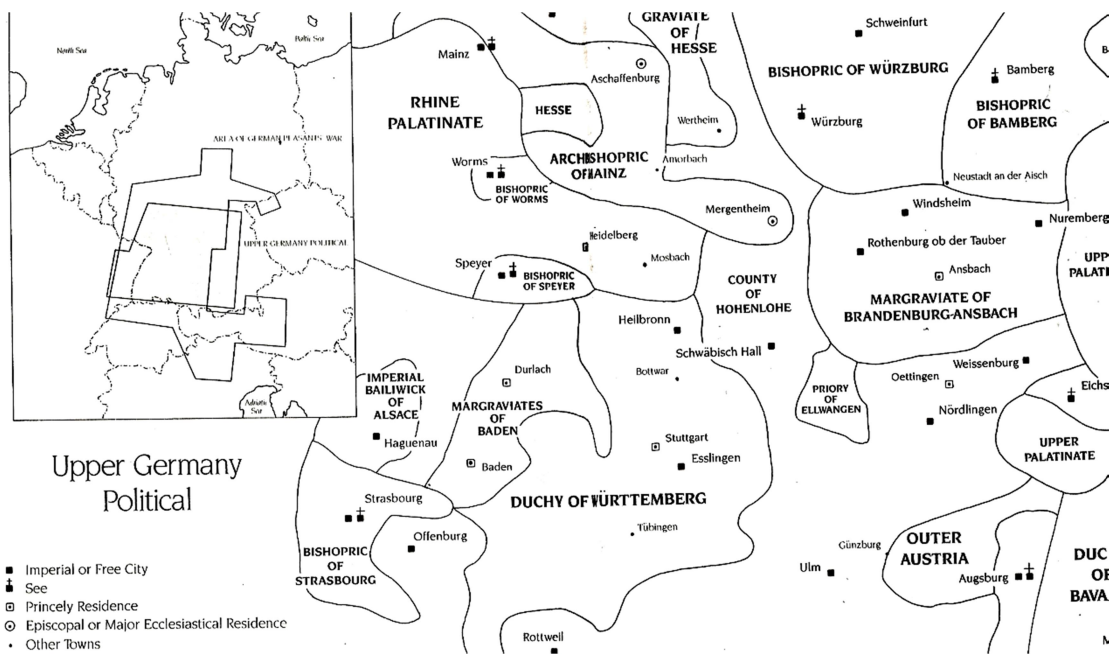


Chapter 4

Franz Wagner in the Rhineland Pfalz

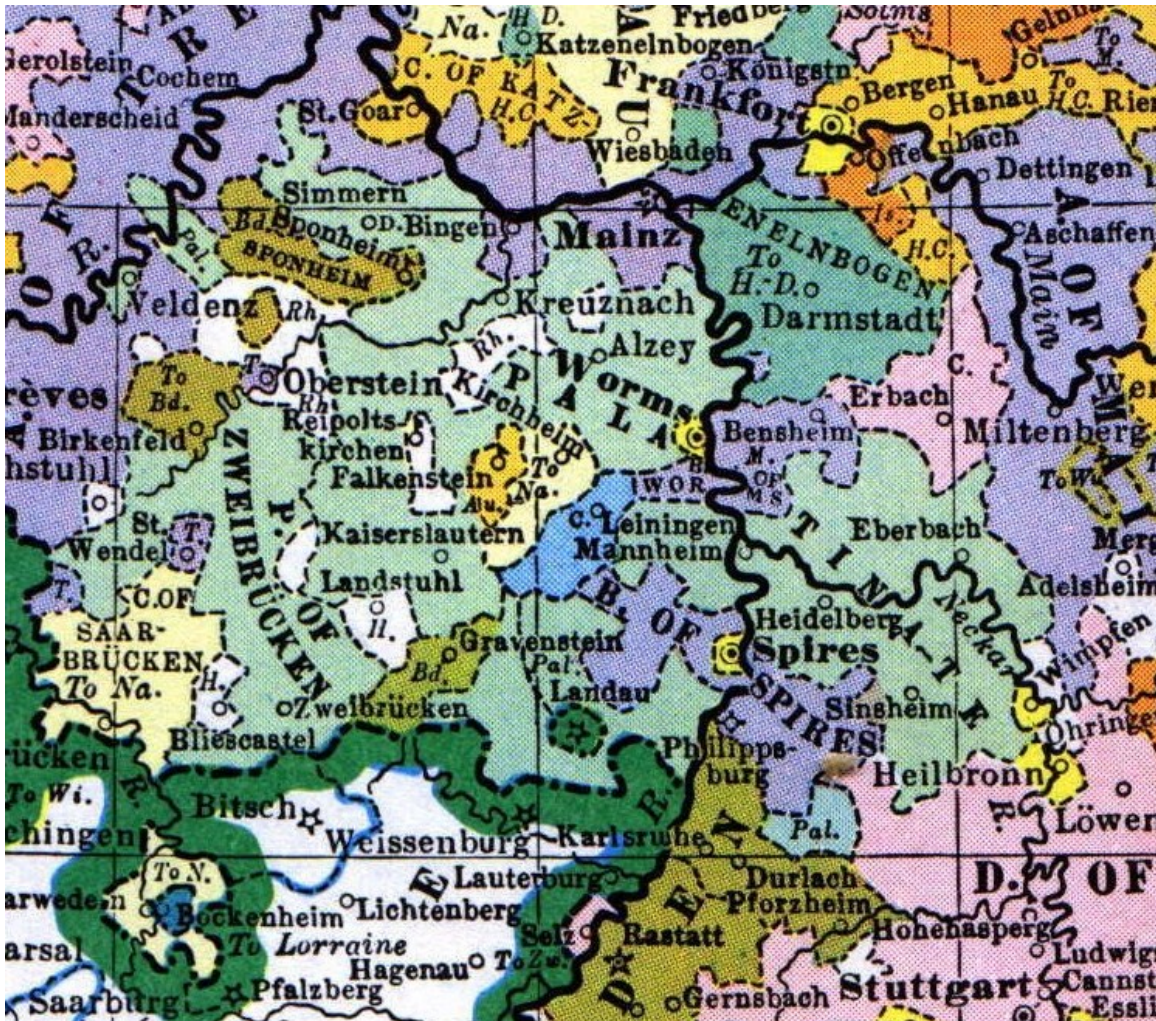
This chapter in the family history takes us from Kronach in Bavaria to the towns of Germersheim, Rohrbach, and Insheim on the west bank of the Rhine, in an area known as the Rhineland *Pfalz*, or the “Rhine Palatinate” in English. This was the heartland from which many emigrants derived who went to America and Tsarist Russia.



Princely and Ecclesiastical Territories From Bamberg to the Pfalz on the Rhine¹

As was typical of other German-speaking realms at that time, the Pfalz was divided into a crazy-quilt of principalities, Bishoprics, and independent city-states, loosely bound together within the framework of the Holy Roman Empire.

¹ Source: Tom Scott and Bob Scribner (eds.), *The German Peasant's War*, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1991.



Territorial Divisions in Rhineland Pfalz in the 1790s

The territories of the *Kurfürst* Karl Theodor (shown in light green, labeled "Palatinate") included most of the Pfalz and the Neckar valley on the east side of the Rhine. The Bishopric of Speyer also owned major territories on both sides of the river (shown in purple, labeled "B. of Spires"). The territories of the Margrave (*Mark-Graf*) of Baden are shown in pea-green (labeled "Bd."). The border with France was the Lauter River (dark green). Note that France occupied not only Alsace at that point in history, but also Landau in the Pfalz.

