

THE MERTZ FAMILY OF FRANKENHAUSEN, GERMANY

I first heard of the Mertz Family of Frankenhause, Germany -- a very small village now part of Mühlthal, a little south of Darmstadt — when a young German woman named Christiane Mertz contacted me in 2009 and said that in the 1680's, Johannes Mertz came to Frankenhause and became the manager of the local baron's lands there. Over time, those lands came to be owned and farmed by his descendants.

Johannes' oldest son was named Johan Henrich and he had six sons, two of whom apparently left for Pennsylvania. Nothing was ever heard from them and the family had no idea where they settled or whatever happened to them. Everything Christiane told me, which I repeat here, came from the genealogical work of Dr. Wendell Mertz (1891-1965), published many years ago and based strictly on German records.

The amazing coincidence was that one of the sons who left for Pennsylvania was named Jost and those German records said he left in 1748. He was why Christiane contacted me because she had found my website showing that Jost Mertz arrived America in 1748 and settled in Berks County. It seemed to her and I agreed, it must be the same man. Christiane wrote: *"thanks for finding our long lost Jost."*

She then sent me more information about the family. Dr. Wendell's information was that the other brother who emigrated was Johan Georg but I noticed there was *another* brother named Johan Henrich who was born in 1709. I was struck by the fact that the more famous Berks County Pioneer Mertz was named Johan Henrich and that his descendants seemed to think he was born about 1708 (though I've never known the source of that date). Christiane looked further and said well it might have been Johan Henrich and not John George who they thought had left. In any event, they knew nothing more about what might have happened to Johan Henrich. There was no further record of him in Germany.

The next key event in this story is that about two years after Christiane first contacted me a descendant of Jost submitted his DNA and it closely matched the DNA of known descendants of John Henry — meaning, scientifically, we could now say that John Henry and Jost were closely related. As there were any number of clues in American records that demonstrate that the families of these two men were close, this all confirmed what I had always believed.

And then in 2017, a man named Dan Goebel contacted me and he was translating, and supplementing where possible, the work of Dr. Wendell Mertz. Dan provided me with a lot of useful information — including copies of the baptism records of Johan Henrich and Johan Jost Mertz, sons of Johan Henrich (Sr.). His work too confirmed that Johan George married and then settled in a village nearby Frankenhause. indeed he had not gone to America.

The work of Dr. Wendell was expanded upon by Alfred Schafer who published a book Die Familie Schafer (Mertz) in 1977. Alfred Schafer was Wendell's nephew; the son of Wendell's sister, Marie (Mertz) Schafer (1874-1958). Alfred's book traced the family back to Antonius Mertz and so we start with him.

Name: Antonius Mertz

Birth: 1595 Strasbourg, Alsace
Death: aft 1662

The earliest known ancestor of this family was Antonius Mertz. Here is a biography of him as given by Alfred Schafer. I have slightly edited the direct translation done for me by my nephew [and I have added some editorial comments of my own].

- Antonius was born about 1595 and died after 1662. According to a 1618 winery receipt — Antonius “hailed” from Strasbourg. [My own Mertz ancestors came from Switzerland in about the 1680’s to Alsace and settled not too far from Strasbourg. But DNA tells us that my Mertz ancestors were not related to this Mertz family in any way.]
- This winery receipt had been found by Dr. Wendell in the Darmstadt Castle archive, it was later destroyed during the bombing of 11/12 Sep 1944.
- From 1618-1635, and apparently also at specific later times, Antonius was the municipal head (Mayor) for Lord Hans Konrad von Wallbrunn in Ernsthofen. [So Antonius had already moved on by 1618, long before my ancestors arrived Strasbourg, but the coincidence that these two totally unrelated Mertz families who emigrated to Berks County in the 1730’s had at some point previously lived in or near Strasbourg is intriguing.]
- At the time, the Wallbrunn territory included the towns of Asbach, Ernsthofen, Herchenrode, Hoxhohl, Beerbrau and Modau, or parts thereof. [Those villages are all very near Frankenhausen and most of these village names and a few others appear in Alfred’s book as places where various descendant Mertzses were born or died.]
- Antonius most likely lost his first wife in 1634/35, a very tumultuous time. Ernsthofen lost nearly its entire population after the Plague Year of 1635 and was completely deserted by the end of the Thirty Years War in about 1650.
- Antonius entered into a second marriage on 8 Sep 1635, in the Chapel of the Castle Lichtenberg, the refuge for the region due to the plague. He married Margereta Felicitas Rinck. [She was the mother of both of the sons covered further in this narrative — Christian and Johannes.] [Castle or Schloss Lichtenberg is in Fischbachtal, Germany — yet another neighbor village to Frankenhausen.]
- Alfred Schafer says the origin of the Mertz surname derives from Martinus. [The reference is, I think, to Mars — the god of war. The origin of the name of my ancestors, Merz in Switzerland, was based supposedly on the name of the month of March (März) which also traces to that same god Mars.]

