

History of the Löffler family in Germany

Deep in the heart of southern Germany, nestled in the rolling hills just northeast of the Black Forest in the state of Baden-Württemberg, lies the village of Hohenhaslach.

Today this small town and its neighboring municipality, Saxonia Home, make up a quiet rural community of some 16,000 villagers. It is part of the greater community of Sachsenheim in Ludwigsburg County. Stuttgart is approximately 25 miles to the southeast, with Munich another 225 miles further east. This mountainous region is known as the northern Kraichgau, an area bordered by the Rhine River to the west and the Neckar River to the north.

Home to small businesses, tradition-rich churches and a popular soccer club, Hohenhaslach is perhaps best known in the region for its lush vineyards. For centuries, workers have toiled in its fields to make Hohenhaslach one of the country's most successful wine producers.

It is also the first known homeland of the family Löffler, which we have come to know in modern times by the surname Spoon.

The German village of Hohenhaslach, as seen in a drawing from the 1500s

The German translation of "spoon" is "Löffel," and genealogists interpret the surname Löffler to mean "spoon maker." This suggests a possible occupation for our Spoon family ancestors. Further evidence indicates that family members were involved in food preparation of some kind. A 1736 church record from nearby Sinsheim identifies a man since proven to be a Spoon ancestor as Leonhard Löffler, "citizen and baker at Hohenhaslach."

The man referred to in that church document is listed in Hohenhaslach baptismal records as Hans Leonhard Löffler, born Feb. 17, 1677. Hans, also referred to as Johannes, is the earliest ancestor with a proven direct connection to the Spoon family at this time. Even so, church records in Hohenhaslach indicate that the Löffler family lived in that village at least as far back as the mid-1500s.

As Werner Holzhauser, a current resident of the town, wrote in correspondence with the author, "An ancient Hohenhaslach family was called Löffler."

Information about the Löffler family in Hohenhaslach can be found in a microfilm entitled "Evangelische Kirche Hohenhaslach" (Protestant church records of Hohenhaslach) at the Family History Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah. This microfilm of the original German church documents reveals many references to the name Löffler, with naming customs and generation gaps suggesting that we have many ancestors in the area dating back well before Hans Leonhard Löffler.

These records begin in the 1550s, which was probably the time the church in Hohenhaslach was established. Historians note that the Reformation had come to the area around 1555, with shifts in political power establishing most German communities as one of two religious faiths: Roman Catholic or Lutheran.

It is likely that prior to that time, no organized church in the area remained intact long enough to preserve such records. It is also possible that church records were destroyed during the centuries of religious and political upheaval that preceded the 1500s.

Hohenhaslach as it is today – a sleepy village on the hill

The village of Hohenhaslach dates back to the ninth century, when a land owner named Ruther Lorsch gave property in a region known as Hasalahe to a local monastery. The name Hohenhaslach was first mentioned in historical documents in the year 1283. In 1356, Count Heinrich von Vaihingen bequeathed his entire possession – which included Hohenhaslach and Donkey Castle Mountain, possibly the site of the monastery – to the house of Württemberg. The village had begun to prosper as a quiet community of vineyards by the 16th century.

It is in the first few pages of the records of the Lutheran church in Hohenhaslach that the first entry of the name Löffler is found. On Oct. 13, 1566, a boy named Martin Löffler is listed as the newborn son of Jeronimus Löffler and his wife, the former Anna Berg. It is likely that the dates entered in the church records are those of the actual baptism rather than the birth. Baptisms were performed soon after the birth of a child, however, so for our purposes we will refer to the date listed as the birth date.

There is no further mention of Martin Löffler in the church records of Hohenhaslach. For now, we must assume that either Martin had no children or that he moved away from the area. Since we know that our ancestors were still living in Hohenhaslach more than 100 years later, it seems likely that the Spoon family descended from another member of the Löffler family. Fortunately, the author didn't have to look far to find one.

Church records list the July 29, 1571 birth of a boy named Jeronimus Löffler. The entry is made under the date Oct. 1, the day of the baptism. Obviously, this is not the same Jeronimus as the one mentioned earlier, but it certainly could be his nephew and a cousin of Martin. The first name of the father in the church document is difficult to read; neither the author nor translators at the Family History Library in Salt Lake City were able to decipher the handwritten German script. As mysterious as this entry in the church documents is, it very well could be the oldest surviving record of a Spoon ancestor.

One thing is certain – the name of Jeronimus's mother, Katharina Hauber. The name Hauber, clearly legible on the document, is a famous name in the history of Hohenhaslach. Johann Hauber, a Dr. of Theology, is pictured holding a Bible in the book "Hohenhaslach im Zeitlauf der

Geschichte," a history of the village available at the Family History Library. He is listed as the father of Michael Hauber, a pastor in Hohenhaslach in the 1650s.

