

Article by Peter Hasselbacher,
For: Über Edenried, Pfaffenzell und Neuhausen, eine Orts-Chronik–
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To paraphrase former President John F. Kennedy, “Ich bin ein Edenrieder.”

However I did not always know that. The path that brought me from Louisville, Kentucky to Edenried and other towns and cities of Germany has been one of the most rewarding of my life. I found old family I never knew and new good friends. I traced my Hasselbacher family line back over 400 years to our ancestral farm, Haselbach, which exists today in Gresten, Austria and from which my family took its name. When I began my search for my roots, I never imagined I would learn that my 10th Great-Grandfather was a participant in the Baurenkrieg of 1598, or that his son would be fined for stealing wood from the King’s forest! These were simple people, yet they left their names and something about their lives in the archives of history. I found bastards and blasphemers, but they are all mine and I am grateful for them. I could not have made my journey if it were not for the records kept by the Catholic and Evangelish churches. In many ways it was easier to find my way back in time in Germany than in America. And yet I believe many unnecessary obstacles exist for those of us in both countries who have felt the sometimes unexplainable urge to seek out our origins.

I was the first Hasselbacher of my line who was born in America in 1946. I knew that my father and his parents were born in Nürnberg. They emigrated to America in 1924. In my childhood, I knew I had Great-Grandparents alive in Nürnberg but alas, I never met them and they died in the 1950s. I knew that my mother’s family was mostly of German descent, but I knew even less about them. My mother died in 2002. My father died in 2011 but Alzheimer’s disease robbed him of his memories long before. I made the terrible mistake of the immortal young and never asked the questions of my parents and grandparents that I would ask today. I was left with photographs of people from the old country without their names. And so, my search began with an effort to find the names of these people with whom I shared my blood and my heritage. I never dreamed I would be so successful– over 3000 people in my family tree so far, and growing. Let me relate how it was I found family roots in Edenried, and why I hope it will become easier for people like me to do the same.

I made my first of annual visits to Germany in 2005. I found two first cousins of my father who were able to help me identify most of my old photographs. That

part was easy. In fact, I had family photographs that they had never seen before because so many of theirs were destroyed during the war. Going back further was more difficult. A wonderful woman in the Standesamt of Nürnberg gave me my first big step forward. She brought up the old registries from the 1890s with the birth and marriage records of my grandparents Konrad Hasselbacher and Karolina Bayersl, along with other family documents. I wept as I saw those old books as I usually do. They are physical proxies of people I have loved, or who have come before and are lost. Following Konrad's line was relatively easy. The Hasselbachers were Exulanten— protestant religious refugees from counter-reformation Catholic Austria in the 1650s. They settled in Mittelfranken and have been well studied. I have tied together many of these family lines in Germany and America.

It is always harder to follow the maternal family lines in the old records. I was handicapped in the beginning because I spoke no German and could not read the old Deutscheschrift. (I can do both better now.) I learned that my Grandmother's father, Xaver Jakob Bayersl, was born in Dinkelsbühl. In my next visit to Germany, I visited the church of St. George in Dinkelsbühl and was allowed to look at the old church-books. I found the family register of the Bayersls but was initially told I could not make photograph or a copy. I told the clerk that I had traveled almost 5000 miles just to see that record and would need time to translate and understand it. (I still need such time today.) The clerk relented and allowed me to take one photo. I learned that Xaver's father, Leonhard Bayersl, was a Lohnfuhrmann born in Affing! This was the giant step in my journey of discovery to Aichach-Friedberg.

About this time I made a discovery that I believe makes it easier for me to trace my family roots in Germany than it is for my friends who actually live there! During the 20th Century, representatives of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) traveled widely in Europe making microfilms of old church and other records. In exchange a copy was given to the church. (I suspect that many the microfilms in the Catholic Church Archive in Augsburg were obtained in this way.) The result of this is that I am able to inspect copies of church-books from virtually every small village around Edenried from the 1600's to the late 1800s. I spent hundred of hours looking through the books of Edenried, Affing, Aindling, Todtenweis, Haunsweiss, Gundelsdorf, Griesbeckerzell and other villages in Bavaria, and in Wurtenberg, and Thuringia where the German ancestors of my mother came from. For example, I have at my fingertips all the family registers from the 1800s of Edenried. These sacramental records allowed me to trace the Bayersls to Affing, and Edenried.

I found however, that where a Mormon microfilm was not available, that things were much more difficult. Understandably, when the old books are still in the church, the staff have a responsibility to protect them, but I have found that once a level of trust is established, in some parishes I have been given total access to the church books and allowed to take photographs. I have several thousand such photographs. However, once the books are taken in to either an Evangelish or Catholic archive, the task becomes almost impossible. Sometimes a microfilm or microfiche is made available for inspection, but often these are tedious to search through, or of poor quality and difficult to read. Making copies to study is difficult or not possible.