Alfred Schafer’s book traces many, many descendants of Antonius across many branches of the family. He did not limit himself just to the line that settled and stayed in Frankenhausen. Other branches settled in nearby villages. One of the more interesting findings to me was that over the years there were quite a number

of marriages between members of the Mertz family to members of the Rosemann family which also was numerous in the various villages in the Frankenhausen area.

That finding is noteworthy because the wife of John Henry Mertz, the immigrant, was Anna Maria Rosemann and a Jacob Rosemann arrived America in 1737 on the same ship as John Henry and members of the Rosemann family are named in Mertz Church records.

So the question, of course, is whether Alfred's research is accurate? I think I can make the case that it does have a lot of credibility.

- There are a great number of specific sources cited in Alfred's bibliography. The sources are not attached to any specific date or relationship so no one fact can be easily verified, but clearly real research went into his book.
- In one line (not of interest here), the book travels back 22 generations, a rather amazing piece of genealogical research if true. It's a little hard to believe anyone anywhere could build a tree that reaches that far back, but it makes me wonder whether the fact that these people lived in the same place for hundreds of years makes research there easier.
- I do have some familiarity with German church and public records, they clearly exist and may well be quite thorough. Perhaps too there were family bibles handed down many generations. Maybe there is a more solid basis for a lot of genealogical facts there than we even find here.
- One example of Dr. Wendell's work though actually impressed me greatly. As stated elsewhere, he says that Antonius "hailed" from Strasbourg and in his narrative he says that fact came from a "1618 winery receipt". Anyone who found such a source had clearly done some digging.

In any event, I am not proposing that every fact, relationship, date of birth or death and place as given by Alfred Schafer be taken as 100% accurate. The work is valuable to me because I simply have no doubt that the John Henry and Jost mentioned in passing in Alfred's work are in fact the two brothers who later appeared at Mertz Church. They were real people in German records and they were real people with matching biographies in American records.

And, given that he likely did not know of John Henry's marriage to Anna Maria Rosemann, or he might well have mentioned it, the Rosemann family clearly also existed in that time and place.

So I think the major conclusions of Alfred (and Dr. Wendell's) work stand:

- Jost and John Henry were brothers. Their father was Johan Henrich.
- They came to America from Frankenhausen where Mertz's still live today.
- John Henry's wife, Anna Maria Rosemann, came from the same area of Germany.
- The Mertz's have been in Frankenhausen since the mid-1600's. It is a reasonable conclusion that Johan Henrich was the son of Johannes and he the son of Antonius.

Name: Johannes Mertz

Birth: 1638 Strasbourg, Alsace
Death: 1691 Frankenhausen, Germany
Father: Antonius Mertz

The son of Antonius of interest to me is Johannes, who according to Christiane Mertz came to Frankenhausen in the 1680's and from whom the two American immigrants descend. But Antonius had another son, Christian, who was equally important to Alfred Schafer.

Alfred's mother was Marie Mertz (1874-1958), whose father was a direct descendant of Johannes. But Frankenhausen is a small village — in an area of Germany where there are mainly only other small villages. The Mertz family has been in that area of Germany from the very early 1600's and is still there today. It is not surprising therefore that in addition to her father's direct line, in her expansive family tree Marie Mertz had an additional Mertz ancestral line.