Eberhard David Hauber

Another prominent Hohenhaslach citizen who was certainly a descendant of Katharina is Eberhard David Hauber (1695-1765). After studying at Germany's Tubigen University, he received the degree of Dr. of Theology in 1727. At the request of King Christian IV of Denmark, Hauber moved to Copenhagen in 1746 to serve as a priest at St. Petri Church. According to a biography of Hauber, "Because of his great knowledge and authorship, he became a member of the Royal Scientists' Society and was promoted in 1753 as consistorial advisor. His private library contained 16,000 to 17,000 books; he had a famous collection of Bible translations of almost every language on earth." Hauber is buried in the St. Petri Church graveyard.

Given the religious fervor of her descendants, it is likely that Katharina Hauber and her husband raised young Jeronimus in a loving home with scriptural teachings. Obviously, they attended church in Hohenhaslach. In the records of that church is listed the May 10, 1573 birth of twin sons, Wolfgang and Hans, to the same "Unknown" Löffler and Katharina Hauber.

Assuming that this branch of the Löffler family includes our direct ancestors, we focus on Hans as the next generation in the line that ultimately leads to the Spoons. The recorded births in 1593 and 1595 of Margaretha and Agnes Löffler, respectively, both list a father named Hans (the mother's name is not listed). Four other children during this time period are listed with a father named Hans; unfortunately, the first names of the last three children in this family, born in 1600, 1607 and 1611, are illegible. The author has determined that one of these children is the father of the next generation in our line of direct ancestors. This is virtually certain, because there are no documents listing any other Löfflers in Hohenhaslach during this time. Until we have confirmation, we will assume for purposes of this book that it is the "Unknown" Löffler born June 6, 1611.

Suggesting that the first name of that child was Hans (or Johannes) would be a good guess. Why? Because the patriarch of the next two generations had that name. Hans Leonhard Löffler, born Feb. 17, 1677, is listed in the Hohenhaslach church records with a father named Johannes. The author could not find a birth record for a Johannes Löffler around 1640-50, the approximate time Hans Leonhard's father would have been born. But the church record of Hans Leonhard's birth proves that such a man did exist, and a birth date around 1640 could make this Johannes Löffler the son of the "Unknown" Löffler born in 1611 and the grandson of the Hans Löffler born in 1573.

Granted, this is all supposition until we find more detailed information. This, however, we know for sure: Hans Leonhard Löffler, born in Hohenhaslach

in 1677, is confirmed as a Spoon ancestor. It would be another 100 years before the surname was changed to the Americanized "Spoon," but as a member of the fifth documented generation of the Löffler family in Hohenhaslach, Hans Leonard already was part of a rich family heritage.

The oldest known birth record for the Löffler family shows the birth of Martin Löffler to Jeronimus Löffler and Anna Berg

According to historical records, the Löffler family moved from its longtime homeland of Hohenhaslach about 35 miles northwest to the town of Sinsheim. We aren't sure exactly what year the move took place. It appears to have been in the 1720s, after Hans Leonhard Löffler fathered three sons.

The first reference to Sinsheim is an entry in the book "Burgert's 18th Century Emigrants from the Northern Kraichgau." A Sinsheim Lutheran church document dated June 8, 1736 records the marriage of Johann Adam Löffler to Anna Margaretha Trinckel. Johann is listed as an apprentice potter and son of "the late Leonhard Löffler" of Hohenhaslach.

This is the same Johann Adam Löffler born in 1711 in Hohenhaslach. Microfilmed church records in Salt Lake City do not include births from this time period, so we don't know Johann Adam's exact birth date. The year was determined from the age he listed on a ship's passenger list years later. He had a younger brother, Johann Christian, born in 1713. Following the custom of that time and to avoid confusion, we will refer to the brothers by their middle names, Adam and Christian.

An artist's sketch shows the town of Sinsheim as it looked in the 1600s

The boy's mother was named Barbara (maiden name unknown). The only evidence we have of this is a 1717 Hohenhaslach church record listing her death at age 31 from *tabes* (emaciation or starvation). This suggests that the family was living in modest conditions at best, perhaps with little food. We know, however, that somehow the Löfflers carried on. Even though Hans Leonhard Löffler was left a widower with two young sons, we know from ship's passenger lists and the family history records of many Spoon relatives that he had one more child.

Johannes Löffler (we know of no middle name) was born in 1722. The name of his mother is not known, and we have no record of a second marriage for Hans Leonhard. But the church record listing Barbara Löffler's death in 1717 justifies the claim made in many Spoon family histories that Johannes was a half brother to Adam and Christian. The identity of Johannes' mother, as well as the final days of Hans Leonhard in Hohenhaslach, remains a mystery.

At some point before 1736, Adam Löffler relocated to Sinsheim. His brothers either came with him or followed him at some point. Perhaps they left for new beginnings following the death of their father, or maybe they simply sought the opportunities a larger town offered.

Today, Sinsheim is a city of 32,000. It maintains its historic feel with the remains of a castle on the hill and quaint dwellings nestled in a valley bordering Elsenz Creek. At the same time, it is known for its automobile manufacturers and is home to a large auto and technology museum. Its history dates back to the year 770, when it was first named in official documents as "Sunnisheim." About the year 1000, a group of Benedictine monks established residence on a hill outside the village. The cloister buildings, still standing today, are now used as a youth hostel. Most of the town burned to the ground in 1689, but reconstruction was well underway by the time the Löffler brothers arrived.

