Dollhopf

600 Years in the Baking

[Since this blog was written further research has come to light. See Blog #15: Dollhopf Name Update for the latest.]

Dollhopf: What's in a name?

> "What's in a name? that which we call a rose
> By any other name would smell as sweet."
>
> William Shakespeare
> *Romeo and Juliet*

Juliet was bemoaning that Romeo's last name "Montague" — the name of her family's sworn enemies – matters not. She loves him anyway.

Each of has thousands of surnames in our family tree, seemingly more arbitrary than not. Does our surname matter?

Psychologists think so. There is emerging evidence that names – how we are known and "labeled" – have psychosocial impact, that names can shape our personality.[1]

Dollhopf means fruitcake. Sort of. (We think; read on.) Does that matter?

The effect that names *might* have on our behavior deserves further analysis, but to genealogists, names and naming conventions are vital to research. There are historical and cultural forces that shape the use of names, and thereby, families. Without surnames it would be nearly impossible to trace family histories. Imagine if no one had a last name, or if people changed their last name every generation. (Contrary to popular convention, DNA wouldn't help; you can't test your dead ancestors for DNA. At least not without a great deal of trouble.)

A "Dollhopf" was presumably a type of napfkuchen or Gugelhupf – a yeast cake sometimes flavored with dried fruit and nuts and baked in a distinctive mold. In the US we know this as a Bundt cake.

Names not only reveal our history, but also our ethnic and cultural affiliations, and our kinship and socialization patterns. The scientific study of proper names is called onomastics, or onomatology.

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[1] See "A Point of View: Can your name shape your personality?" by Will Self, BBC News, https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-34423194

The use of a surname in addition to one's given name, or first name, was fairly common in the Roman Empire (e.g., Julius *Caesar*). The practice largely died out after the fall of Rome in 476 AD, the date when the German leader Odoacer overthrew the Roman emperor Romulus. The Germanic tribes of northern Europe did not use surnames.

William, the Duke of Normandy, also known as William the Conqueror, reintroduced the practice of surnames after his conquest of England in 1099 AD. One theory suggests that the practice was necessary to track the transfer of land owned by the nobility from one generation to the next, and, just as important, to track the transfer of their peasant's land. Peasants could "rent" land, they could not own it, but they could pass that right of tenancy (called a *fief*) to the next generation – with, of course, the permission of the noble.

The adoption of surnames in Europe varied significantly from region to region. Onamasticians theorize that when villages or tribal groups were small, say five to ten families, there was no need for last names. Everyone was known by a given name, most often the name of a saint or noble person. As villages grew, so did the need to differentiate among individuals with the same name. How many "Johanns" could a village of one hundred families have before there was utter confusion? For this reason there arose the practice of using a "*by*name" – an additional nickname that further identified a person, and just as important, those who were related to that person.

Different than surnames, bynames were *not* passed down from one generation to the next. But as migrating tribes increasingly turned to farming, and therefore staying in one place, it became important to identify the specific person who "owned" a parcel of land, and to ensure that his land was passed to members of his family upon his death.

The use of surnames developed slowly and gradually over several centuries, spreading throughout Europe in the late Middle Ages (~1000 to 1350 AD). This was a time of tremendous population expansion, and hence the need for differentiation. The use of surnames was not common in central Germany, the area of our ancestors, until well into the 14th century.

The surname Dollhopf, according to our current research, originated in the region of *Franken* ("Franconia"), a culturally and linguistically distinct area of northern Bavaria. Franconia, about the size of New Jersey, is further divided into *Oberfranken* ("Upper Franconia), *Mittelfranken* ("Middle Franconia"), and *Unterfranken* ("Lower Franconia"). The use of surnames came to Franconia – specifically the town of Nürnberg, in Mittelfranken – in the mid 1300s. Nürnberg was an important cultural center, known as the unofficial capital of the Holy Roman Empire because the Imperial Diet, the ruling body of the Empire, often met at the Nürnberg Castle.

Franconia occupies the northern half of Bavaria and is further divided into three regions.

