

Johann Heinrich Christian and Ernst Vornkahl's Family in Germany

Roy A. Johnson, Ulrich Schröder, Carol J. (Loges) Sturdivant, and Earnest M. ("Mel") Vornkahl†

The immigrant ancestors of Roy, Carol, and Mel are the brothers Johann Heinrich Christian ("Henry") Vornkahl and Ernst Vornkahl. Both Henry and Ernst are subjects of separate chapters in this book describing their families and descendants in the United States. This chapter outlines what we have learned about their families and ancestors in Germany.

Background. Henry and Ernst's earliest documented ancestors were farmers in the village of Nettlingen. Nettlingen is a farming community with a history of nearly one thousand years. The village is located about 20 kilometers east of the city of Hildesheim in the modern state of Niedersachsen.^[3081] The area in which Nettlingen is located is known as the "Hildesheim Börde" (Hildesheim Plain), a large area of fertile land in north central Germany.^[3082] When Ernst returned to Germany from the United States for a visit to Hoheneggelsen in June, 1900, he commented on the farmland in a letter to his son in Missouri: "The country is blessed with a good crop of any kind. They are about to put up their hay and after that they will have to hurry to cut the winter barley. They have some spring barley also (and an) excellent wheat crop they will enjoy, but ¼ of all the land is in sugar beets."^[3083] While visiting the nearby village of Berel in 2007, we spoke with a local farmer who told us the main crops grown at the present time are sugar beets, wheat, and corn. Mustard is planted in the fall as a green fertilizer crop.

As we uncovered the records of Henry and Ernst's paternal ancestors,^[3084] we found that the family's residence shifted with time, first from Nettlingen to Dingelbe and then from Dingelbe to Hoheneggelsen. All three villages are within five or six kilometers of one another. The changing places of residence are derived from the records of births, marriages and deaths for the family.

The following sections of this account describe Henry and Ernst's family in Germany. Such a discussion would flow most naturally if we started with the earliest known ancestor of Henry and Ernst. However, the nature of genealogical research is such that we invariably start with the present generation and work backwards through time until the trail grows cold when earlier records cannot be found. Consequently, the following discussion begins with Henry and Ernst's immediate family and then goes back generation by generation. The sequence of these generations is outlined in Figure 69 on the following page.

Henry and Ernst's Father, Mother, Sisters, and Brothers. Henry and Ernst were born in different villages. Henry was born in Dingelbe on 10 Jan 1821 and was christened Johann Heinrich Christian Vornkahl.^[991,2422] Ernst was born in Hoheneggelsen on 18 Apr 1831 and was christened Friedrich Ernst Vornkahl.^[2306] Their father and mother were Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad Vornkahl and Johanne Dorothee Elisabeth Ohlendorf, known by the names, Friedrich and Dorothee (Dora).^[3084]

Friedrich was born in Dingelbe on 30 Aug 1787.^{[2379][2422]} A copy of his birth record, written in Latin, is shown in Figure 70. A transcription of the entry is: "Fornekahl 30 Aug bap est Joēs Joachimus Fridericas Conradus et P.L. Mathia Fornekahl et Maria Dorot. Kiel aeath. Lev á Joē Henrico Meier hycle adst. Joachimo Hartman, Theresia Kaune hey adol. et Joē Frider. Gifhorn et Mar. Elisab. Meier nato Bartels et Helmersen." An approximate translation: "Baptized on 30 Aug is Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad Fornekahl; son of Matthias Fornekahl and Maria Dorothee Kiel; godparents are Johann Heinrich Meier; Joachim Hartman; Theresa Kaune; Johann Friedrich Gifhorn and Maria Elisabeth Meier nee Bartels of Helmersen."

