

The Nehweiler Inheritance

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Note: this will always be a draft. If anyone finds information which might add to, modify or correct it, please let me know.

Do not publish this, or quote any part of this in a publication, without the author's consent.

Introduction

These are letters to (Catherina) Barbara Klipfel about her great uncle's estate in Alsace. They describe an inheritance dispute.

The problem apparently started after the death of Philipp Lisher, her great uncle, in Philadelphia.¹ Though apparently an immigrant (he is said to live on "on the Parade place"), he still owned property in Nehweiler, in the Lower Alsace region of France from which he came. When he died, the husband of his niece, George Schmidt, sold all of this property, and started several new buildings on his farm. The problem is that this took the money from his wife's sister (and her family), who should have inherited part of this property.

The sister, (Catherina) Barbara Meyer, was dead by the time of Lisher's death, but her daughter, Barbara Klipfel, was still living. Nehweiler was a small town; in 1851, only 462 people lived there.² So, two relatives of the family, George Bähr (a former Mayor, and her uncle) and George Mori, wrote to tell her about the "swindling" that her "rascally cousin" had perpetrated.³ They ask for several documents, including a power of attorney to act on her behalf as they try to reclaim the estate from Schmidt.

The letters were originally written in German, and the family seems to have had them translated. One of the translations, that in items 2 and 3, seems to match Appendix D. But though I don't know German, much less have the ability to read this handwriting, it seems that we're missing some documents. The first translation, dated 26 January 1835, refers to an earlier, perhaps lost letter. In Appendix C, I can distinguish some names (such as "Barbara Klipfel" in line 2 at the top of the first page, and "Filtz" in the line after), and they don't seem to appear in logically parallel places in either of the translations—so, this long

¹ There are three spellings of this name in the letters—Fischer, Lisher, and Lisper. I settle on Lisher because from what I can make of the originals, it seems to be correct; and the Pennsylvania Census shows a "Jacob Lisher" living in Philadelphia (in Lower Dublin Township) in 1830—which is the only version of any of the possible combinations of the names to appear there between 1800 and 1850. Lisher is also a fairly common German name. "Lisper" seems to be a transcription error; the "h" looks like a very long "p." See for example George Bähr's signature on page 3 of Appendix D.

² The town of Nehweiler bei Wörth (in German, or Nehwiller-prés-Woerth in French) was absorbed into the larger town of Reichshoffen in 1972; it is today part of France; see Appendix B.

letter apparently still needs to be translated. Letter Item 1 also begins with the date "Janry the 26th 1835," which I don't see on any of the German letters—does this mean that this is a translation of a lost original? There is an inventory (Appendix E) which isn't translated. These apparent gaps are why I've included the scans of the originals, in case someone else can make sense of this. I would be happy to send along digital copies, which are in color.

Despite these gaps, a good bit of this is still clear. If the letters from Alsace sound like a scam today, they apparently sounded like trouble then too. On the back of the 1850 letter, a note explains that someone is to go to Philadelphia to figure out more clearly what happened to the property, and to "be careful & return this letter." This is perhaps Mr. Pritchard, whose response is Item 5.

The scandal must have taken decades to resolve. The letters are dated 1835 and 1850. Also note the ages of the family members: Henry Klipfel and Barbara Meyer were dead by 1819, and George Schmidt was in their generation—and Jacob Philipp was in the generation before theirs. "1804" is evident at the top of page 1 of the long, apparently untranslated letter in Appendix C. The family did, however, try to take some action. The note to "Mr. Thomas" indicates so. One of the instructions (item 1 in the 1850 letter) is to obtain an official certificate to certify the dates of birth and death for her relatives who had immigrated with her: Barbara Klipfel went to the Recorder of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in New Orleans to do just this in 1850, which is why we have record of them today (see Appendix G).⁴ But, judging by the letter from Mr. Pritchard (item 5), there was ultimately no point in recovering the property.

The importance of the letters to later generations who kept them was likely not the inheritance itself, but because they are, incidentally, a record of names of family members and a bit of a scandal that affected them. On the back of the second letter is a note which

³ Bähr and Böhr both appear (along with several other versions without an umlaut). I settle on Bähr because this seems to match the signature on page 3 of the Appendix D.