Most of the Pfalz at that time belonged to the *Kurfürst* Karl Theodor (1724-1799), of the Zweibrücken-Birkenfeld branch of the Wittelsbach dynasty. He had inherited the Electoral Palatinate in 1742, and in 1777 he also inherited Bavaria proper, which once again reunited the various lands of the Wittelsbachs on both sides of the Rhine. The capital of the *Kurfürst's* realms was usually at Heidelberg, where he maintained his chief residence, although prior to his reign

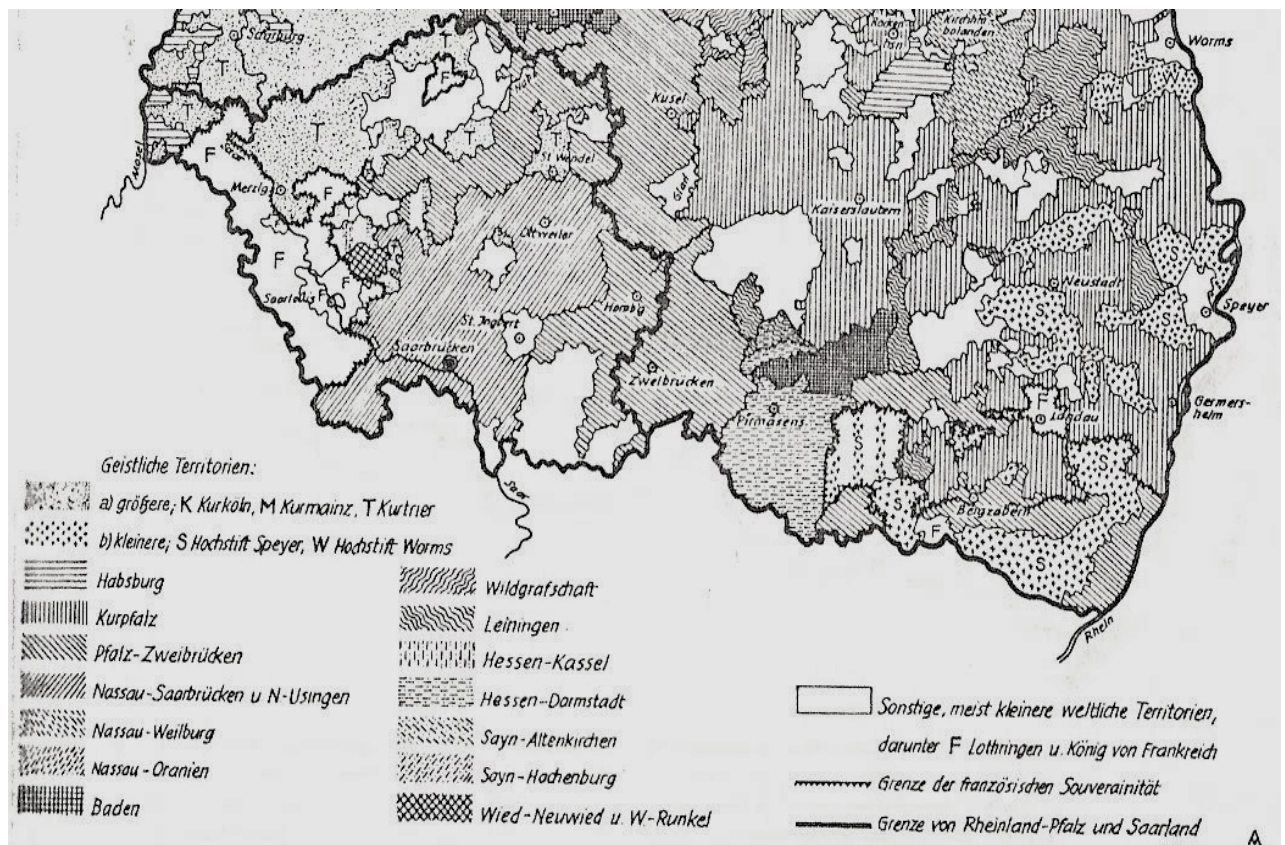
it had been moved for a time to Mannheim after the French destroyed Heidelberg in 1689. Karl Theodor presided over vast territories on both sides of the Rhine, including large portions of the Pfalz, the Neckar River valley (in modern Baden), and Bavaria. He was holder of the title *Dominium Rheni et Necaris* (Lord of the Rhine and Neckar).²

A distinction should be drawn between the Pfalz as a geographic region on the west bank of the Rhine, and the *Kurpfalz*, which was a political entity consisting of the territories owned by Karl Theodor. He was not only a Prince (*Fürst*), but also holder of the prestigious title of Prince-Elector (*Kurfürst*) of the Palatinate. The prefix *Kur-* in his title denoted that he was one of the seven Imperial Electors (*Kurfürsten*) in the electoral college (*Kurfürstenkolleg*) of the *Reichstag*, which was empowered to select the Holy Roman Emperor.³ Other Electors included the powerful Archbishops of Mainz, Trier, and Cologne.

In 1789 Karl Theodor's *Kurpfalz* territories were scattered throughout the Palatinate, interspersed with the smaller estates of the cadet branches of the royal families, the hereditary holdings of the various Bishoprics, and the Imperial Free Cities. A closer view of the southern Pfalz is shown in the map below. Karl Theodor owned a large block of territory south of Landau (denoted by vertical lines in the map), which included Insheim, Rohrbach, and nearby villages. The other major landowner in the southern Pfalz was the Bishop of Speyer (territories denoted by dots in the map). There were also eight Imperial Free Cities in the Pfalz -- these included Frankenthal, Kaiserslautern, Ludwigshafen, Neustadt an der Weinstrasse, Pirmasens, Speyer, Zweibrücken, and Landau (until 1697). Other old Imperial Free Cities in the region included Cologne, Aachen, Düren, and Worms.

² Stefan Mörz, "Verwaltungsstruktur der Kurpfalz zum Zeitpunkt des Bayrischen Erbfalls," *Mitteilungen des Historischen Vereins der Pfalz*, Band 84, Speyer: Verlag des Historischen Vereins der Pfalz E.V., 1985.

³ The prefix "*Kur-*" in the title likely derived from the same root as the German word *Kurator*, indicating a guardian or conservator. This prestigious prefix was also attached to the *Kurfürst's* realms, which were known as the *Kurpfalz*. Likewise, there was a *Kurmainz*, *Kurköln*, and a *Kurtrier* to designate the territories owned by the archbishops of Mainz, Cologne (*Köln*), and Trier who also held the title of Imperial Elector.



A Closer View of the Southern Pfalz in 1789.⁴

It is perhaps of some significance to this family history that the *Kurfürst* Karl Theodor was a staunch supporter of Catholicism. Religion played an important role in the migratory routes followed by populations at that time. In Durlach, for example, which was a Protestant city, 78% of the new immigrants came from other Protestant territories, very few arrived from neighboring Catholic regions. Likewise, most of those who settled in the Catholic parts of the Rhineland came from other communities with the same religion.⁵ Although the population of the Pfalz today is fairly evenly divided between Catholic and Protestant, especially in the larger cities, the rural villages in the lowland plains, extending south into Alsace, are a heartland of traditional Catholicism. The cycle of feast days and the popular customs associated with folk Catholicism remain at the core of village life.

⁴ Map source: Hans-Walter Herrmann, "zur früheren territorialen und administrativen Gliederung des Gebietes der heutigen Bundesländer Rheinland-Pfalz und Saarland," in *Inventar der Quellen zur Geschichte der Auswanderung 1500 - 1914 in den Staatlichen Archiv von Rheinland-Pfalz und dem Saarland*, Selbstverlag der Landesarchiv Verwaltung Rheinland-Pfalz, 1976.

⁵ Steven Hochstadt, "Migration in Preindustrial Germany," *Central European History*, vol. 16, no. 3, Sept. 1983, p. 217.