† Deceased 11 May 2014

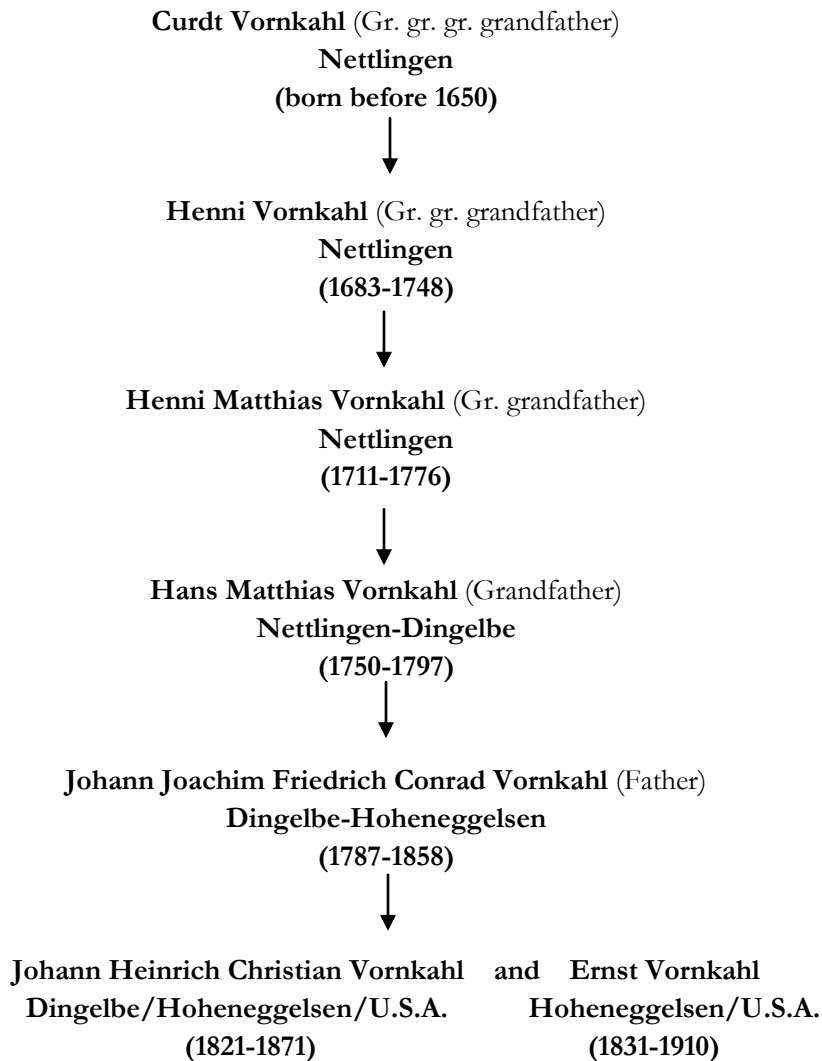


Figure 69. Paternal ancestors of Henry and Ernst Vornkahl. (Gr.= great)

Their father, Friedrich, was married twice. His first marriage in 1810 was to Johanne Marie Catharine Elisabeth Hermannes, a young woman from the nearby village of Hoheneggelsen.^{[1521][2132][2377-8][2382-3]} Friedrich and Catharine Elisabeth had three children, all born in Dingelbe, before her untimely death at the age of 32 in 1815.^[1858] The three children were Friedrich Adolf (1811),^{[903][2412]} Johanne Marie Elisabeth (1813),^{[926][2413]} and Marie Sophie Friedericke (1815-1815).^{[939][2414]} As adults, Friedrich Adolf married Caroline Wilhelmine Sophie Christine Kaufmann.^[2354] and Johanne Marie Elisabeth married Johann Behrend Friedrich August Lehrke.^[2350] Both couples raised families in Hoheneggelsen where the births of their children are recorded in the parish record books. See Chart 3A.

Friedrich's second marriage in 1817 was to Johanne Dorothee Elisabeth Ohlendorf.^[1529] Dorothee^[2265] was from Helmersen, a small settlement of farmers located between Nettlingen and Dingelbe. Friedrich and Dorothee's first child was born in 1817^[960] several months before their marriage but died in infancy.^[1864] Their second child (1819)^[976] died in 1820 when just under a year old.^[1868] Their third child was Henry, *i.e.*, Johann Heinrich Christian, who was born in Dingelbe in 1821.^{[991][2422]} Two daughters, Catharine Sophie Friedericke (1823)^[1012] and Caroline Wilhelmine Elisabeth (1825),^[1029] followed Henry and also were born in Dingelbe.