⁴ See the (9) children of Catherina Barbara Meyer and Henry Klipfel under the "Third Generation" in Appendix A; the names that were registered were Henry her father, and Catherine Elizabeth, George Henry, George, Michel, and Philippe.

describes the relationships of the family members; Barbara Klipfel, whose second husband was John McMillan, is called "Mrs. McMillan" here, which implies that the note was written by someone at least a generation later. And in several places in the letters a later reader has underlined names and some key phrases, including the word "swindling" in the first letter. The interest in this minor incident is the same for us today.

Editorial Procedure

These documents are very fragile, and the translations are not always very fluent. I have tried to balance a respect for the original with a desire to make them readable. But, I have erred on the side of being literal rather than altering the documents. Names are spelled differently throughout, and I have not regularized this, since I don't know how the names might appear in other, as yet unknown documents which readers might uncover. I've also tried to be clear about what I couldn't understand, in case someone later can make more sense of this.

To accomplish all of this, these are the annotations I have used:

- < > surround text or space which has been damaged or which is indecipherable; if they surround a word, the word is my best guess.
- [] surround my additions to the text, including page turns.
- ^ ^ surround text which has been inserted superscript by the author
- I have kept spelling, punctuation, capitalization, underlining, strikeouts, and paragraphing as it is in the originals.

1. *A translation of a letter from Alsace, which may be in the file. I respect the lines of the original here because it made it easier to transcribe.*

Nähweiler, Janry the 26th 1835

My dear although unknown friend

I, George Böhr Mayor and Principal of the Community of Nähweiler wrote to You, and made You acquainted with several thefts (swindling) that Your Cousin George Smitt farmer in this place and husband of Elisabeth Meyer the sister of Your deceased mother Barbara Meyer has committed on You. But as we, George Mori, son of Jacob Mori senior, but now married to Margaret Smitt daughter of Jacob Schmitt the tailor, and as I, George Bohr, married to Magdalene of George Moris or Benzen George made You acquainted in this said letter, that Your Cousin George Smitt did not answer Your letter. But as we two don't know now, wether You have received our answer, therefore we write You now again George Schmitt your rascally Cousin has sold to a man from Neidderroderm⁵ in our Elsace everything that was to come to the heirs of Philipp Fischer of Philadelphia he sold it for seventeen hundred francs, every thing that is here in Nähweiler, and half of which would likewise have fallen to You, has he appropriated to himself. Besides this there are several other particulars, and as we are not certain that You have gotten our letter, we write to You a second time about them. Firstly Three quarters of a Acre situated in Muhlbruih.⁶ Secondly the Quar-

ter Acre situated in Drisek. Thirdly one and half Acre situated near the village, all this was the property of the Grandmother Concerning the furniture he has to be forced to make an Inventarium (List) therefor as soon as You receive this letter, You have to send us a legal Authority in the following style:

That You send the Authority to George Bohr the son in law [overleaf] of George Mori of Nähweiler, and also to George Mori the son of Jacob Mori senior, to get everything and property that lawfully and justly belongs to You as inheritance from Your grandmother Margaret Salome Fischer the wife of Christian Meier deceased all in Nähweiler. Concerning the things of Philadelphia in America, which George Schmitt has bought of the man. You have to mention in this Authority how much it is, as he has taken already 1700 francs. This man has a son in North America who made his inheritance over to his father and the father has sent for that the Sale of (Bill of Sale? Sales money?) of Your inheritance to America. We send You our greetings and embrace You cordially.

Tarry not and send everything to the subjoined address
Mr: George Böhr Farmer in Nähweiler in Lower Elsass
near Hugenau⁷ Kingdom of France Department of the
Lower Rhine in Nähweiler.

The inheritance comes originally from Philipp Fischer at the present time in Philadelphia, on the Parade place. This Philipp Fischer has taken in second marriage a person by the name of

⁵ Niederroedern; this is not visible on Appendix B, but it is in France, right next to Lautenbourg.

⁶ I could not find Muhlbruih or Drisek.

Mad. Schramm to whom he had made over any and every thing for her lifetime. But as she did die You have to get ^the^ inheritance.

We greet You cordially, our wives do the same and <as> soon as You have sent the Authority we will send You e<ve->ry thing faithfully as true as our names are

George Böhr. Mayor. George Mori.

⁷ Haguenu; see Appendix B.

