what they did. But I would also be worried about my house, my barn, my livestock – my family's means of survival.

I would be worried about being cut down by a sword. That's what happened to our grandfather Hans Weigel. He was speared in his garden.

I would be worried about getting shot by a musket. That's what happened to our uncle Nicol Nützel.

Perhaps I would run to my house or barn and try to defend it, or put out the flames if it was on fire. Our grandfather Cuntz, whose wife we were burying, burned to death doing just that.

If I were a woman, I would immediately think rape. Because that's what the mercenaries did. With a vengeance.

It I were a child I would be terrified at the site of my parents screaming and tearing off in all directions. Imagine the chaos. Pastor Böhner said that *everyone* was screaming.

The mourners – my family and friends – ran into the woods to hide. Hearts must have been pounding, chests heaving, as they crouched behind rocks and trees, or laid low in the grass trying not to make a sound. But the babies and small children cried. The horsemen set dogs on them and chased them further into the woods, catching some of them and….

They listened from a distance through the trees as the soldiers shouted in a foreign tongue, torching the thatched roofs and haystacks. Smoke filled the village and crept into the forest. The menfolk were screaming for help and their cries echoed throughout the Mistelbach valley.

What would it be like returning from the woods to a house on fire, the barn and crops on fire, belongings scattered over the whole of the village as if hit by a tornado; the cows, pigs, and geese slaughtered, carved for food, carcasses lying about. Rats everywhere. What would we eat? Where were we going to live? Who got killed? Was father still alive?

A few short weeks later our neighbors started dying of an unknown disease. Their glands became swollen, their fingers blackened, and they developed intense fevers. They died within days of each other.

The horror. What would it have been like?

_____

This afternoon in the year 2020 I sit alone at homr, quarantined because of another pandemic. COVID

My great-grandparents endured worse.

Mark Dollhopf
New Haven, Connecticut
May 25, 2020

Appendix A: Dollhopf Ancestors in Neighboring Villages

In 1632 we had 36 other *known* great-grandparent families living in 18 villages within a ten-mile radius of Mistelbach. Each village is in italics followed by the distance in miles from Mistelbach in parentheses. Our great-grandfathers are listed with their ages at the time.

Bindlach (7.5)
Caspar Lang, 22
Haintz Perner, 35

Creez (2.5)
Hans Bar, 27
Hans Hagen, 22

Creussen (9)
Hans Holzhauser, 61

Dohlau (4)
Hans Bernreuther, 36

Gesees (2.5)
Hans "der Hikend" Bar, 55
Hans Roth Opel, 24
Wolfgang Schabtag, 53

Geigenreuth (1.2)
Georg Beyerlein, 35

Haag (5)
Hans Hofmann, 46

Gosen (5)
Hans Kolb, 27

Lindenhardt (9)
Conrad Reim, 24

Mistelgau (2)
Egidius Harras, 31
Hans "gen. Sohnlein" Pfaffenberger, 20
Johann die junge Schamel, 51
Johann Goldfuss, 61
Johann Bar, 49
Thomas Roder, 56
Hans Kufner, 39

Neunkirchen (8.5)
Albrecht Wolf, 34

Pettendorf (3.5)
Hans "d. Junge" Nützel, 33
Hanss "der Ältere" Neutzel, 71
Hanss Nützel, 47
Fritz Stahlmann, 33

Pittersdorf (1.5)
Goerg Lang Nützel, 56
Hans Ruckriegel, 77
Lorenz Schmid Ruckriegel, 24
Mathess Hagen, 55

Pleofen (8)
Andreas Kauper, 46

St. Johannis (6.2)
Hans Rauh, 43

Schobertsreuth (1.8)
Hans Hagen, 44

Seitenbach (3.7)
Egidius Dörnhöfer, 21
Hans Dörnhöfer, 43

Unterkönnersreuth (6.2)
Hans Land Bohner, 23

Appendix B: The Dorfmühle Today

The Dorfmühle (village mill) today, remodeled into a two-story house.

The original height of the mill is indicated by the exterior stone wall of the first floor. A second floor of yellow stucco was added in the remodeling.

The rear of the Dorfmühle showing the original mill equipment on display – the gears that transferred power from the wooden waterwheel to the grinding stones.

Original grinding stone from the Dorfmühle, mounted in the wall behind the house. Two stones would have been stacked like pancakes and turned by the waterwheel, grinding the grain between the two as they turned. The grain would be circulated through the stones several times to grind it down to the desired consistency for flour.

A view of the Dorfmühle from the Mistelbach stream. The stream is in the foreground running beneath the bridge. The water would have been diverted to the mill via a chute to power the water wheel, mounted on the rear of the building.

St. Bartholomew can be seen on the hilltop.

Appendix C: Dollhopf Ancestors before the Thirty Years War.

15X = our 15X-great-grandfather, etc.

15X Hans Dollhopf [~1400-~1455]
Unknown Wife [?-?]
3 children
First known Dollhopf in Mistelbach.

14X Übelein (Dietrich) Dollhopf [~1435-~1511]
Margaretha NN (no name) [?-~1511]
2 children
Miller/became owner of village mill in 1499.

13X Cuntz Übelein Dollhopf [~1465-~1526]
Margaretha Eck [?-~1534
4 children
Miller/inherited mill.

12X Cuntz Dollhopf [~1498-1570]
Unknown Wife
4 children
Miller/inherited mill.

:org *der Ältere* Dollhopf
539-1600]
agdalena Hüter [?-1609]
children
rmer/ Gotteshaus Master

11X Cuntz Dollhopf
[~1550-1581]
Margaretha Gros [?-1598]
6 children
Farmer/tailor

Georg *der Mitte* Dollhopf
[~1555-?]
Kunigunda NN [?-?]
No children
Moved to Bayreuth

Georg *der Junge* Dollhopf
[1556-1623]
Barbara Hübner [?-?]
14 children
Miller/inherited mill.

10X Cuntz Dollhopf
[1581-1635]
Maria Sporrer [1565-1634]
Maria's funeral raided by horsemen
1 child
Gotteshaus Master/tailor/gave florins to church/burned in barn.

Cuntz Dollhopf
[1592-1635]
Maria Lang [1577-?]
No children
Miller/inherited mill/last owner

Mill destroyed in 1634.
Dollhopfs no longer own.
Abandoned until 1649.

9X Conrad and his family were the only Dollhopfs to survive in Mistelbach after 1648.

9X Cuntz (aka Conrad) Dollhopf
[1607-1683]
Unknown wife/four wives
2 children
Gotteshaus Master/tailor

8X Hans der Ältere Dollhopf
[1629-1710]
Margarethe Wedel [1652-1705]/three wives
6 children
Tailor