At some time after Wilhelmine's birth, Friedrich moved away from Dingelbe because the next recorded birth for Friedrich and Dorothee is Friedrich Ernst in the parish of Hoheneggelsen in 1831.^[2306] Ernst, like his brother

Am 15. Septembris adhaerentibus
 Griefe 15 Aug. + 1863
 bapt. est Joes Henricus et C. Just.
 Griefe et Elisab. Formeier nat. huj.
 Lev. ab Ernesto Henrico Henke adol. et
 Adelam adol. adol. Joes Bartel et
 Adelam et Gertr. Elisab. Mater Virginia.
 Fornekahl 30 Aug.
 bapt. est Joes Joachimus Fredericus Con-
 radus P. C. Mithia Fornekahl et Ma-
 riab. Nicolaeath. Lev. a Joes Henrico
 Meier huj. adol. Joachimo Platten
 Theresia Hauwe huj. adol. et Joes
 Frieder. Giffhorn et Mat. Elisab. Meier
 nat. a Bartel et Adelam adol. et C.
 Beckman 15 Septembris.
 bapt. est Joes Frieder. Wilhelmus
 et P. C. Carolus Wilhelmus
 Beckman molendinario et Justina
 Wollers nat. huj. Lev. ab adol. Fried.

Figure 70. Baptism of Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad Fornekahl recorded in the Dingelbe parish record book. Photocopy printed from a microfilm of the original record book. See text for a transcription and translation of the birth entry.

Henry, later emigrated from Germany to the United States and was Mel's great-grandfather. A stillbirth was recorded in 1833.^[2307] The final child born to the couple was Franz Wilhelm Theodor in 1835^[2308] who died of whooping cough at the age of four in 1839.^[2359]



Figure 71. Aerial photograph of Vornkahl farmstead no. 35 at Weidhof 10, Hoheneggelsen, courtesy of Friedrich Lassalle and Amanda Busche. Haze is created by reflection from glass protecting the original photograph.

The records of births, marriages, and deaths kept by the parish churches in those times would often describe the vocations and positions of the males. From these sources, we find Friedrich described as a *Vollspanner*, an *Halbspanner*, or an *Ackermann*. These words translate, very approximately, as: farmer with a full team, *i.e.*, a farmer with a team of two horses or two oxen; a farmer with a half team; or a husbandman. These descriptions serve as a rough measure of the amount of land farmed by the farmer.

After Friedrich moved his family to Hoheneggelsen, they lived at house no. 35 at the address Weidhof 10 in the village.^[3085] An aerial photograph of the farmstead is shown in Figure 71.^[3086] The only portion of the buildings remaining in 2014 was the residential quarter seen to the left side of the structure. A photograph of the residence is shown in Figure 72.^[3086] It seems plausible, although we have little evidence for it, that Friedrich's first marriage to Catharine Elisabeth Hermannes, whose family lived at no. 34 in Hoheneggelsen,^[3085] was a factor in the move of his family from Dingelbe to that village. Friedrich and Dorothee remained in Hoheneggelsen until their deaths on 20 Oct 1858^[2361] and 20 Mar 1867,^[2362] respectively.

Friedrich's immediate family was extensive. His six surviving sons and daughters together had at least thirty-one children. Oldest son, Friedrich Adolf and his wife Wilhelmine Kaufmann, had at least three children. Daughter Elisabeth and her husband August Lehrke had five children. Younger daughter Sophie and her husband Melchior Heinrich Christian Wilhelm Himstedt, had eight children. And youngest daughter, Wilhelmine and her husband Heinrich Wilhelm Brandes, had two children. As noted in their respective chapters, Henry and his wife Wilhelmina were the parents of eleven children while Ernst and his wife Elizabeth had two children. All these families are summarized in Charts 3A-3E, 11, and 15.