2. A second letter, with a fuller explanation of measures to be taken. It is copied in Appendix C.

Nehweiler, February 7 1850

Worthy friend and Aunt

In conformity with my last of the 31st of January I send you as follow [sic]
1st a transcript of the power of Attorney made by Elizabeth Meyer, wife of Geo. Schmidt of Nehweiler, claiming herself to be the only heir in the succession of estate of the deceased Philip Jacob Lisper of Philadelphia

2nd a certificate naming all children imigrated [sic] with you, date of birth, the acts of death so they can be entered in the civil register of the Parish of Nehweiler; also the first and whole name of the Family; also the name of the deceased children

These acts of death should be duplicated certified by the recorder also legalized by the French Consul. The date of the parties died and their age should be mentioned if possible

3rd A model of my power of attorney that you can have copied properly signed by you witnessed by two or more competent witnesses known by you or your family. If possible Eye witness to the death of your mother which can be included in the end of the Power of attorney.

Your signature and those of witnesses should be put in the presence of a Notary [page turn] and legalized by the French Consul.

The Family name of your deceased husband Filtz or Fiehls or whatever his right name is should be inserted in the power of Attorney sign yourself as born Klipfel. In the power of Attorney please mention the heirs from Philadelphia that if you ever discover what George Schmidt received if are ever able to bring him to a settlement be can compel him to disgorge If you don't know anybody in Phila. write on Mr. P.H. Pistar 62 Beaver Street New York. He is the correspondent of Mr. Henry Ball of Weisenburg. He is attending to his business in America. You can depend on him because he has relatives in Phila. If you need any certificates of Birth or death from here I will send them to you right away.

I heard that my calumniator wrote to you. Have the kindness to send me a copy of his letter so I be able to put it under his nose or prosecute him before the courts and show him in his proper light before the authorities or if you are willing send me the original letter. You uncle and friend,
Geo. B^aehr.

They talk in Nehweiler that Schmidt received between 1800 or 1900 francs from Phila. some others say he received 2400 or 2500 fr. Geo Schmidt commenced building right away house, barn, and stable.

Justice of the Peace of Worth⁸

The Justice of the Peace of the Canton Worth certifies that he assembled the heirs of Margaret Saloma Lisper wife of Christian Meyer Brother deceased in Nehweiler and notified them of the succession of papers received from Barbara Klipfel widdow of Filtz of New Orleans and in the matter of succession of Her grandmother Margaret Saloma Lisper of her grandfather Philip Lisper deceased in Phila. the heirs resisted to settle with Miss Barbara Klipfel so I would advise you to send to Mr. Geo. Baehr the power of attorney to compell the unwilling heirs to come to a settlement.

Worth February 7, 1850

Justice of the Peace

Merilhon

"Stamp"

⁸ This is Woerth (see Appendix B); Nehweiler belonged to the Canton of Woerth.

3. *This is a second translation of the same letter as Item 3. This was so fragile that it was crumbling as I transcribed it. Again I have kept the lines of the original because this made the copying of it easier.*

Dear friend and cousin,

In compliance

my letter of the 31st of February^o last I send you hereby--

1) An extract of the power of attorney given by Elisabeth M<eyer> of Georg Schmidt of Nehweiler; in order to obtain po<sses ___> sole heir, of the estate of the late Philipp Jacob Lisher who died at Philadelphia.

2) A statement of all the <_____> of all the children of <_____> parents, ^who^ emigrated with them with <_____ d>ates of their birth attached, in order to make the certificates of death, correspond to the general register of the congregation Nehweiler, regarding their christian and family names, as well as the different ages of the deceased children.

It will therefore be necessary to have new certificates made out, which if possible should contain the day of death, and are to be properly recorded and certified by the governor and the french ambassador or consul.

3) A form in which the power of attorney is to be executed may be copied, but has to be signed by you own hand and sealed, in presence of two or more witnesses, knowing you personally, it would be of some benefit if you could select as witnesses people acquainted with your family, and such who [page 2] were travelling companion, and witnesses at the deathbed of your

mother, in which case the circumstances may be added as intimated in the enclosed formula.

The power of attorney must be drawn up by and signed before a notary public, who has at the same time to certify the deposition of the witnesses, which power must be confirmed by the governor and the french consul.