- Marie's direct line of Mertz ancestors is Johannes (1840-1924), Johan Wilhelm (1802-1859), Johan Adam (1771-1812), Johan George (1738-1814), Johan Peter (1705-1799) and then **Johan Henrich** (1675-1750).
- **Johan Henrich**, of course, was also the father of John Henry and Jost — the emigrants to America. Johan Henrich's father was Johannes (1640-1691).
- The wife of Marie's grandfather, Johan Wilhelm Mertz, was Justine Sophia Gobel. The wife of Justine's grandfather, George Peter Gobel, was Maria Elisabeth Mertz (1745-1796). Alfred Schafer also traced Maria Elisabeth's line.
- Maria Elisabeth's direct line of Mertz ancestors is Johan Nicholas Mertz (1708-1781), Johan Michael (1673-1755) and Christian (1645-1723).
- There the two lines converge. The father of both Christian (1645-1723) and Johannes (1640-1691) was the man named Antonius Mertz who lived circa 1595-1662.

It is not coincidence that the Gobel name appears in Marie Mertz's family tree and Dan Goebel is translating Dr. Wendell Mertz' published work. Dan is not a Mertz descendant but there are several interconnections of his Goebel ancestors and the Mertz family of Frankenhausen. Thus his interest.

Here are two charts that show the two different Mertz lines covered by Alfred Schafer, that of his mother Marie Mertz and his great-great-grandmother Maria Elisabeth Mertz.

Marie Mertz' Direct Line					
	Mertzes	Born	Born	Died	Died
	Marie	1874	Frankenhausen	1958	Frankenhausen
F	Johannes	1840	Frankenhausen	1924	Frankenhausen
GF	Johan Wilhelm	1802	Frankenhausen	1859	Frankenhausen
GGF	Johan Adam	1771	Frankenhausen	1812	Frankenhausen
2G GF	Johan George	1738	Frankenhausen	1814	Frankenhausen
3G GF	Johan Peter	1705	Frankenhausen	1799	Frankenhausen
4G GF	Johan Henrich	1675	?	1750	Frankenhausen
5G GF	Johannes	1640	Schloss Lichtenberg	1691	
6G GF	Antonius	abt 1595	Strasbourg	abt 1662	

Maria Elisabeth Mertz' Direct Line (mother of Johan Wilhelms' mother)					
	Mertzes	Born	Born	Died	Died
	Maria Elisabeth	1745		1796	
F	Johan Nicholas	1708	Waschenbach	1781	
GF	Johan Michael	1673	Nieder Ramstadt	1755	
GGF	Christian	1645		1723	
2G GF	Antonius	abt 1595	Strasbourg	abt 1662	

Name: Johan Henrich Mertz

Birth: 1675
Death: 1750 Frankenhausen, Germany
Father: Johannes Mertz (1638-1691)

The son of Johannes of interest to me is Johan Henrich who presumably lived nearly his entire life in Frankenhausen and many of his descendants continue to live there, and in nearby villages, today.

According to the German research, Johan Henrich had six sons:

1. Joh Peter born 1705.
2. Joh George born 1708. Dr. Wendell Mertz noted "nach Pennsylvanien".
3. Joh Henrich born 1709.
4. Joh Wendell born 1718.
5. Joh Christoph born 1720.
6. Joh Jost born 1724 about whom Dr. Wendell noted "etwa 1748 Pennsylvanien".

As was typical in that place in those times, the eldest son Joh Peter inherited title to his father's lands, leaving the younger brothers to somewhat have to fend for themselves.

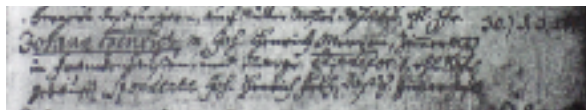
I know nothing more about Wendell or Christoph, I am not sure if Wendell Mertz or Alfred Shafer tracked their lives further or not. In any event, there is no reason to think they emigrated.