As the eldest male heir, Friedrich Adolf inherited the farm in Hoheneggelsen from his father and mother.^[3087] He married Wilhelmine Kaufmann, the daughter of Peter and Ilse Catharine Marie (Wiesen) Kaufmann, on 23



Figure 72. House at Wiedhof 10, Hoheneggelsen, on the site of the old Vornkahl farmstead. Photograph courtesy of Friedrich Lassalle and dates from 2013.

Feb 1849 when he was 37 years old and Wilhelmine was 18.^[2354] Friedrich Adolph was born in Dingelbe but because his family was Lutheran and the church in Dingelbe was Catholic, he was baptized in the Nettlingen church. Friedrich Adolph and Wilhelmine's first child, a son, lived less than a year.^{[2315][2366]} Their second child, Ernst August Ferdinand Wilhelm, was born 20 May 1851.^[2317] A third child, their daughter Wilhelmina Doris, was born 25 Aug 1858.^[2323] She did not marry and died on 26 Jul 1942.^[3085]

Friedrich Adolf's surviving son, Ernst August Ferdinand Wilhelm remained at the Vornkahl farmstead (no. 35) in Hoheneggelsen.^[3085] He remained single until age 45 at which time he married Johanne Sophie Dorothea Berking in Hoheneggelsen on 22 Apr 1897.^[2360] Their only child was a daughter, Elisabeth Wilhelmine Johanna, born 25 Apr 1900.^[2346] Wilhelm died two years later on 27 Jul 1902 at the age of fifty-one.^[2376] He was the last male descendent of Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad Vornkahl carrying the Vornkahl name to be living in Hoheneggelsen. [However, a grand nephew, Heinrich Friedrich Vornkahl (b. 27 Aug 1864; see Chart 3C)^[1272] and spouse Johanne Wilhelmine Emma Sundermeyer, settled in Hoheneggelsen where he was a saddle-maker and where they raised a family of four children.] Wilhelm's daughter, Johanna, married August Hermann Heinrich Mohle of Hoheneggelsen on 18 Mar 1922.^[2363]

With the inheritance of the Vornkahl farm by Friedrich Adolf, it is not unreasonable to think that his younger half-brothers, Henry and Ernst, found emigration an attractive alternate to remaining in Germany as laborers. Emigration to America by Henry and Ernst split the family into two parts, separated by thousands of miles. However, a variety of evidence shows that the two groups stayed in contact. One example is that we find two Himstedt children, born in Germany, having godmothers in the United States. The first was Christine Wilhelmina Alwine Emilie, born in 1850,^[2316] for whom Wilhelmina Vornkahl in America was named as a godmother. It is probable that this was Henry's wife, Wilhelmina Greve, whom he married shortly before 1848 and thereby was



Figure 73. Left to right: Else Lehrke, Lotti Othmar, and Henni Brandes.

an aunt of the child. The second was Dorothee Elisabeth Louise Emilee Himstedt born in 1857.^[2322] One of her godmothers was Elisabeth Riekeberg, “wife of Ernst Vornkahl in America,” and an aunt of the newborn.

As described in our chapter about Henry Vornkahl, his son Frederick apparently traveled from Iowa to Germany in 1875. We also know that Ernst Vornkahl and his wife Elisabeth returned to Germany for a visit in 1900. In Germany, they first stayed with Carl Vornkahl in Hildesheim and then with Ernst’s nephew, Wilhelm Himstedt, in Hoheneggelsen.^[3083] (See the chapter in this book about Ernst Vornkahl for more about their visit to Germany).