Our direct line of Dollhopf ancestors came from the small village of Mistelbach (population today of ~1,600) in Oberfranken, about 50 miles northeast of Nürnberg. Mistelbach borders the city of Bayreuth, home to the famous Wagner Opera Festival.

German Name Derivations

Broadly speaking, there are four linguistic "categories" from which German surnames are derived: occupational, patronymic, geographic, and descriptive.

To illustrate, I shook our Dollhopf family tree and the following names fell out, illustrations of surnames and their meanings. The following are actual surnames from the Mistelbach area used by our paternal and maternal grandparents:

- Occupational – this is the most common type of surname in Franconia. Examples from our family tree, and their meanings, include *Fischer* (fisherman), *Hübner* (peasant farmer), *Hacker* (meat or tree cutter), *Hagen* (bull breeder), *Stahlmann* (man who makes steel or armor), *Todschinder* (death renderer, probably one who slaughtered animals), *Schmidt* (blacksmith, or silver-, gold-, or copper- smith), *Ruckriegel* (burglar!), *Opel* (apple grower), *Meyer* (land administrator, mayor), and *Küfner* (large vat or barrel maker).

- Patronymic – naming after the father. This was more common in the north of Germany rather than the southern or central areas like Franconia. It is characterized by the use of "*von*" or "*zu*" before a name. There are only two instances of this among our ancestors. The first is *von der Grün*, or "of the family green." The von der Grüns are a noble family, and are in turn descendants of the second example, *von Berg* (of the mountain family). In fact, our oldest known ancestor, not of the direct Dollhopf line, is Adolf I von Berg, the first Count of Berg, born in 1077 – before surnames were even in common usage.

  The knights that owned Mistelbach for more than 300 years used *von Mistelbach* as their surname. The use of "*sen*" at the end of a surname indicates "son of," but there are no instances of this in our family. Again, it is more common in northern Germany. The use of "*in*" at the end of a surname, however, as in *Dolhopfin*, indicates daughter, or wife, of *Dolhopf* [sic]. This appears many times in our tree, most often in court records, and was in common use for women in our family until the 1700s.

- Geographic – indicating where the person lived: *Franck* (one from Franken, or of the Frankish people), *Strömsdörfer* (lives by the village stream), *Reuschel* (lives by the reed swamp), *Pfaffenberger* (from the village of the priest), *Kauper* (from the village of Kauppa); *Hofman* (man from the farm).

- Descriptive – here is where it gets interesting: *Grossmann* (a big, or fat man), *Schramm* (one with a permanent scar), *Schiller* (one with squinty eyes), *Roder* (one with red hair or red beard), *Popp* (one who talks like a baby!), *Neukam* (a newcomer to the village), *Krauss* (one with curly hair), *Kolb* (one who uses a club in battle or for other use), *Holl* (one who has fields).

All the above are examples from our ancestors in Mistelbach.

The name Dollhopf falls into the descriptive category, and the first person to use this name in our direct line appears in the *Lehenbuch* ("Landbook," or "Feudalbook") of 1420 in Upper Franconia. More specifically, there was an unusually large number of Dollhopfs in the village of Weidenberg, about 13 miles due east of Mistelbach.

Although many Dollhopf lines seem to have originated in this area, there is no way currently to ascertain that this is the *only* region that gave rise to the use of the name. Our earliest identified and confirmed direct Dollhopf ancestor is Hans Dolhopf, born between 1400 and 1415, probably in Weidenberg or Bayreuth, although more research is necessary to verify his place of birth. According to the Lehenbuch, he was granted a farm in Mistelbach in 1430 (see following illustration). He died on or before 1454, at which time his inheritance was recorded in the Lehenbuch.

His name, however, was *not* Dollhopf.

It was *Tolhopff*. Over the next 400 years, roughly until the mid 1800s, the name Dollhopf appears in civil and church records variously as Tollhopff, Thollhopff, Tollhopf, Tolhopf, Dohlhopf, Dolhopf…and Dollhopf. In Franconia the use of the consonant "D" replaced "T" in the late 1400s to early 1500s. For example, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), the famous Renaissance artist from Nürnberg, was born Albrecht Türer. In the span of his lifetime his name

changed to Dürer. Same with Dollhopf. Beginning in the 1500s the use of "D" for Dollhopf became more common in Franconia, but did not entirely replace the "T" until the 1800s.