The map also shows the inroads that France had made into the Pfalz at that point in history. France owned Landau (shown as a small area of white denoted by "F"), as well as Saarlouis and the neighboring area along the southwestern border. The political landscape on the west bank of the Rhine had undergone major changes since the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ceded the Hapsburg territories in Alsace to France. The Treaty of Nymwegen in 1679 had allowed the French to occupy (but not annex) Landau, Germersheim, and Selz. However, the bellicose and ambitious Louis XIV (reigned 1661-1717) would not settle for mere occupation rights. In 1680 he convened *Chambres de Reunion*, for the purpose of claiming as much territory in the Holy Roman Empire as he could possibly seize. Louis annexed Landau and proceeded to turn it into one of the most heavily fortified garrisons in Europe. His *chambres* also asserted a claim to Germersheim and all territory in the southern Pfalz extending to the Queich River, which flows into the Rhine through Landau. The boundary eventually became established further south at the Lauter River (which marks the northern border of Alsace), but the French never gave up their efforts to "rectify" their borders at the expense of the Hapsburg Empire.

In 1688 Louis XIV invaded the Pfalz, triggering the War of Palatine Succession (1688-1697).⁶ At the Treaty of Rijswijk in 1697 French ownership of Landau was recognized by the Holy Roman Empire. This was followed by the War of the League of Augsburg (1701-1714), concluded by the Peace of Rastatt in 1714, which granted France the three towns of Nussdorf, Queichheim, and Dammheim. In 1766 and 1786 the French were allowed to annex Germersheim (which they had occupied since 1679) by agreements with the Duke of Zweibrücken and the Palatine Elector.⁷

Germersheim was an important administrative center and a crucial anchor for French imperial claims in the Pfalz. It was part of a long line of fortified settlements stretching from the Rhine westward to Landau, Saarlouis, and then to Luxembourg. It is situated on an elevated bluff overlooking the west bank of the river, located at the confluence of the Queich, which flows east through Landau. Germersheim is also a major crossing point over the Rhine, which accounted for its early strategic importance. One of the classic old lithographs by Merian in 1656 depicts Germersheim on its high bluff, with a bridge extending over the side-channels of the river. At that time it had a population of about 2,000 people (today it has grown well above 14,000).

Louis XIV intended fortress Landau to be the northern spearhead for his empire, driven into the underbelly of the Pfalz. Landau and the nearby fragments of land remained in French hands throughout the 18th century, as a symbol of their territorial ambitions. They briefly succeeded in these ambitions

⁶ Also referred to as the "Nine Years War," or the "War of Spanish Succession."

⁷ M. S. Anderson, *Europe in the Eighteenth Century, 1713 - 1783*. New York: Longman (1976, second edition).

during the Revolutionary years, when the entire west bank of the Rhine was occupied and it remained under French suzerainty until Napoleon's defeat.⁸



**Germersheim, a Crossing Point on the Rhine
(lithograph by Mattheus Merian, 1656)**

Franz Wagner in the Pfalz

After Franz Wagner's birth record in Kronach in 1754, there is a large gap in information available until April 22, 1792 when he married Margaretha Karmann in Rohrbach, a village near Speyer in the Pfalz.⁹ The marriage record states that Franz was from Kronach near Bamberg, his parents were Christopher Wagner and Anna Maria "Hausenbayer." Margaretha was the daughter of Johann Karmann, a

⁸ Hans Ziegler, "Die Südpfälzer im 'Vaterland der Freiheit'" *Die Pfalz am Rhein*, (September, 1986).

⁹ Churchbook of Rohrbach, vol. 1, p. 65, April 22, 1792. In the Archbishop's Archive in the city of Speyer, Pfalz.

painter, and Maria Ursula Dorrhaut, in Mannheim. As we have seen, this information matches what is shown in the churchbooks of Kronach, Bavaria, where Franz was born on Dec. 20, 1754, the son of Christopher Wagner and Maria "Puttenhorn." As was discussed in the previous chapter, the reference to Franz's mother as "Hausenbayer" in his marriage record did not denote her surname, but rather it was just a literal description - "*hausen*" means "to dwell in," and *Bayern* means "Bavaria," i.e. she was from a family that resided in Bavaria.

We don't know what transpired during those intervening 38 years after the birth of Franz in Kronach and when he settled in the Pfalz and married Margaretha Karmann in 1792. However, we can make some educated guesses. We know that his father, Christopher, was a common tradesman, a wagon-maker and teamster, and there is no indication that he owned property in Kronach. It should not be surprising that Franz left to seek his opportunity elsewhere, as did thousands of other young men at that time. There are no earlier references to Franz Wagner or Margaretha Karmann in the church books of Rohrbach before 1792.¹⁰

After Franz Wagner left Kronach, he likely went to the Archbishopric of Bamberg in northern Bavaria, then along the ancient trade route of the Main River to the Neckar, which flows past Heidelberg and Mannheim to the Rhine. The route passed through a string of Bishoprics (the old *Pfaffengasse*, or "priest's alleyway" as Gustavus Adolphus had scornfully referred to it during the Thirty Years War), which stretched from Bamberg through Würzburg, Mainz, and Speyer, into the territories of the *Kurfürst* of the Pfalz on the Rhine.

The royal residence of the Prince Elector of the Palatinate was moved from Heidelberg to Mannheim in 1720 and it became a large, fortified city. It was strategically sandwiched between the confluence of the Neckar river and the Rhine, located on a major ferry crossing point. As such it was a natural magnet drawing persons from throughout the *Kurfürst's* realms. Young men would have converged there for jobs and to access the many small villages on both sides of the river.

Franz Wagner may have worked in Mannheim for a while after he left Kronach and he may have met Margaret Karmann there. Their marriage record in Rohrbach states that Margaret's parents were Johann Karmann, a painter¹¹, and Maria Ursula Dorrhaut, in Mannheim.