There also were written communications between families on the two continents. A letter written by Hermann Brandes of Hoheneggelsen on 12 Feb 1913 and sent to his cousin, Frederick Vornkahl, in Iowa has survived.^[3088] It is clear from this letter that the two cousins carried on a continuing correspondence. A transcription and translation of the letter is given in Appendix 1. Hermann’s letter was, in part, a response to the news that Frederick’s wife, Emma Wirsig, had died on 10 Dec 1912. Hermann expressed his condolences to Frederick in the first paragraph of the letter. He then went on to tell Frederick about several family members in Germany. He also included with his letter a photograph of three young women (Figure 73). He identified the women as: Else Lehrke, age 21 and the youngest daughter of Hermann Lehrke; Lotti Ohtmar, the fiancée of Wilhelm’s second son Herman; and Henni, Wilhelm’s daughter, age 16 (Wilhelm probably is Hermann’s brother). Continuing, he adds that Wilhelm’s eldest son, also named Wilhelm, is “at the farm in Mölme” and is 26 years old. Again, he may be referring to Wilhelm Brandes since the Brandes family was from Mölme.

Next to be mentioned in the letter are cousin Wilhelm Himstedt and his son Hermann who has “served in the armed forces and remains in the Reserve.” Wilhelm’s brother is living with his daughter Ella in Deinsen, a village to the southwest of Hildesheim.

Then he writes, “Aunt Vornkahl is doing quite well in spite of her age. With my people, the situation is still the same.” The “Aunt Vornkahl” most likely is Friedrich Adolf’s widow, Wilhelmine Kaufmann, who was born in 1830 and was still living in 1913 at age 83. He goes on to say that “Wilhelm’s wife has not re-married and lives as a young widow. Their only daughter, Johanne who is 12 years old, lives in Braunschweig” to attend school.



Figure 74. Postcard enclosed with letter from Albert Rütther to Sophia (Vornkahl) Refior in 1948. The postcard was described as “old” in 1948. Scenes are, clockwise from upper left: “Schloss” (castle); “Villa Hoyermann;” “Evang. Kirche” (Evangelical church); “Total-Ansicht” (total view); and “Bahnhof” (train station).

This Wilhelm and daughter, Johanne, very likely are Friedrich Adolf’s son and granddaughter. Hermann’s discussion of relatives concludes with a comment that he does not have any news about Wilhelm Himstedt’s other siblings. There is no indication in the letter that Hemann had a family himself or that he was an accomplished scientist and student of nature (see Appendix 2 for a brief description of his accomplishments).

Much later in time, two letters written in 1948 have also survived (see Appendix 3). These letters were from Albert and Ida Rütther of Töpingen, a village about 60 miles north of Hildesheim, to Sophia (Vornkahl) Refior in Iowa. Albert Rütther was a grandson of Henry and Ernst’s sister, Catharine Sophie Friedericke Vornkahl. Sophia Refior was Henry’s granddaughter. Albert and Sophia therefore were second cousins. In the first letter, written shortly after the end of World War II, Mr. Rütther expresses thanks for a gift of clothing received from the Refiors. He alludes to some of the hardships that resulted from the war. He also responded to a question about his profession with the comment that he had been a postal inspector but that he “had to tender my resignation in the Third Reich because I had spoken truthfully.” He enclosed an old postcard depicting Hoheneggelsen on which the approximate locations of the homes of several family members have been marked (Figure 74).

With his second letter, Mr. Rütther enclosed a list of those children of Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad Vornkahl and Johanne Dorothee Elisabeth Ohlendorf whose births, while occurring in Dingelbe, had been recorded in Nettlingen. This list was obtained by Mr. Rütther upon request to the pastor of the Nettlingen parish church. The data from the list are given in Appendix 3 of this chapter and are also recorded in sources [2420-2424]. This listing does not include children born later in Hoheneggelsen.

Henry and Ernst’s Cousins. Henry and Ernst had at least sixteen first cousins on the Vornkahl side of their family. Of special interest to us are two of these cousins, each of whom had a grandchild that became a resident of Hoheneggelsen. Henry and Ernst’s aunt, Johanne Marie Sophie, married Johann Berend Christian Vornkahl of Nettlingen^[1506] and they had five children (Chart 6A). The two probably were very distant cousins.