Since most of our ancestors were not literate, or even if they were, the spelling was often determined by the priest or civic official scribing the record. The name varied from village to village. Different spellings were often used for the same individual, making for, at times, confusing and tortuous research – not to mention the fact that an overwhelming number of Dollhopfs had Johann or Conrad as the first name. Often there were multiple Johann's in the same family!

There are several theories about the meaning of Dollhopf, all of which have been sourced, but none ultimately definitive.

Dollhopf is composed of two root words: *Dol* and *hopf*, or, in the 1400s, "*Tol"* and *hopf*. According to the Dictionary of Early Modern High German, "tol," or "dol" has different regional meanings: 1) suffer, pain, grief; 2) sewer ditch, pit, cave; 3) mad, enraged, furious; or 4) lumpy.
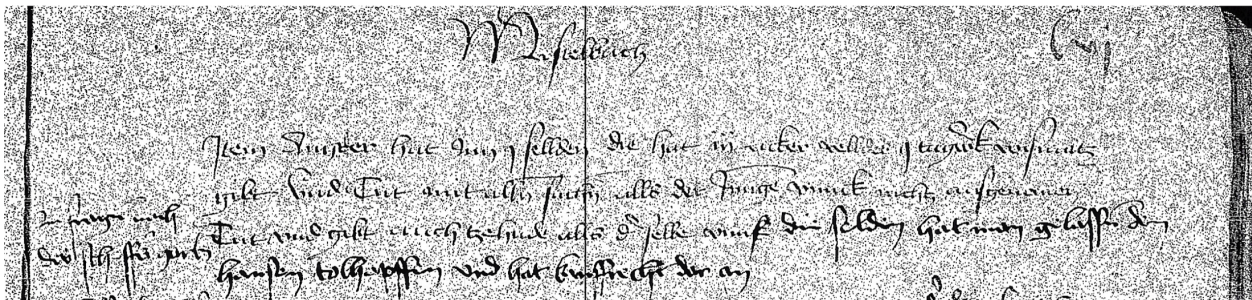
The excerpt above is from the Bayreuth Lehenbuch ("land book") c. 1440. It is the oldest known reference to a direct Dollhopf ancestor. Initial entries in this Lehenbuch date from between 1421 and 1430 and included updates until the 1440s. The above record mentioning Hans Tolhopff was not part of the original record, but is an update, probably added in the mid to late 1430s. The above record translated [with my notations in brackets]:

Mistelbach
Also, Angrer [a farmer named Angrer, also an ancestor of ours] owns one small farm which includes fields in the size of 2½ acker [acre], meadows in the size of 1 tagwerk [2]; he pays dues [taxes and obligations] in everything like the young Vunck [another farmer], nothing exempted. He pays dues and gives also the tithe (10% of crops to the church), just like the same Vunck. The small farm was left to Hans Tolhopff and he has purchase right.

The same dictionary defines *hopfen*, *hopfe*, or *hopf* as 1) "hop" (used in beer brewing), or, 2) "to hop" (as in jump). Quite literally it could mean a mad person brewing hops, or jumping up and down, clearly possible if one drinks enough of the brew.

Hans Bahlow, compiler of the *Deutches Namenlexikon* (German Name Dictionary), first published in 1967, explains the derivation of Dollhopf as: *napfkuchen* (yeast cake), or *gugelhopf* or *kugelhopf* (what we in the US know as a Bundt cake). He suggests that the name originated with an Andreas Tolhopf in the year 1484 in the *Oberpfalz*, a

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[2] *Tag* = day; werk = work. This is unit of medieval land measurement equivalent to the amount of land that could be plowed by one man in a day. It varied tremendously from one region to the next depending on soil conditions, topography, plow technology (iron or wood), and whether or not horses or oxen were used. It was usually something less than an acre.

region bordering Bayreuth, where the above mentioned Weidenberg is located. Presumably he was a baker of these cakes. However, contrary to Bahlow's research, we know that there were individuals with the name prior to this date.