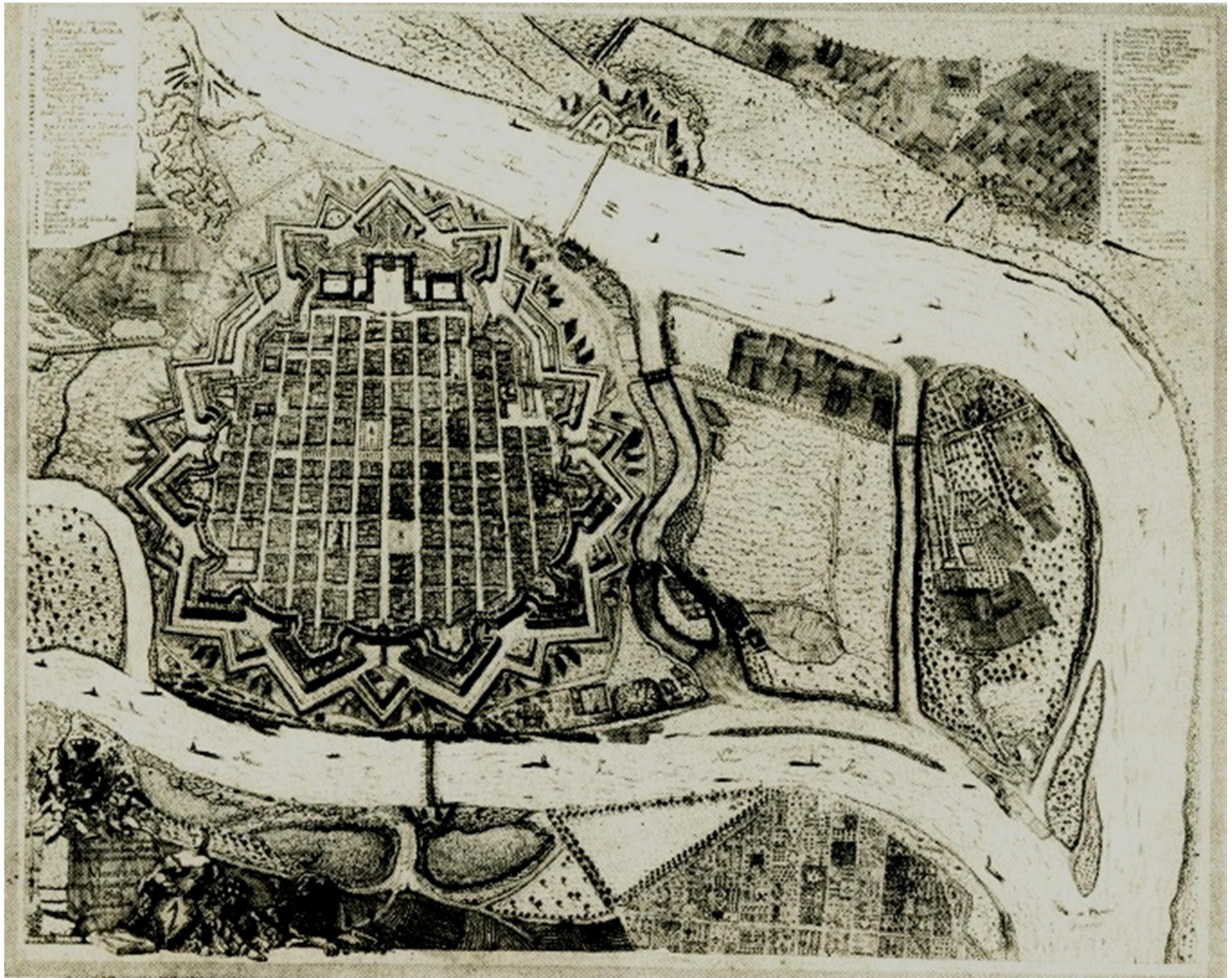
There was a Karmann family shown in the Catholic churchbooks in Mannheim at that time. Peter Karmann and his wife Catharina Wegesser were married on April 27, 1778. He was the son of August and Margaret Karmann. Peter and Catharina had children born there from 1779 to 1783. He was likely

¹⁰ Rohrbach, LDS microfilm 247442

¹¹ I don't have the original marriage record, but the extracted one states that Johann Karmann was a "*Maler*." This term generally means a house painter or a decorator, whereas an artist is more commonly translated as a *Künstler*.

related to Franz's wife, Margaret, since there were not many residents with this surname in Mannheim.¹²

The Dorrhaut surname is more unusual and it does not come up on internet searches for Germany or France. The closest match is the spelling of Dorhout in Holland, who resided from Amsterdam up to Friesland. This region would have been a natural corridor for members of the family to spread down the Rhine to the Mannheim area.



Mannheim at the Confluence of the Rhine and Neckar, 1758

¹² Margaret's family name is spelled in various ways, such as "Karmann," "Carmann," or "Kahrmann." In the baptismal record for their son Ferdinand Wagner her surname is spelled "Carmännin." The suffix "-in" preceded by an umlaut vowel is standard feminine ending on surnames in German. The surname Karmann is found in highest frequency in south Hessen, and it is possible that Margaret's family originated there and settled in Mannheim at some point. Early references include Peter Carmann 1550-1609 in Darmstadt, and Georg Ludwig Carmann 1594 in Babenhausen, Hessen. The surname is also found in the Mosel river region and in Lorraine (*Lothringen*).

The population in Germany had rebounded quickly after the Thirty Years' War, and by the mid-1700s it was growing unchecked. In those regions with partible inheritance of land, family parcels became subdivided to such an extent that many heirs could no longer support themselves on their meager allotments. They were forced to supplement their incomes by becoming hired workers, referred to as *Heuerlinge* (hirelings), or *Tagelöhner* (day-wagers). In Saxony, for example, by 1750 the number of self-supporting peasants had remained stable for almost 200 years, but the number of landless workers had grown five-fold, and then it tripled again over the next 100 years. These workers flocked into the cities, seeking whatever opportunity was available. In the Franken area in northern Bavaria, populations had grown to such an extent that there was no more room in many cities to construct new houses inside the city walls. Towns were rather tightly controlled by their councils and by the guilds, which sought to regulate the influx of day-laborers that could undermine the local economy. The city governments tried to cope by restricting citizenship to the first-born sons of native *Bürger*.¹³ The process of attaining citizenship in a city was expensive and time-consuming. Letters had to be provided attesting to legitimate birth, and a sizeable fee had to be paid, sometimes amounting to 10% of assets. In Würzburg, the percentage of non-citizens amounted to 57% of the residents.¹⁴

Those who were not fortunate enough to attain a foothold somewhere either waited on the outskirts of a town (where they were sometimes referred to literally as *Brinksitzer*), picking up whatever meager crumbs were available for a livelihood, or in most cases they became migrants. Little wonder that the roads in Germany at that time were filled with traders, artisans, and day-laborers, seeking their fortunes wherever they may. It should also be noted that wagon-drivers, due to the nature of their trade, were the most migratory of professions. Unskilled or temporary residents in a town typically earned their living by transporting materials, street cleaning, and construction. After military campaigns there were usually openings for outsiders, when towns had to clear rubble, rebuild structures that had been damaged or burned, and plow the fields that had been trampled under by armies. The population of immigrant workers typically skyrocketed in such villages for the next 20 years, and some were able to establish a foothold there.¹⁵

In 1792, when Franz Wagner first appeared in the church book of Rohrbach, there was an historical window of opportunity for young men seeking a niche in those regions that were recovering from widespread devastation by war. After the French Revolution erupted in 1789, war soon enveloped the entire west bank of the

¹³ Hochstadt, 1983, p. 221.

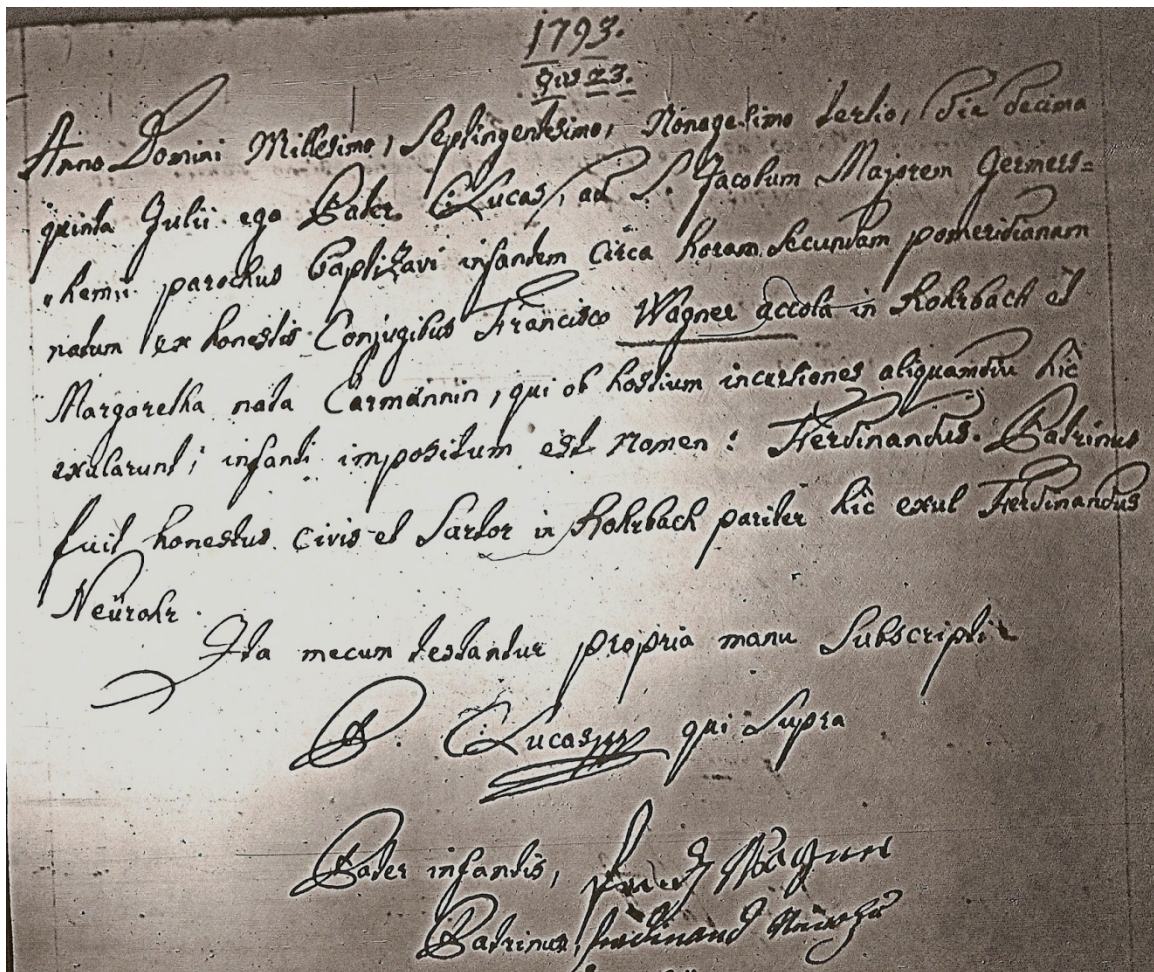
¹⁴ Hochstadt, 1983, p. 140.