There is some good news. Both confessions are beginning “Kirchenbuchportals” where high-quality scans of the old books are placed on the Internet for all to see. The Evangelish Arkiv for Mittlefranken in Nürnberg is transferring microfilm and scans onto computer, which facilitates reading. I have viewed scans from 1600 Gresten Austria. I believe we can do better in making this priceless and otherwise unobtainable information available to people who wish to see it. That means making it easier to obtain copies. Even many modern Germans have trouble reading the old writing and need time to examine it.

What did I find in Edenried?

I was able to trace my Baýrl family back through Affing to Edenried where I had ancestors living from before 1717 until at least 1815. Joseph Baýrl was born 1827 in Affing and married Karolina Brüstle in Dinkelsbuhl. Following the death of his wife in 1878, Joseph moved with his children to Augsburg where I loose track of that family. I have their civil records, but not their church records. I have a newspaper report of Joseph being murdered in a fight in Augsburg.

Joseph’s parents were Leonhard Baýrl (*1795 +1872 in Affing) and Kreszenz Helfer (*1792 Todtenweis, +1854 Affing). Joseph was the son of Johann Baýerl and Magdalena Echer. Johann died 1835 in Affing but I have not been able to find a birth record. However, his father Martin Baýrl was from Edenried!

Martin Baýrl was baptized 1718 in Haunsweis, but his parents were from Edenried. I suspect that newborn Martin was taken to Haunsweis to be baptized. My inspection of the church-books suggests that at some times, a single priest serviced both communities. Martin married Maria Mall of Gallenbach (c1735-1815) but I could find no record of her birth or life there. At the time of her death in Edenried, Maria lived in Haus Paulheis where the Leinfelders live today.

Martin's parents, and my oldest known ancestors in Edenried were Michael B yrl (c1684-1769) and his wife Elizabetha (+1744). Michael and Elizabetha are my 6th Great-grandparents. Michael is the earliest B yrl I found in Edenried. I do not know where he was born, nor do I know the family name of Elizabetha– no marriage record is available. It appears that at first Michael and Elizabetha lived in Frechholtzhausen at the time of his death, Michael was called the “old Reupp.” His daughter-in-law Maria died in Paulheiss, the house next door. The couple had 10 children, but at least 4 died before adulthood and I cannot account for 4 others. In one terrible winter of 1728, Michael lost his wife Elizabetha and three of his sons. There was a daughter, Apollonia (1720-1765 in Edenried) who had an illegitimate son Joseph. Joseph's Godmother was Anna Maria Bichler. Apollonia was 24 at the time of her mother's death. Michael did not remarry and Apollonia may have remained at home to help take care of her younger siblings.

The B yrls of Edenried must have been friends with the Pfaffenzeller and Brantmeyer families as they were godparents to each other's children and witnesses together at weddings. Although my ancestors left Affing by 1856, many other relatives continued to live there. I know exactly who the B yrls are on the war memorials in the churches of Haunsweis and Affing. There were in the past a few hundred B yrls or Bayerls living in Aindling and Gundelsdorf who may well have been members of my greater family. Only a handful of B yrls are to be found in the region today.

Some mysteries remain that I wish I could solve. For example, where did Michael and Elizabeth come from? Where was Martin's son Johann born? Who was Maria Mall? What happened to the B yrls of Augsburg? Did my Great-grandfather Xaver ever live there, or did he continue his apprenticeship as a Pinselmacher in Dinkelsb hl before moving to N rnberg? Most perplexing to me is why was a “y” used in the spelling of B yrl? Is was a source of confusion for the next 200 years!

My personal relationship with Edenried.

I first visited Edenried in 2009 and every year since. I had a few pages of old records that I could not read. I went to the church where I found Herr Jakob Hermann mowing the lawn. I put together the dozen words of German that I knew at the time and asked for help. He pointed out a red-roofed house nearby and told me to return that evening. I encountered other acts of kindness that day. One man, whose name I have forgotten, took me to the old house of his parents on the edge of the village overlooking the fields of Edenried. That evening I made my way back to the house of the red roof and met the Nassl family which embraced me warmly. Walli Nassl helped me understand the old records I had and also found

her old family names on the pages. Since then, I count the Nassl family as dear friends.

As was my fearless way, I knocked on the door of Paulheiss and fell immediately in love with the Leinfelder family. At that visit, or perhaps the next, Konrad took me to the houses of my ancestors in Affing and to Haus Reupp where by coincidence Konrad's cousins live today. (In fact, I suspect Konrad is related to most everyone else in Edenried!) Every year since then I have been able to visit the old B yrl homelands where each year I learn more about this part of the world. I shared Edenried Fr shoppen with more new friends— I hope they find that my German is getting better each time! I even found the thousand-year old village of Haselbach by Ehekirchen where a Haselbacher duke once lived! Best of all have been the many adventures I shared with my Nassl and Leinfelder friends who have adopted me. I hope I have a chance to meet more of the people of Edenried. Surely some of us are cousins! If I can help find old church records for you, it will be my pleasure.

Peter Hasselbacher