Dan Goebel was able to track Joh George and confirm, as I suspected, he did not go to America. There is record of the marriage of George to Anna Margaretha Seitz and they settled in Nieder-Beerbach, a little village near Frankenhausen. He believes, as I did almost from the beginning, that Dr. Wendell was simply confused as to which of the older two brothers emigrated. He meant to say Heinrich "nach Pennsylvanien", not George.

It seems an inescapable conclusion though that Jost did emigrate and absolutely was the Jost who arrived in 1748 and next showed up at Mertz Church, the very church founded by his presumed older brother John Henry. I do not think there is anything in American records to indicate Jost's birth year. He died young in 1764, his wife had been born in 1733 -- so while we can't say we know he was born in 1724 (from American records), it is quite a reasonable estimate of his age. And Jost Mertz is a truly unique name — he was the only one EVER in American records.

Dan Goebel sent me the baptism records for Johann Jost and Johann Heinrich Mertz from the Ober-Ramstadt Kirchenbuch.

Johann Henrich Merz Baptism 1709



*Johann Henrich, m. Joh. Henrich Merzen,
Zimmer Meister in Frankenhause(n),
und Marger. Elis. uxoris ehl. Sohn
getauft. Sponderte Joh. Henrich Feth,
dasig. Zimmergesell. 30.) d 3 Xbr.*

Without abbreviations:

*Johann Henrich, mit Johann Henrich Merzen, Zimmer Meister in Frankenhause(n),
und Margaretha Elisabetha uxoris ehlich Sohn getauft. Sponderte Johann Henrich
Feth dasig Zimmergesell. 30.) den 3 Dezember*

English Translation:

*Johann Henrich the legitimate son of Johann Henrich Merz, Master Carpenter in
Frankenhause(n), and Margaretha Elisabetha his wife was baptized. Sponsor Johann
Henrich Feth, Apprentice Carpenter from here. 30.) the 3rd December*

(Note: the 30 only refers to the order of baptisms in 1709, Henrich was number 30)

Johann Henrich Mertz Confirmation 1722

As written:

7, Joh. Henrich Mertz von Fr. Haus . . . 12 1/2 Jahr

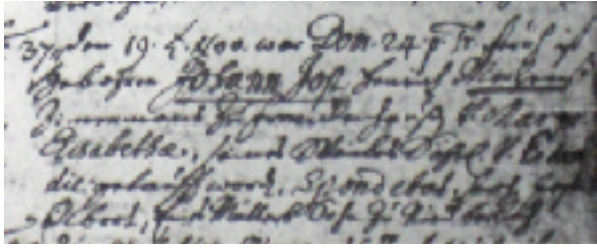
Without abbreviations:

7. Johann Henrich Mertz von Frankenhause(n) . . . 12 1/2 Jahr

English Translation:

7. Johann Henrich Mertz of Frankenhause(n) . . . 12 1/2 years

Johann Jost Mertz Baptism 1724



37: den 19te Nov. war Dom. 24. p. Tr. _____ ist gebohren Johann Jost, Henrich Mertzens, Zimmermanns zu Frankenhausen u. Margr. Elisabetha, seiner weibes Sohnl. u. Eodem die getauft worde. Spondebat Joh. Jost Elbert, erst Müllers Sohn zu Nieder-Beerbach.

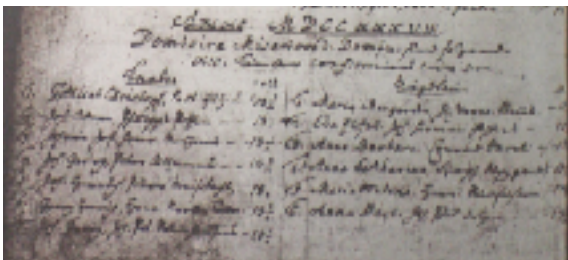
Without abbreviations:

37: den 19te November war Dominica 24 post Trinitatis _____ ist gebohren Johann Jost, Henrich Mertzens, Zimmermanns zu Frankenhausen und Margaretha Elisabetha, seiner Weibes Sohnlein, und Eodem die getauft worde. Spondebat Johann Jost Elbert, erste Müllers Sohn zu Nieder-Beerbach.