¹⁵ Hochstadt, 1983, p. 203 states that "carters and day laborers" were the most migratory elements of the population.

Rhine. *Kurfürst* Karl Theodor had attempted to remain neutral, but nevertheless the Pfalz became a battleground. In 1792 the French armies pushed up through the Pfalz into the lower Rhinelands, then the allied armies of the First Coalition counter-attacked and pushed them south to Strasbourg. As the French armies retreated they plundered the villages in the Pfalz, leaving ruination in their wake. In 1793 the French reattacked and by mid-October, 1794, they had retaken the Pfalz. Thousands of people had fled in panic from the towns of Alsace and the Pfalz across the Rhine for safety. Many of them had not been able to return to their homes, which stood vacant.

Franz Wagner's Family

The birth of Franz Wagner's first son, Ferdinand, is shown in the Catholic churchbook of Germersheim in 1793.



Birth of Ferdinand Wagner - July 15, 1793¹⁶

"In the year of our Lord 1793, the 15th of July, I, Father Lucas, pastor at St. Jacob the Magister parish [in Germersheim], baptized an infant born about the hour of two in the afternoon, to the legally married couple, Franz Wagner, a neighbor in Rohrbach, and Margaretha, born Carmann, who were living in exile here for some time because of enemy [military] attacks.¹⁷ The infant was given the name Ferdinand. The godfather was the honorable citizen and tailor in Rohrbach, likewise named Ferdinand Neurohr.

This is testified by my signature below.

P. [Pater] Lucas, who wrote the above.

Father of the infant, Frantz Wagner

Godfather, Ferdinand Neurohr."

The priest's brief remark, explaining why the baby was baptized there in Germersheim rather than in their home village of Rohrbach, is intriguing. The "enemy attacks" (*hostium incursienes*) undoubtedly referred to the massive battles that were raging between the French and the Imperial German armies at that time, centered around the Queich River and the villages below Landau. Franz and Margaret apparently had fled to this larger city for safety, and likely also for access to better medical care during her pregnancy. This would explain why they had their child in Germersheim, which is about 18 kilometers north of Rohrbach. They had lived there "for some time" because it was dangerous to remain behind in the small village of Rohrbach, which was in the heart of a battlefield. Travel on the roads was obviously very risky. The French military was conscripting the German villagers to do entrenching work for them. Judging from the fact that Ferdinand Neurohr from Rohrbach was also residing in Germersheim, other villagers had likewise fled there for protection. On the date when the infant Ferdinand was born, Germersheim was in the hands of the Imperial German armies, but fortress Landau remained in the hands of the French. Germersheim would have been a strategically good refuge since refugees could flee across the Rhine there if hostilities threatened to engulf the town. Two weeks later, at the end of July, the French launched a desperate counter-attack and bloody battles raged near Germersheim, Ottersheim and

¹⁶ Germersheim microfilm 0367414

¹⁷ The Latin phrase is: *qui ob hostium incursienes aliquamdiu hic exularunt*. The word *exularunt* is a variant spelling of "*ex(s)ulerunt*," "they were exiled," or "living in exile." This word was commonly found in Latin church books after the Thirty Years War, when there was a wholesale relocation of Protestants and Catholics into neighboring states that matched their religious affiliation. In some of those states they comprised 25%-50% of the population (e.g. in Franken, a Protestant area north of Kronach). "Exiles" also referred to persons who fled to avoid warfare.

Herxheim. The French were forced to retreat to fortress Landau, which became surrounded on all sides by the allies. In early August the French tried to break out of the siege and push south to Mörlheim and Insheim, but they were unsuccessful. Finally, in October, 1794, they managed to beat back the Imperial armies. The details of these military campaigns will be described in chapter 6, the history of Insheim by Albert Fritz.

The next piece of documentation, a few months after the birth of Ferdinand in July, 1793, refers to Franz Wagner as a “widower.” This indicates that Margaret died soon after giving birth to Ferdinand – perhaps during childbirth. Franz was clearly left in dire straits with the death of his wife. He had a little baby to care for, he was a newcomer without family in the area to help him, and he likely did not have many financial resources. He very quickly – within 10 months -- found another woman to assist him -- Eva Catherine Würth, in the nearby village of Insheim, about one kilometer above Rohrbach. On May 8, 1794 Eva served as the godmother for her niece (see photocopy below). In that record Eva was reported already as Franz’s “wife” (*uxor*). Ten months may seem somewhat fast for a new marriage, but we should keep his circumstances in mind, he had an infant to care for. Eva was about 39 years old at that point. She was the daughter of Anton Würth, a swine-herder originally from Rohrbach, who had settled in Insheim when he got married. Anton Würth was already deceased, but Franz undoubtedly knew Eva’s brothers and sisters. The record states that Franz Wagner was a “city laborer” (*cive operario*) in Insheim.

Anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo
 nonagesimo quarto, die octavo mensis
 maii, Rudolphus Orth loci Insheim
 Scholasticus me evocante Parochus
 infra scripto baptizavit infantem
 natum, hunc octavo tempore
 matutino iam eadem die ex Josepho
 Würth civitate laboratoris et
 Maria Anna nata Kirschthaler
 conjugibus legitimis cuius Parochus
 cui nomen impositum est Eva Catharina
 obiit sine ceremoniis. Catharina fuit uxor
 Catharina, uxor Francisci Wagner
 civis ac operarii huius loci. Ita mecum
 testantur propria manu subscripti
 Baptizans
 Pater infantis
 Materna
 et ego Josephus Ziegler ad Parochiam
 orthi Insheim. Actum Insheim loci Ins-
 heim Parochus.