There are several theories related to the derivation of *gugelhop*f, which is also known in Germany as *kugelhupf, guglhupf,* or *gugelhupf*, depending on the region, and in France as *kouglof, kougelhof,* or *kougelhopf*. As we know it in English, the Bundt cake is distinguished by the mold in which it is baked – the distinctive fluted cake tin with the hole in the middle, sometimes called a "Turk's head" mold.

The medieval gugelhopfs incorporated yeast – they were more like a sweetened bread – and included dried or candied fruits, delicacies in Franconia. Hence, fruitcake.

Given that there are many possible definitions and combinations of *dol* and *hopf*, and in turn several definitions of gugelhopf, there are four competing theories for the derivation of Dollhopf. All four have documented, legitimate, sources. You might be inclined to think that I made this stuff up, given how crazy it is.

Dollhopf Theory #1

Dollhopf could mean the "ring or crown of the raving madman." According to this definition *Tol* means madman, and *höfer* is a medieval term for a ring or crown. It was said that the fluted swirls of the gugelhopf were fashioned to imitate the turban – the "ring" or "crown" – of the raving madman. In this case the raving madman was the Turk, since Germans from this southern area of Europe spent a lot of time battling the Ottoman Turks.

Mimi Sheraton, the New York Times food critic, in her definitive *The German Cookbook* (1965), cites legends of the gugelhopf:

> These yeast cakes were made in the shape of the sultan's turban to celebrate victory over the Turks, specifically when the Hapsburg forces defeated the Turks ending the Siege of Vienna (Austria) on October 14, 1529.

She went on to cite yet another kugelhopf legend, this one from the Alsace, an area of eastern France bordering Germany:

> It seems that the Magi, or Three Kings, were walking from Bethlehem to Cologne – don't ask why! – and were very tired when they got to the hilly wine village of Ribeauville in Alsace. There they received hospitality from a pastry chef, one Mr. Kugel. In appreciation, they later baked a cake in the turban shape of the Magi and gave it their benefactor's name. In honor of that event, a *Fete de Kugelhopf* is held every June in Ribeauville. It must also be noted that the word "kugel," in German, means a sphere or a ball, which might also have something to do with the name.

A turban worn by a Turk or Magi.

So much for legends. But no matter their origin, tolhopfs, or gugelhopfs, or kugelhopfs, were festive, and often baked for weddings, baptisms, and religious holidays, and decorated with flowers and leaves as well as fruit.

I should note at this point that "fruitcake" is not a derisive term in Germany, as it is in the US. Here a "fruitcake" describes someone who is eccentric or insane. In Germany a fruitcake is only that, a cake with fruit in it. I once made the mistake of joking about being a fruitcake in front of a German audience, and nobody laughed. When I asked why, an audience member said, "Because there is nothing funny about being a fruitcake."

Thank heavens. At least they weren't laughing at our ancestors.

Dollhopf Theory #2

Dollhopf could also mean, literally, the "bulge of hopping dough."

The Brothers Grimm, of fairytale fame, also wrote a book about pastry, and attributed the *hopf* in gugelhopf to the "hopping" or "jumping" of dough out of the pan caused by the rising of the yeast.

Dictionary.com affirms this definition of gugelhopf:

> *Gugelhopf* 1885-90; < German Gugelhopf (orig. Swiss G), Gugelhupf (orig. Austrian, south German dial.), equivalent to *Gugel,* a hood with a liripipe[3] and partial covering for the shoulders, worn in the Middle Ages; Middle High German gugel, Old High German chugela, cucula < Late Latin cuculla; see cowl) + *-hopf, -hupf*, noun derivative of Middle High German hopfen to hop, skip, jump; apparently from the cake's tendency to overflow the pan in a shape likened to the headgear.

The Heraldry Institute of Rome gives further credence to this derivation, as it relates to the earlier historical spelling *Tolhopff*. It defines Tolhopff as "a Bavarian-Austrian nickname after a round flour biscuit of the Gugelhopf type."[4] It also attributes the origin to the previously mentioned Andreas Tolhopff from 1484.