English Translation:

37: the 19th of November, the 24th Sunday after Trinity Sunday, is born a little son, Johann Jost, Henrich Mertz, Carpenter of Frankenhausen and Margaretha Elisabetha, his wife, and on the same day was baptized. Sponsor Johann Jost Elbert, only son of the Miller of Nieder-Beerbach.

Johann Jost Mertz Confirmation 1738



3. Johann Jost, Henr. Mertzens - 13 1/2

Without abbreviations:

3. Johann Jost, Henrich Mertzens - 13 1/2

English Translation:

3. Johann Jost, Henrich Mertz's (son) - 13 1/2 (years)

The Rosemann Family

In addition to all the various Mertz families covered by Alfred Schafer's work, I was totally stunned when I found three marriages in Alfred Schafer's family tree of a male Mertz and a female named Rosemann.

Why is this Rosemann connection so interesting? Because the name of John Henry's wife was Anna Maria Rosemann. And a Jacob Rosemann was on the same ship as John Henry Mertz in 1737. I think this is one more piece of evidence tying these Berks County Mertzses (Jost and John Henry) back to their Frankenhausen origins.

The three Mertz-Rosemann marriages:

- Marie Mertz' mother was Margaret Elisabeth Roßmann (1851-1920). [Hereinafter Rosemann.] She and Johannes Mertz married 22 Jul 1869.

Margaret Elisabeth Rosemann's Direct Line (wife of Johannes Mertz born 1840)					
	Rosemanns	Born	Born	Died	Died
	Margaret Elisabeth	1851	Nieder Beerbach	1920	Nieder Ramstadt
F	Johan Conrad	1810	Nieder Modau	1878	
GF	Johan Henrich	1777	Nieder Modau	1852	
GGF	Johan Henrich	1748	Lutzelbach	1823	
2G GF	Johan Jacob	1712	Lutzelbach	1788	
3G GF	Johan Philip	1672	Lutzelbach	1723	
4G GF	Johannes	1637	Lutzelbach	1693	
5G GF	Philips	1600	Wenighosbach	1641	

- Marie Mertz' great-grandfather was Johan Adam Mertz whose wife was Anna Benigna Rosemann (1779-1841). She and Johan Adam married 12 Oct 1861.

Anna Benigna Rosemann's Direct Line (wife of Johan Adam Mertz)					
	Rosemanns	Born	Born	Died	Died
	Anna Benigna	1779	Herchenrode	1841	
F	Johan Philip	1747	Herchenrode	1835	Neunkirchen
GF	Johan Philip	1707	Herchenrode	1787	
GGF	Johan Georg	1674	Lutzelbach	1744	Neunkirchen
2G GF	Johannes	1637	Lichtenberg	1693	
3G GF	Philips	1600	Wenighosbach	1641	

- Marie Mertz' grandfather was Johan Wilhelm Mertz whose wife was Justine Sophia Gobel. The wife of Justine's grandfather, George Peter Gobel, was Maria Elisabeth Mertz. And she was the daughter of Johan Nicholas Mertz and his wife Anna Catharine Rosemann.

Anna Catharina Rosemann's Direct Line (wife of Johan Nicholas Mertz)					
	Rosemanns	Born	Born	Died	Died
	Anna Catharina *	1710	Herchenrode	1765	Waschenbach
F	Johan Georg	1674	Lutzelbach	1744	Neunkirchen
GF	Johannes	1637	Lichtenberg	1693	
GGF	Philips	1600	Wenighosbach	1641	

Like the two Mertz women in Marie Mertz' tree, the three Rosemann women in Marie's tree trace their ancestry in different ways but to a common ancestor — in their case to Philips Rosemann who lived 1600-1641 per Alfred Schafer.