Eva (Würth) Wagner, Godmother
 May 8, 1794¹⁸

"In the year of Our Lord 1794, the 8th day of the month of May, Rudolph
 Orth, a school-teacher in Insheim, called me at the parish mentioned below,
 [where] the infant was baptized, born at the hour of eight in the morning on this
 day, to Joseph Würth, citizen and brick-mason, and Maria Anna, born
 Kirschthaler, a legally married couple in this parish, to whom the name given is

¹⁸ Source, Insheim microfilm 0367591

Eva Catherine. It died without ceremony. The godmother was Eva Catherina [Würth], wife of Franz Wagner, citizen and worker here. Thus testified by my signature written below.

Baptizer [blank]

Father of infant [blank]

Godmother [blank]

And I, Joseph Ziegler, at St. Michael the Archangel parish, in Insheim.”

Although Franz and Eva were already living together by May, 1794, and she was reported as his wife, they didn't actually have a church wedding until nearly two years later. This suggests that legal conventions may have lagged behind the exigencies of reality in those deeply troubling times. A local historian of Insheim (Albert Fritz) states that Fr. Joseph Ziegler fled across the Rhine for safety in the last days of 1793, along with the pastor of the Protestant church in Insheim and the officials of the Bishopric of Speyer. Fr. Ziegler supposedly didn't return to his parish until August 1796. During that hiatus, civil marriages became compulsory due to the anti-clerical attitudes of the French administration. All births, deaths, and marriages were officially recorded in the town halls by civil servants, rather than by priests. The absence of Fr. Ziegler probably explains why there were no signatures on the record above from May 1794. It's not clear how Fr. Ziegler recorded that Eva "Wagner" served as a godmother in 1794, and he also recorded the marriage of Franz Wagner and Eva Würth on Feb. 4, 1796, which was a full 7 months before Ziegler supposedly returned. At any rate, it does seem likely that the absence of Catholic clergy during those turbulent years interfered with the normal course of baptisms and marriages. It's also likely that couples complied with the new rules by having a civil marriage, then later having a religious ceremony when the priest was available.

This is Franz and Eva's marriage record:

“In the year of our Lord 1796, the 4th of February, I united in matrimony Franz Wagner, a widower from Kronach near Bamberg, and Eva Würth, the daughter of Anton Würth, deceased citizen of this place, and Margaret Stauch his surviving widow, in the presence of the witnesses Peter Würth and Joseph Walz, citizens of this place.

This is testified by my signature below, execution assisted.¹⁹

Husband: [blank]

Wife: [blank]

First witness: [blank]

¹⁹ The Latin phrase is: *ena[c]timonio assistens*. This may mean that Franz Wagner, Eva, and the witnesses were illiterate, or perhaps with no writing skill beyond their signatures.

Second Witness: [blank]

Joseph Ziegler, Pastor at St. Michael the Archangel, located in Insheim."

Handwritten Latin text from a marriage record. The text is written in a cursive script on aged paper. It begins with the date 'Anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo nonagesimo tertio die 4^{to} Februarii' and describes the marriage of Franz Wagner and Eva Würth. It mentions that Wagner is a widower and that Würth is the daughter of a deceased man. The record is signed by the witnesses and the pastor, Joseph Ziegler.

Anno Domini millesimo septingentesimo
nonagesimo tertio die 4^{to} Februarii
matri-
monii Franz Wagner viduum
et Antonach prope Bamberg et Evam
Würth Filiam Antonii Würth defuncti
Civis hujatis, et uxoris hujatis relictae
ejus viduae, presentibus Testibus Petrus
Wilhelm Josepho Walz
Civibus hujatis
ita necum desubandus propria manu subscripti
enadimonio nup. aspidens.
Sponsus
Sponsa
Testis primus
Testis secundus
et ego Josephus Ziegler de Sancto Michaeli
archangelus loci Insheim Parochus.

Marriage of Franz Wagner and Eva Würth - Feb. 4, 1796²⁰

Eva Würth was 41 years old when she and Franz Wagner became legally married (we know from other records, to be discussed below, that she was born in Insheim in 1755). Apparently she had never been married (there is no indication that she was a widow), and she had no children.²¹ Franz was 42 years old (born in Kronach in 1754). The marriage entry also provides crucial pieces of information when it states that he was "a widower," confirming the premature death of Margaret, and also that he was "from Kronach near Bamberg."

²⁰ Insheim, microfilm 0367591

²¹ If Eva had been married previously, and if she was a widow, this surely would have been mentioned, since the priest did report that Franz was a widower.

Two years later the birth of their son, Franz jr., is recorded in the church book of Insheim:

“In the year of our Lord 1798, the 20th day of the month of May, I, Joseph Ziegler, pastor at St. Michael the Archangel, located in Insheim, did baptize an infant, born yesterday in the third hour of the evening, to Franz Wagner, a city laborer, and Eva, born Merker, a legally married couple in this parish, to whom the name Franz was given. The godfather was Franz König, a citizen and weaver from this same place. This is properly testified by my signature below.

Father of the infant: Franz Wagner

Godfather Franz König

And I, Joseph Ziegler, pastor at St. Michael the Archangel in Insheim.”

Anno Domini millesimo Septingentesimo
 nonagesimo octavo die Septi-
 mense ~~May~~ ^{May} ~~17~~ ²⁰ ~~1798~~ ¹⁷⁹⁸
 Ego Josephus Ziegler
 Sacerdos in Archangelum loci
 Insheim Parochus, baptizavi infantem natum
 huius, hora tertia vespertina, et puerum
 Augustum iive uxorem et Eva, natum ~~Merker~~
 conjugibus legitimis huius Parochi, eius.
 Nomen impositum est. Franciscus. Pater
 fuit Franciscus König civis et Tesitor, et
 eodem loco, illa puerum ~~propterea~~ ^{propterea} manu subscripti.
 Pater infantis ~~Franciscus König~~
 Pater infantis ~~Franciscus König~~
 et ego Josephus Ziegler ad Sanctum Michael
 Archangelum loci Insheim Parochus.

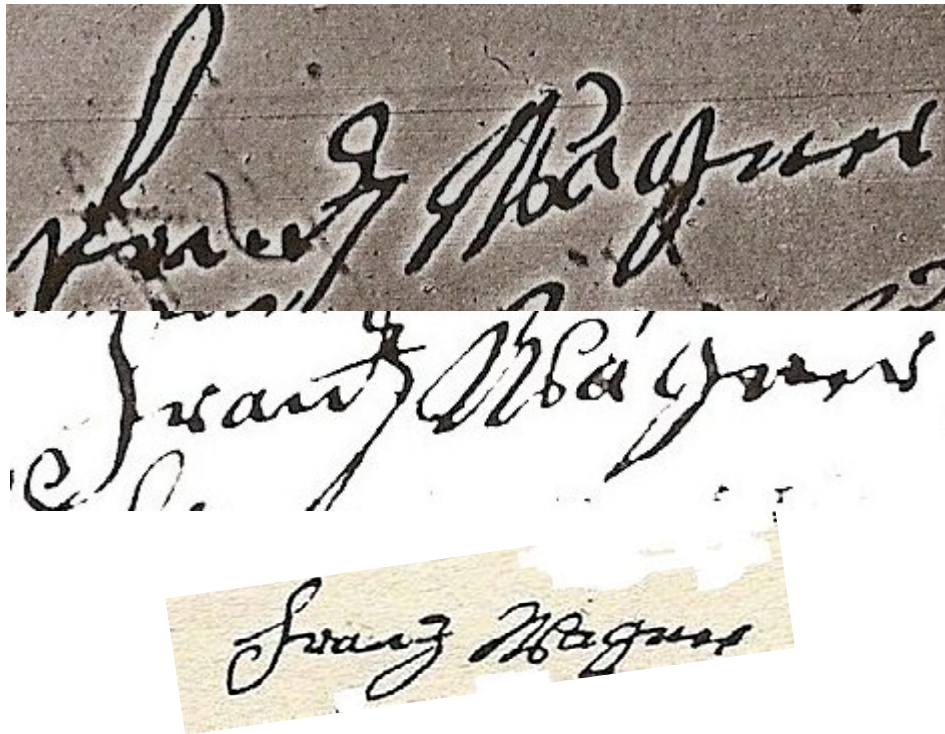
Birth of Franz Wagner jr. - May 19, 1798²²

One puzzling feature in this entry is that Fr. Ziegler refers to Eva’s maiden name as “Merker,” yet the marriage entry states that her family name was “Würth.” The simplest explanation is that Fr. Ziegler made a mistake. That happened occasionally in the church books. Note that he mistakenly recorded the date of baptism as the 17th of May, then crossed it out and wrote May 20th in the margin. There are three prior records for Eva Würth in the church book of Insheim, none of which show her surname as “Merker.” Her birth record in

²² Source: Insheim microfilm 0367591

1755, as well as the later entry in 1794 when she served as godmother for her niece, and her marriage record with Franz, all refer to her with the surname "Würth." There was a family with the surname Merker in Insheim, and there were marriages between the Merker and the Würth families, which may have led the pastor to make a slip-up.