In its description, the Institute defines *tol*, or *dol,* as "lumpy" or "bulbous," as in the fourth definition of *dol* listed above, and draws a direct comparison with *dol* as in the word *Dolm,* a fish with a large bulbous and lumpy head (the fish also known as the *Kaulkopf* or *Groppe),* as well as *dol a*s in *Dollbirne*, a bulbous or lumpy pear.

Hopping of the dough out of the pan caused by yeast.

The Nürnberg imperial tax-roll of 1497 includes the name Dollhopf (and variant spellings), and also some other surnames that use the prefix *Dol* or *Tol* – *Tolwetzer*, *Dolhammer*, *Dolfuss*, and *Dolwein*. *Dolhammer* might have been a particular kind of hammer, maybe a German lump hammer, or what we know as a sledgehammer. A *dolfuss* is a dysplastic foot, or a club foot. A *dolwein* refered to someone who drank too much wine, with the result that his behavior became mad and furious. *Tolwetzer* does not belong to this group of names; it probably refers to someone who has his roots in the town of Tollwitz.

Two particular facts further support this this theory of Dollhopf.

In the Mistelbach area, during the Middle Ages, there were home gatherings called *rockenstuben* – occasions when young women gathered on long winter evenings ostensibly to spin yarn. Sooner or later their social get togethers were crashed by the young boys of the village and the proceedings became excuses for debauchery – a village

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[3] A *liripipe* is an element of clothing, the long tail of a medieval hood or cloak that drapes down the back. The modern-day *liripipe* appears on the hoods of academic dress.
[4] https://www.heraldrysinstitute.com/amp/lang/en/cognomi/Tolhopf/idc/734630/

bacchanalia, if you will. Sort of like teenage medieval spin-the-bottle parties. Village pastors and local authorities tried to ban the rockenstuben throughout the ages with little success.

Chronicles of the rockenstuben relate that certain yeast cakes were prepared for these "festive" occasions, and they were called *Duglhopfs*. This is the most direct ancient clue we have to date.

Also giving credence to this theory is the fact that yeast was first "discovered" as a baking additive in Franconia in the 1300s. Imagine witnessing, for the first time, a yeast concentrated dough that would rise, or leap, out of the pan! It is not hard to imagine that this might have inspired the invention of a name like Dollhopf, in turn recognizing the artisans who created this amazing and tasty new treat.

Dollhopf Theory #3:

Another theory is offered up by *the Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in Franken*, the "Society for Family Research in Franconia:"

> In the old town chronicle of Kemnath [a village near the Dollhopf epicenter of Weidenberg], the writer Graf von Oberndorff[5] tells the story of the Dollhopf family from the early 1400s. 'They controlled a substantial amount of land, the local courts, the iron forges, and a number of lakes.'
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> The family name Dollfuß (ß = ss) means Klumpfuß (Klump = club, fuß = foot, or club foot). Analogously it can be assumed that 'Dollhopf' has the same meaning. When naming the family, the person who was called Dollfuß had a disfigured foot and 'jumped.'
>
> Very early on, one Dollhopf family bore a coat of arms showing a man hopping out of the mountains with his arms upstretched (meaning: a jumping fool!).
>
> Another Dollhopf family had a coat of arms with a fluttering, or jumping, jackdaw on a rock.

A "jackdaw" is a German blackbird, a small, gray-headed crow. The German word for jackdaw is "dohle" – hence "dohlehopf" is a jumping blackbird.

This theory would not be so far-fetched if it weren't validated in a significant way by the fourth theory.

Dollhopf Theory #4

 A fourth possibility is "birdbrain." Hmmm.

In the crypt at St. Peter's Cathedral in Regensburg[6] lies the tomb of Johannes Tolhopf (1429-1503), a well-known Renaissance humanist, astronomer, priest, and rector of the Cathedral, whose roots can be traced to Weidenberg. Father Tolhopf will be the subject of a future post.