Another possible motive for their move to Sinsheim is religious persecution. It is well documented that the fight for religious freedom in many parts of Germany was forcing many to flee their homeland during this time period.

Stone Castle Mountain at Sinsheim

The Thirty Years' War, a series of battles between 1618 and 1648, was the final step in a military attempt to settle the religious division the Reformation had caused. One of the great conflicts of early modern European history, the Thirty Years' War led to the destruction of many villages and countless deaths. As a result, few church records before 1650 survive to this day.

On one side of the conflict was the House of Austria, which included the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperors Ferdinand II and Ferdinand III, together with Philip IV of Spain. These rulers sought to re-establish the Catholic Church throughout Europe. They were opposed by several nations, including Denmark, Holland, France and Sweden, many representing the Calvinist and Lutheran faiths.

Perhaps most of all, however, the conflict became a civil war in Germany, where various principalities took up arms against each other, some for and others against the Habsburgs. It was an ugly period in German history and a costly one for followers of the Lutheran faith. In the years following the end of the war, Lutherans received minimal privileges in practicing their religion. While Catholic and Reformed congregations flourished, Lutherans found few opportunities for organized worship. Under the terms of the Palatine Church Division of 1705 in the Palatinate region of the northern Kraichgau, 5/7 of the parishes became Reformed and 2/7 became Catholic. None were established as Lutheran. In order to preserve the faith, Lutherans were forced to raise funds in other parts of Germany. Their small congregations struggled to survive.

The three sons of Hans Leonhard Löffler were part of this persecuted group of Lutherans. Whether for this reason, for other reasons unknown to us or perhaps for a combination of both, Sinsheim became a favorable option for them. Located in a more populated area, it offered the security of an established Lutheran church, as the 1736 marriage record of Adam Löffler proves. It was also closer to the Rhine River, a means of travel already being used by Germans migrating north to the Netherlands.

In search of a place to practice their religion freely, many had heard of the

opportunities available in America. Word of a settlement of German Lutherans in the colony of Pennsylvania was received with enthusiasm. Ships full of German immigrants left the port of Rotterdam (Netherlands) for America on a regular basis.

By the time of Adam's wedding in 1736, his younger brother Christian had already set out for a new life in a new land.

Arrow points to Christian Löffler's signature on 1733 passenger list

Following the lead of many Germans fleeing their homeland, Christian set sail on the Rhine River, a scenic trip north and west to Rotterdam. There he boarded the ship Samuel, bound for America. Risking the months-long journey with its virtual guarantee of dangerous storms and exposure to disease, Christian became the first of our ancestors to set foot on American soil. He disembarked from the Samuel at the port of Philadelphia on Aug. 17, 1733. His signature can be found on the passenger list from the journey.

We have no record of any correspondence between Christian and his brothers in Germany, and we don't know why the three didn't travel together. Perhaps Adam and Johannes waited for Christian to send word from America before they decided their own fate. At any rate, we know that Adam and his wife Anna Margaretha followed the same route shortly after their marriage, arriving in Philadelphia on the same ship Samuel, captained by one Hugh Percy, on Aug. 30, 1737.

Perhaps it was decided that Johannes was too young to make the journey with either of his brothers. After all, he was only 11 when Christian set sail and 15 when Adam left. Finally, at the age of 25, the youngest of the Löffler brothers made the long journey, sailing out of Rotterdam on the ship Restauration, Captain James Hall in charge. The name Johannes Löffler is one of the first to appear on the passenger list of the Restauration, which arrived in Philadelphia on Aug. 9, 1747 .

We may never know the full story of the Löffler family in Germany, but we know the Spoons owe much to the three brothers who were courageous enough to leave their native country and begin a new life in a strange land.

Douglas Spoon

8 November 2008

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By the time of Adam's wedding in 1736, his younger brother Christian had already set out for a new life in a new land.

Arrow points to Christian Löffler's signature on 1733 passenger list

Following the lead of many Germans fleeing their homeland, Christian set sail on the Rhine River, a scenic trip north and west to Rotterdam. There he boarded the ship Samuel, bound for America. Risking the months-long journey with its virtual guarantee of dangerous storms and exposure to disease, Christian became the first of our ancestors to set foot on American soil. He disembarked from

the Samuel at the port of Philadelphia on Aug. 17, 1733. His signature can be found on the passenger list from the journey.

We have no record of any correspondence between Christian and his brothers in Germany, and we don't know why the three didn't travel together. Perhaps Adam and Johannes waited for Christian to send word from America before they decided their own fate. At any rate, we know that Adam and his wife Anna Margaretha followed the same route shortly after their marriage, arriving in Philadelphia on the same ship Samuel, captained by one Hugh Percy, on Aug. 30, 1737.

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