The family name of your late husband / Filtz or Fiehls as the name my be correctly be spelled / must in your power of attorney correspond with your own signature, but you may add to the latter your maiden name "Klipfel"

In the power of attorney is the intent of the inheritance of Philadelphia remarked, <_____> to make Georg Schmidt here answerable for the amoun<t> <____> that he illegally has received, provide you are able to ascertain the same, and procure the necessary particulars and proof, which you will please communicate to me fully.

If you have no particular acquaintance in Philadelphia, you may direct your letter to M^r. Ph. F. Pistor Beaver Street N^o. 62 New York, who is the correspondent of M^r. Heinrich of Waissenburg and acts as his agent in Amerika, some of his relations reside at Philadelphia, and will look to your interest.¹⁰ If you should require any cert from here any certificates or birth or death from here you will please inform me of it and I will transmit the same to you.

I learned that my enemies have addressed you. It would

⁹ Yes, it does say "the 31st of Febuary"; it's an error for "January."

¹⁰ Bergzabern was just a few miles away from Nehweiler; see Appendix B. A "Phillipe Frederic Pistor" was born there on 19 May 1807; he married Mary Matilda Falconer Cushman on 26 October 1846 in New York City.

render me great satisfaction, if you would be so kind as to [page 3]
send me a copy of said letter, that I may convince them of their
harmful conduct towards me, and if driven to an extreme to let
the judge decide.

I believe it would be still better to send me instead of
a copy the original.

In expectation of your answer I remain

your

obedient cousin and friend

Geo. T. Bähr the late

Mayor of N<ehweiler>

P.S. It is a general rumor in Nehweiler, that <_____>
received from the estate 1800-1900 frcs, and some of <_____>
amount reaches 2400-2500 francs, anyhow <Schmidt> <_____> <_____> <_____>
ly after rebuilt the premises. It will be important to ascertain
how much his agent received and to obtain written proof.

The justice of peace of the county of Wörth certifies that,
the heirs of Margaret Solomea Lisher wife of Christian Lisher ^Meyer^¹¹
which, both died at Nehweiler, appeared before him to receive notice
and cognicence of those papers of Barbara Klipfel, widow Filtz
of New Orleans, regarding her interest on the inheritance of her
grandmother Margaret Solomea Lisher and her grand uncle
Philipp Lisper deceased at Philadephia

But that said ^heirs^ refused to admit Barbara Klipfel's right
to share and make all possible objection and order to avoid [page 4]

said division, in consequence of which it becomes necessary as to correct the errors in the produced documents, as likewise so send a new power of attorney to the late mayor Georg Bähr, in order to persecute [sic] by the competent tribunal the ill disposed heirs.

Wörth the 7th of Febuary 1850

Therithon [?]

Justice of peace

(seal)

[Further down on page 4 of this letter is the following, written in another hand:]

Margaret Solomea Lisper

was grandmother to Mrs McM<illan>

Jacob Philip Lisper was

grand uncle to Mrs McMillan

Elizabeth Meyer wife of

Georg Schmidt was our Aunt to Mrs McMillan

[Still further down is this, written sideways, in yet a third hand:]

Call on Ph. F. Piston No. 62 Beaver St

NY and ascertain the particulars of

the property in Philadelphia

be careful & return this letter.

C. G. S.

¹¹ superscript, and inserted in pencil by a later hand

4. *This is just a single note; it is not dated, but I placed it last because it seems to document action taken to resolve the dispute. It is copied in Appendix E.*

[outside of note:] "Mr. Thomas."

Mrs. McMillan has sent on to the Justice of the Peace at Wort all the documents necessary and a power of attorney Georg Bähr formerly Mayor of Nehweiler is her uncle and can give you all the information concerning her property and who is charged with her power of attorney Stratsburg¹² is the Capital of Nehwiler county and Mr Robert wrote to the consul there in a relation to this property of Margaret Solomea Lisper & of Philip Lisper and to which property she is heir.

¹² I.e., Strasbourg; see Appendix B.