The baptismal entry in 1798 again reports that Franz Wagner was a "city laborer" (*cive operario*) in Insheim. The word "*operarius*" is sometimes translated as "day laborer," which would indicate a low status. However, Fr. Ziegler used this same phrase repeatedly in most of the baptismal entries in the church book, so he may have meant it more broadly as "a person who works in this town." It is not clear how literally this should be taken.



Comparison of Signatures, 1793 (top), 1798 (middle), and 1799 (bottom)

There is no doubt about Franz's identity, since he was the only person with the surname Wagner in either of the church books. It is also interesting to compare the three signatures by Franz Wagner that are available on old documents -- the 1793 signature on the baptismal entry for his son Ferdinand in Germersheim, the 1798 signature for his son Franz jr. in Insheim, and the 1799 signature on a petition signed by all the villagers (to be discussed in the next chapter). The initial letter "F" in Franz appears different in the first signature, but that is because he used a lower-case "f" and then a capital "F" in the other two signatures. The handwriting for "Wagner" is identical in all three cases,

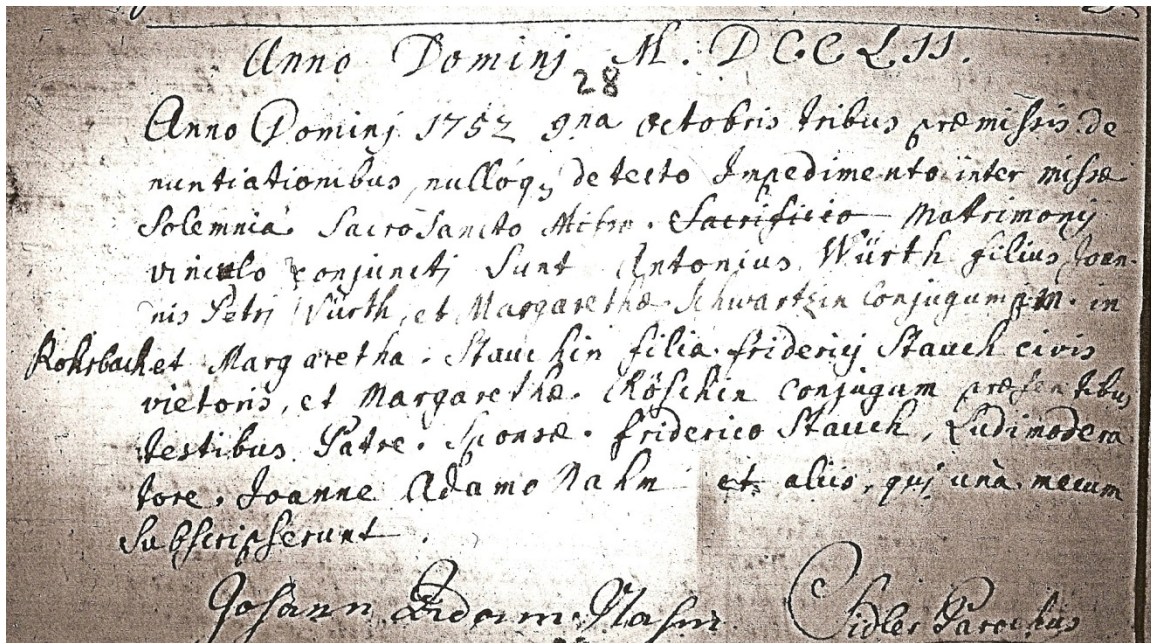
especially the capital "W." Keep in mind too that there is a time difference of six years between these signatures.

Eva was 41 years old when she married Franz Wagner, and 43 when she had their son, Franz jr., in 1798. She was late in her child-bearing years, which probably explains why they had no other recorded children after him. The later Russian records report that Franz Wagner and his wife Eva and the two boys, Ferdinand and Franz jr., emigrated to Tsarist Russia in 1809 – those were their only two children listed.

The Würth and Stauch Family in Insheim

The Würth family originated in nearby Rohrbach. After Anton Würth's marriage to Margaret Stauch in 1752, they resided in his wife's village, Insheim. He is referred to in two baptismal records (1761 and 1771) as a "swine herder" (*Subulcus*). At least one of his children (viz. Johann Valentin Würth) was illiterate, as stated by the priest.

Eva Catharina Würth, Anton's daughter, was born in Insheim on Oct. 25, 1755. She served as the godmother for her niece on May 8, 1794. She was stated to be the wife of Franz Wagner, although they did not become legally married until 2 years later.



Marriage of Anton Würth and Margaret Stauch (parents of Eva Wagner),
Oct. 9, 1752²³

²³ Source: Insheim microfilm 0367591

“In the year of Our Lord 1752, the 9th of October, after the three banns [of marriage were announced], no impediment being detected, during a solemn Mass of the Holy Sacrament of matrimony, Anton Würth, the son of Johann Peter Würth and Margaret Schwartz, a married couple in Rohrbach, and Margaret Stauch, daughter of Friederich Stauch a citizen and cooper, and Margaretha Rösch, a married couple, were united in the bond of marriage. A witness present was the father of the bride, Friederich Stauch, schoolmaster Johann Adam Nahm, and others whose signatures are below.

Johann Adam Nahm
Sidler, Pastor”

Anno Dni 1755. Die 25^{ta} mensis Octobris baptizata est
Eva Catharina filia legitima Antonij Würth Civis
et Annae Margarethae natae Glauchin conjugum in Insheim
matrina fuit Eva Catharina soror Martini Knoll Civis
in Insheim filia soluta. Baptizavit Henricus
Josephus Sidler Parochus. ut edixere parentes et matrina.

Baptism of Eva Würth, Oct. 25, 1755²⁴
(Wife of Franz Wagner)

“In the year of our Lord 1755, 25th day of the month of October,²⁵ Eva Catherina was baptized, the legitimate daughter of Anton Würth, a citizen, and Anna Margaretha, born Stauch, a married couple in Insheim. The godmother was Eva Catherina, an unmarried daughter of Martin Knoll, citizen in aforesaid Insheim. Baptizer was Heinrich Joseph Sidler, Pastor. Signed on behalf of the parents and godmother.”