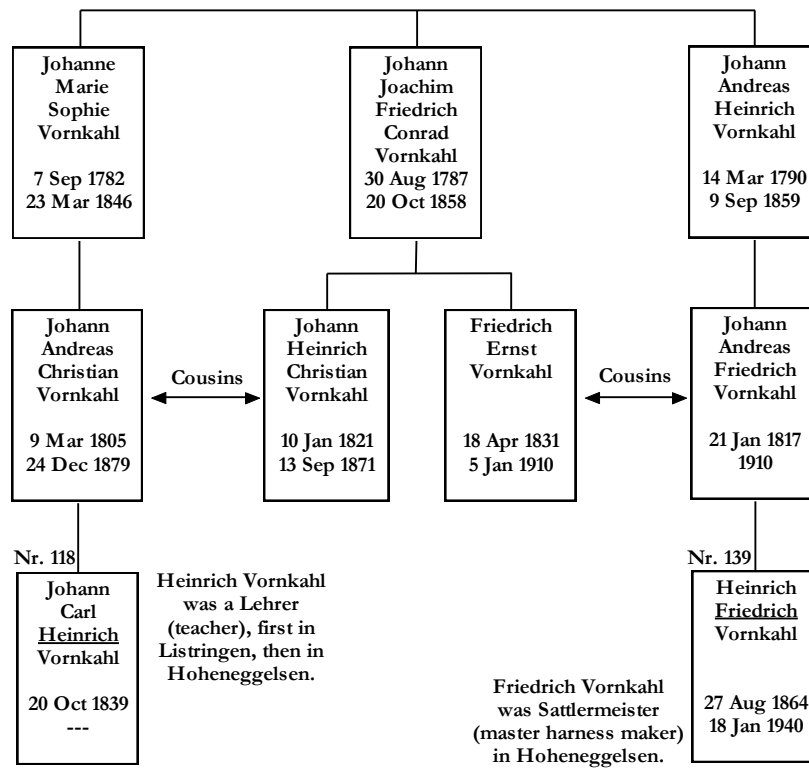


Figure 75. Chart illustrating two cousins of Henry and Ernst and the children who became residents in Hoheneggelsen.

Their son, Johann Andreas Christian,^[2787] married Johanne Marie Sophie Catharine Henriette Reineke of Heltershausen (Charts 6A and 6B). After their marriage, the couple moved to the nearby village of Gr. Himsted and lived at house Nr. 16. They were parents of five children, all born in Gr. Himstedt.^[3089]

Their son, Johann Carl Heinrich^[2789] (Chart 6B and Figure 75), became a teacher and taught school in the small village of Listringen until the early 1870s and thereafter in Hoheneggelsen. He was married to Johanne Marie Catherine Helms; their first two children were born in Listringen and a third in Hoheneggelsen. In Hoheneggelsen, the family lived at Nr. 118 in a building that served as both a residence and as a school house. Today the building is the Heimat Museum of Hoheneggelsen (see Figure 76).^[3089]

Henry and Ernst's prolific uncle, Johann Andreas Heinrich, had an illegitimate daughter followed by two marriages with each marriage producing five children (Chart 3C). His son, Johann Andreas Friedrich, married Sophie Christine Wilhelmine Hantelmann of Hoheneggelsen; they had eight children (Chart 3C). Their son, Heinrich Friedrich, married Johanne Wilhelmine Emma Sundermeyer of Ahstedt in 1895.^[2780] Friedrich and Emma lived in Hoheneggelsen (house Nr. 139; Figure 77) where Friedrich was a master saddle and harness maker.