He was a prolific letter writer, corresponding often in Latin with other leading scholars of his era, including Albrecht Dürer. He was a famous astronomer, and was summoned by King Mathias Corvinus of Hungary to be the court astronomer. In the fifteenth century astronomers were what we would consider astrologers, and Tolhopf's job was to predict the future based on the stars. He predicted victory for the King in his battle with the Turks, and it proved to be true. He was knighted for his brilliance. Really. He had 50/50 chance.

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[5] An historian from the 1800s.
[6] Regensburg is in the Oberpfalz region, the same region as Weidenberg.

The gravestone covering his tomb bears the head of the *dohle*. *Hopf* could be a derivative of *kopf*, which means "head." *Dohlekopf* could be the head of a bird or, I jest, birdbrain. Adding some credence to this definition is the bird word *wiedhopf – hopf* with an "h." A wiedhopf is a hoopoe bird, made famous by the aria "*Die Vogelfänger bin ich ja*" from the Mozart opera *Die Zauberflöte (*"The Magic Flute").

In addition, Tolhopf, who was also a founder and the first president of the University of Ingolstadt, had a coat of arms, crest, and book plates fashioned with the head of a bird. One has to ask, "Why?"

So Which is It?

"Crown of the raving madman," "hopping yeast dough," "club footed hopper," "hopping bird," or "bird brain." Which is it?

For now, the more credible explanation appears to be the gugelhopf theory, cited more often by professional onomasts. But the research continues. There are medieval texts – and medieval cookbooks – yet to be explored.

While we are on the subject of names…

It has been entirely frustrating for this genealogist to have to deal with the mind-numbing repetition of first names. Half of the males (380 of 786) in the current Dollhopf Mistelbach tree are named Johann. There are Dollhopf families where two, three, or four sons are named Johann. Or Conrad. Or Georg. Two, three or more daughters named Margarethe, or Anna. While trying to keep the names straight for a genealogist is difficult, how did the families of the day deal with it?

"Johann, fetch some water."

"Which Johann, ma?"

Our 12th great-grandfather Conrad Dollhopf (1498-1570) had three sons named Georg. The pastor recorded their official names in the parish register as Georg *der Älte* (the older), Georg *der Mitt*e (the middler), and Georg *der Junge* (the younger). So I guess they figured it out.

Johannes Tolhopf (his name above is written in Latin) amassed a substantial library. The above is a woodcutting of the book-plate that he commissioned for use in his books. The head of the dohle, or jackbird, is featured prominently.

The Catholic Church in the Middle Ages encouraged the faithful to baptize their children with the given name of a saint or other Biblical name. Children were almost *always* named after their godfather or godmother, and unlike today, being a godparent was not only a big honor, but also a serious responsibility – godparents *had* to be present at the baptism to serve as the official witnesses to the rite. This was a decree of the Council of Trent.

The tradition of naming children after their godparent persisted until the 1900s – our great grandfather John Dollhopf named his first four children after godparents – then he appears to have dropped the practice for the rest of his nine children.

Ninety-five percent of our identified Dollhopf ancestors (roughly 1,500 in the current tree) bear given names after saints. There are the obvious Johann, Mathias, Stephan, and Georg for males; and Anna, Margarethe, Maria, and

Katherina for females. But many of the given names are for obscure German medieval saints such as Conrad, Eberhard, Lorentz, Pankraz, Nicolas, Caspar, and Albrecht for males; and Kunigunda, Gertruda, Ursula, Walburga, and Ottilia for females.

Hmmm. Grandaughters Kunigunde and Walburga. It's possible.

Even though the church in Mistelbach – St. Bartholomäus – switched to Lutheran around 1528, the Catholic tradition of naming children after saints persisted. Saints were saints after all, and even Martin Luther, who abhorred the intense Catholic veneration of saints, named *all* of his six children after saints – Johann (Hans), Elizabeth, Magdelene, Martin, Paul, and Margaret.

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What's in a name? Shakespeare thought little. Genealogists think much. As for Dollhopfs, we're trying to figure it out.

In short, why some person in the 1300s, in the late Middle Ages, in a small remote village in Franconia, took the name Tolhopf, we may never know.

But the onomastic journey is delicious.

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