- Remember Alfred was tracing the ancestry of his mother Marie Mertz. She just happened to be descended from Johan Henrich, father of John Henry and Jost. So those two brothers are only named in passing in his narrative.
- He was not tracing the ancestry of John Henry nor his wife Anna Maria Rosemann.
- He likely had no reason to even know that John Henry married Anna Maria or that she and her family had gone to America, he may never have come across that fact.
- Nonetheless, with the help of Dan Goebel, I can here present Anna Maria Rosemann's ancestry too.

Anna Maria was not the only Rosemann to come to America and to be named in the records of Mertz Church.

- Jacob Rosemann arrived America on the same ship as John Henry in 1737.
- Jacob Rosemann was a named sponsor at Mertz Church in 1741 at the baptism of Johann Jacob Mertz, son of John Henry and Anna Maria. The other sponsor at this baptism was Magdalena Scheur(in).
- At Oley Church in 1755, Jacob Rosemann and Anna Appolonia baptized daughter Anna Elisabetha Margaretha. She was born 7 Dec 1755 and baptized 16 Apr 1756.
- The will of Jacob Roseman of Berks County was written 9 Sep 1756 and proved 12 Oct 1756. He mentioned brother-in-law Henry Mertz. He mentioned son Jacob, wife Annapolia and brother-in-law Henry Mertz. [So, Jacob who died in 1756 was the brother of Anna Maria (Rosemann) Mertz.]
- Jacob Rosemann with wife, Sybilla, baptized several children at Mertz Church starting in 1767.

I have an ancestor Philip Mertz (confused by many people with John Philip Mertz, son of John Henry — they were two different men) whose wife was Anna Eva, maiden name unknown. Charles Fisher, a noted genealogist specializing in Central Pennsylvania, said that Philip's wife was Anna Eva Rossman, daughter of Jacob and Magdalena (Scheur) Rossman. I have always known that Fisher was wrong as to the maiden name of Philip's wife Eva, but the idea that Jacob Rosmann married Magdalena Scheur stuck with me, I didn't question it.

So I always believed that there was evidence of three men named Jacob Rosemann — father, son, grandson — known by the names of their three wives: Magdalena Scheur, Anna Appolonia and Sybilla, respectively. I believed the elder Jacob was the ship passenger in 1737 and that he came with his wife Magdalena and children including son Jacob and daughter Anna Maria who would marry John Henry Mertz.

Dan Goebel has convinced me there were only two (relevant) men named Jacob Rosemann, that the ship passenger was in fact Anna Maria's *brother*. It caused me to re-examine the records of Mertz Church and I realized my mistake.

- Often in those records, the parents of a child were named in the form husband's name, wife's maiden name. So we find the names Johan Henrich Mertz and Ana Maria Rossman(in) quite often as a married couple.
- But not so the names of sponsors. In the case of sponsors, the format was, for example, Johan Henrich Mertz and wife Anna Maria. But if it was two single people, then the names would be given, as they were in one instance, Jacob Rosemann and Magdalena Scheur(in).
- The point is that Jacob Rosemann never married Magdalena Scheur, he only was once listed as a baptism sponsor with her. He did marry Anna Appolonia.

Dan's research shows that both Jacob and Anna Maria were children of Johann Georg Roßmann (1674-1744) and Anna Sabina Winterstein (1685-1744). Jacob was born in 1702, Anna Maria in 1715. When Dan told me that, I realized I already knew George Rosemann as the father of Anna Catharina Rosemann who married Johan Nicholas Mertz and the great-grandfather of Anna Benigna Rosemann who married Johan Adam Mertz (see the two relevant Rosemann charts above).

So what is clear is that the Rosemann family of Mertz Church came from the exact same area of Germany as the Mertz family of Mertz Church and the two families obviously knew each other well. In fact, I now think we can rule out that John Henry and Anna Maria just happened to meet on the ship — they most certainly all knew each other back in Frankenhausen. And now the question is: Did they marry in Germany prior to their departure, or did they leave Germany with the intent to marry upon arrival in America and travelled together for that reason?

Dan Goebel believes they married once in America but likely had every intent to do so when they left Germany. I have no argument with that belief.