Henry and Ernst's Grandfather, Hans Matthias Vornkahl.^[3090] Henry and Ernst's grandfather, Hans Matthias Vornkahl, was born in Nettlingen on 20 Sep 1750, the son of Henni Matthias Vornkahl and Johanne Dorothee Busse.^[456] A photograph of the birth record in the Nettlingen church book is shown in Figure 78. Transcription of the entry reads: "Henning Matthias Vornkahl eodem einen Sohn getauftet, Namens Hanß Matthias, Geff. seyn: Hanß Matthias Liekefetten, und Hanß Bußen des Schwager, in Betrum wohnert Frau." A note in different handwriting was entered at a later time: "+ am 10 Sept: 97." An approximate translation is: "Henning Matthias Vornkahl on same day (as in the preceding entry, *i.e.*, 20 Sep 1750 – not shown) a son was baptized, named Hanß Matthias, god-parents are Hanß Matthias Liekefett and Hanß Bußen's, the brother-in-law living in Bettrum, wife." "Deceased 10 Sep 1797."



Figure 76. Nr. 118, Hoheneggelsen. Presently the Heimat Museum. Photo by F. Lassalle.



Figure 77. House Nr. 139, Hoheneggelsen. Photograph courtesy of Friedrich Lasalle.

Hans Matthias married Marie Dorothee Kiel (Kühl) from Bettrum in 1779 or 1780. An Ehestiftung (marriage contract) for the couple is dated 21 Nov 1779 although this probably was not the date of their marriage. Hans Matthias is identified on the document as being of Dingelbe.^[3090a] See Appendix 4 for a brief description of the Ehestiftung. They were the parents of six children in the years from 1781 to 1792, including Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad in 1787. All six births are recorded in the parish records of Dingelbe, consistent with the assumption that Hans Matthias settled in Dingelbe at about the time of his marriage to Dorothee. Hans Matthias is described in these birth records as a Vollspanner, which usually meant that he farmed an amount of land that required the use of a full team of draft animals, *i.e.*, two oxen or two horses.

Dorothee's death on 24 Mar 1794^[1807] in Dingelbe is recorded in three parishes, Dingelbe, Nettlingen, and Hoheneggelsen, each of which state that she was buried in Nettlingen. After Dorothee's death, Hans Matthias married again, this time to Marie Elisabeth Schaper of Nordassel.^[1816] Hans Matthias and Elisabeth were the parents of two daughters before he died in Dingelbe on 10 Sep 1797^{[1813][2362][2399]}

Hans Matthias was one of nine children in the family, three of whom died in infancy and two whose fates are unknown. The remaining four children, including Hans Matthias, grew to adulthood, married, and had families in Nettlingen, Dingelbe or Helmersen. Hans Matthias' two older sisters were Anne Hedewig (1741)^[401] who married Johann Sylvester Likefett,^[3091] and Anne Marie (1744),^[405] who married Joachim Seegers.^{[2094][2377]} (See Chart 3A.) His younger brother, Johann Heinrich, is discussed in the following section.

Johann Heinrich Vornkahl (Henry and Ernst's Great Uncle) in Helmersen. Hans Matthias' younger brother, Johann Heinrich (1756),^[498] married Marie Elisabeth Bartels of Helmersen on 18 Jun 1778 after which, it appears, the couple lived in the homestead of the bride's family atASSE Nr. 75 in Helmersen.^{[1494][2148]} They were the first of five generations of Vornkahls to live at this address through the 19th and into the 20th century. Marie Elisabeth was the daughter of Hans Heinrich Bartels.^[2253a]

Helmersen is a small community of farm homes that stretches along the road between the villages of Nettlingen and Dingelbe. A chapter about Helmersen, written by Ernst Hüpsel, is included in the "Chronik Nettlingen," by Dr. Fr. Spanuth (1967). In this chapter, the location of Helmersen is briefly described as