5. *This note does not mention the inheritance specifically, but it seems very much like it refers to the end of the problem.*

Phila. April 26th, 1854

Mrs. McMillan

Dr Madam,

I have received your two letters, relating to your business in this place, I did not answer them immediately because Mrs. Van Dyke was in Washington and I wished that Mr. Pritchard should have another interview with him – I am sorry to say, that he does not give much hope of your recovering the property, in the first place he does not think, if it were recovered, that it would pay the expenses and also that it would be years before any thing could be done – I am sorry to give you such a poor account of it, but he says he will not abandon it yet – I will see him again in a little while and write you again

I am glad you arrived home in safely and found your family well. [page 2] With the help of God, I hope to be in New Orleans next Oct: when I shall see you & all my friends I hope once more – We are all well, will you give my love to Mrs. Southways and Mr. Goodrich and all whom you know I love—

I am sincerely,

Your friend

C.M. Pritchard

Appendix A: This is the ancestry of the involved family. People from the family important to the dispute are numbered in bold. In the chart, I have excluded people from the family who aren't relevant to this correspondence.

First Generation

1. Unamed LISHER. The family was from Nehweiler bei Wörth, in the Alsace region of France, which is in the Lower Rhine Valley right on the German border.

Children:

- 2** i. Margaret Solomea
- 3** ii. Jacob Philipp

Second Generation

2. Margaret Solomea LISHER (UNNAMED¹). Margaret Solomea died in Nehweiler.

Margaret Solomea married Christian MEYER. Christian died in Nehweiler.

They had the following children:

- 4** i. Catherina Barbara (1762-1818)
- 5** ii. Elizabeth

3. Jacob Philipp LISHER (UNNAMED¹). Jacob Philipp died in Philadelphia, PA.

The letters say that it is his death which prompted the dispute over the property: at his death, the husband (George Schmidt) of his niece took control of his property back home and sold it all.

Third Generation

4. (Catherina) Barbara MEYER (Margaret Solomea LISHER², UNNAMED¹). Born in 1762 in Nehweiler. Catherina Barbara died in New Orleans, LA, in 1818; she was 56.

Catherina Barbara married Heinrich (Henry) KLIPFEL. Born in 1781 in Nehweiler. Heinrich (Henry) died in New Orleans, LA, in 1819; he was 38.

They had the following children:

- i. Catherina Elisabeth. Born on May 15, 1800. Catherina Elisabeth died in 1830; she was 29.
- ii. George Heinrich. Born on August 25, 1801. George Heinrich died in June 1833; he was 31.
- iii. Johann Philipp. Born on January 18, 1803.
- 6** iv. Catherina Barbara (1804-1844)
- v. Marguerite. Born on November 14, 1807.
- vi. George (Died as Child). Born on November 14, 1807. George died in December 1817; he was 10.
- vii. Frederic. Born on April 20, 1811.
- viii. Michel (Died as Child). Born on March 30, 1812. Michel died in December

- ix. 1817; he was 5.
Philippe (Died as Infant). Born on March 3, 1816. Philippe died in December 1817; he was 1.

5. Elizabeth MEYER (Margaret Solomea LISHER², UNNAMED¹).

Elizabeth married George SCHMIDT. He is the "rascally" cousin who sold the inheritance and took the money without sharing it with his wife's sister. One of the two authors of the letters ("George Mori, son of Jacob Mori Sr.") is married to a Margaret Schmidt, who is George's relative in some fashion, perhaps his sister. The other author, George Bähr, is said to be Barbara Klipfel's uncle, but by what connection I don't know—presumably by marriage to an unknown sister of one of her parents.

Fourth Generation

6. Catherina Barbara KLIPFEL (Catherina Barbara MEYER³, Margaret Solomea LISHER², UNNAMED¹). Born on January 2, 1804 in Nehweiler. Catherina Barbara died in New Orleans, LA, in 1844; she was 39.

She went by "Barbara." She is the woman to whom the letters were addressed. She is a direct immigrant ancestor. In 1850, she (as "Barbara") went to the Recorder's office of Births, Marriages, and Deaths in New Orleans and registered the deaths of her father, sister, and her brothers (see Appendix G). There is no mention of the death of her mother.

Catherina Barbara first married Charles FIELDS.

They had one child:

- i. Julia

Catherina Barbara second married John MCMILLAN. Born in 1804 in NY. John died in New Orleans, LA, on June 23, 1842; he was 38.

They had the following children:

- i. John (1834-1838)
- ii. Thomas (1839-1840)
- iii. Ellen (1842-1910)