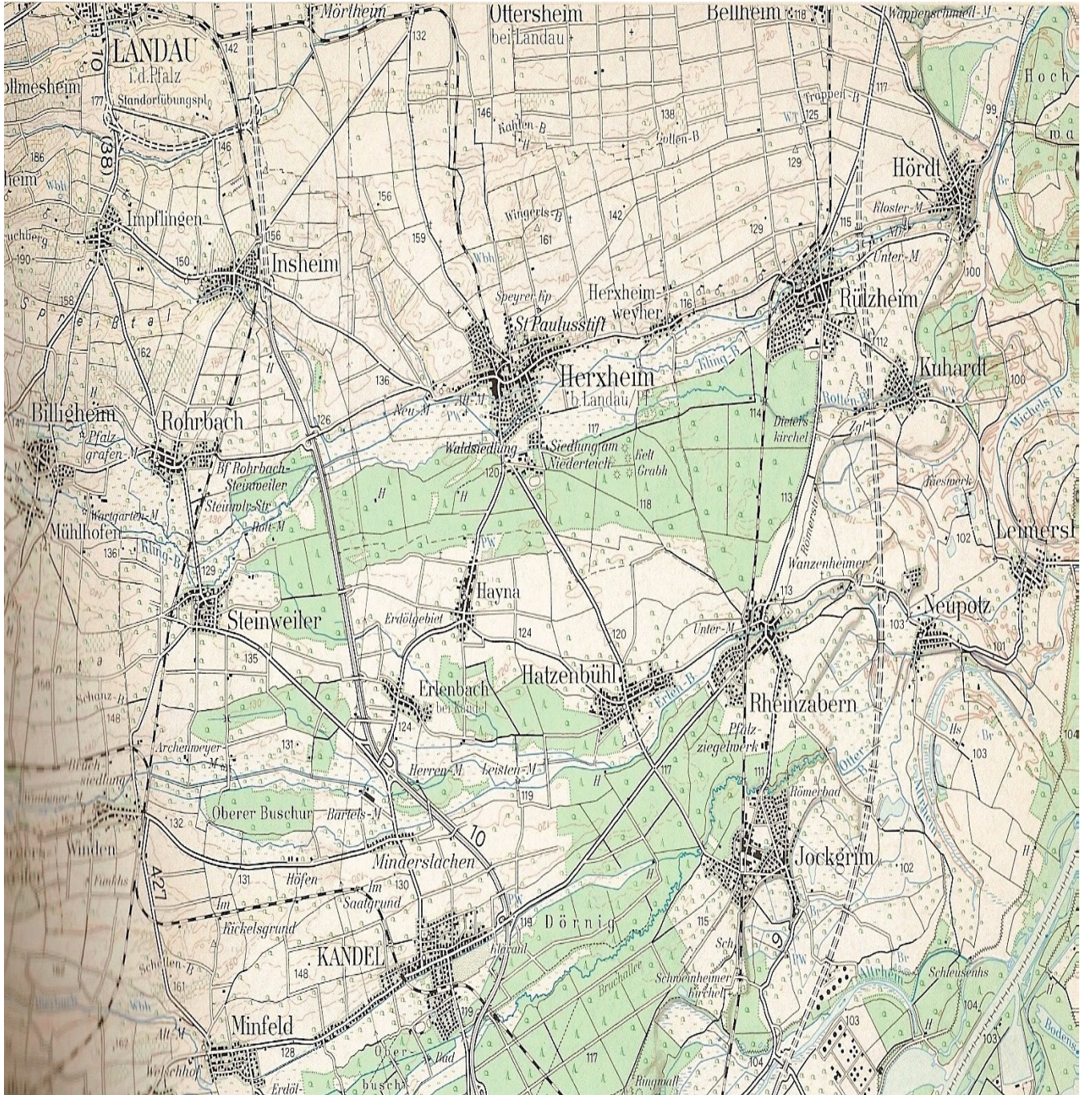
The Würth family (the variant spelling of “Wirt” began in 1812) can be traced back into the earliest records of Insheim and by the 1800s they had numerous descendants.

²⁴ Source: Insheim microfilm 0367591

²⁵ According to translation guides, the Latin abbreviation *8bris* or *8ber* in old German records does not refer to the “eighth month,” but rather literally to *Octo* (eight), “October.”

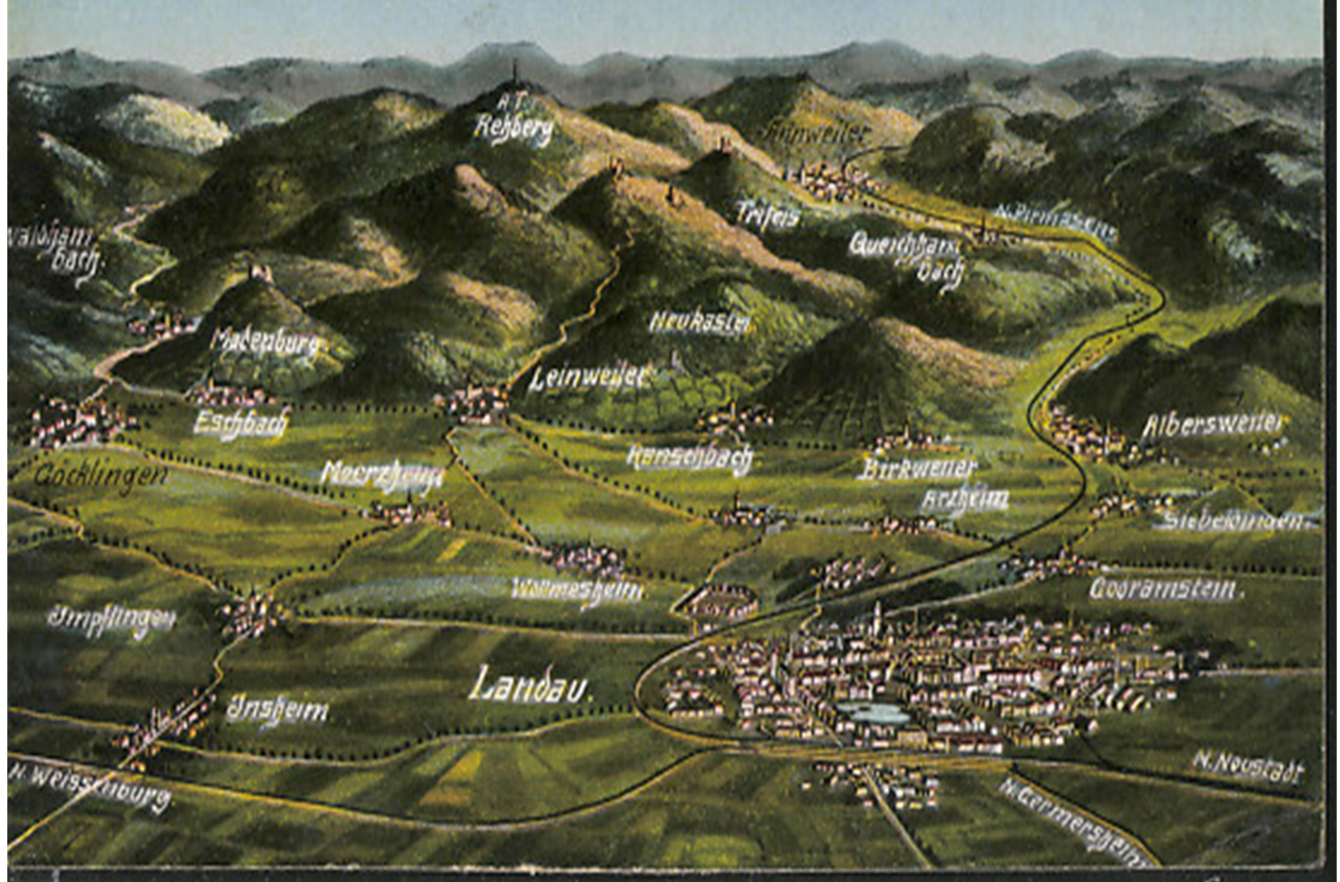


St. Michael's Church in Insheim



Insheim and Neighboring villages below Landau

Landau mit Umgebung.





Landau and Vicinity Today