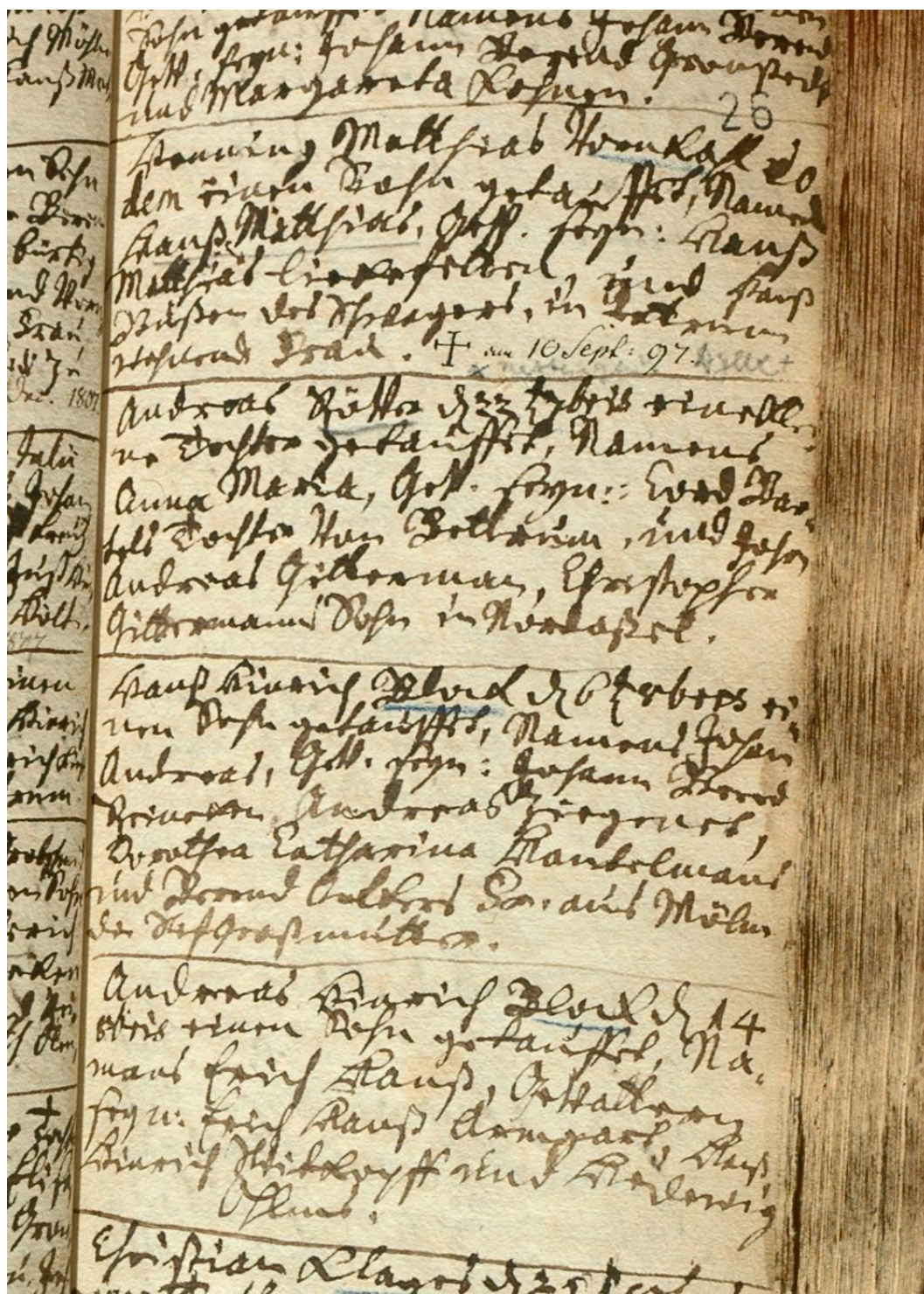


Figure 78. Photograph showing part of the page on which the birth of Hanß Matthias Vornkahl in 1750 is recorded. The entry for Hanß Matthias is the first complete entry near the top of the page. See text for transcription and translation of the entry.

“Nordwestlich von Nettlingen liegt westl. der Klunkau der Weiler Helmersen. In Urkunden finden sich die Ortsnamen: 1277 Elmere, 1281 Melmere, 1321 Helmesen.” This description translates approximately as “Northwest of Nettlingen, the hamlet Helmersen lies to the west of the Klunkau River. In the old records we find the hamlet named Elmere in 1277, Melmere in 1281, and Helmersen in 1321.”

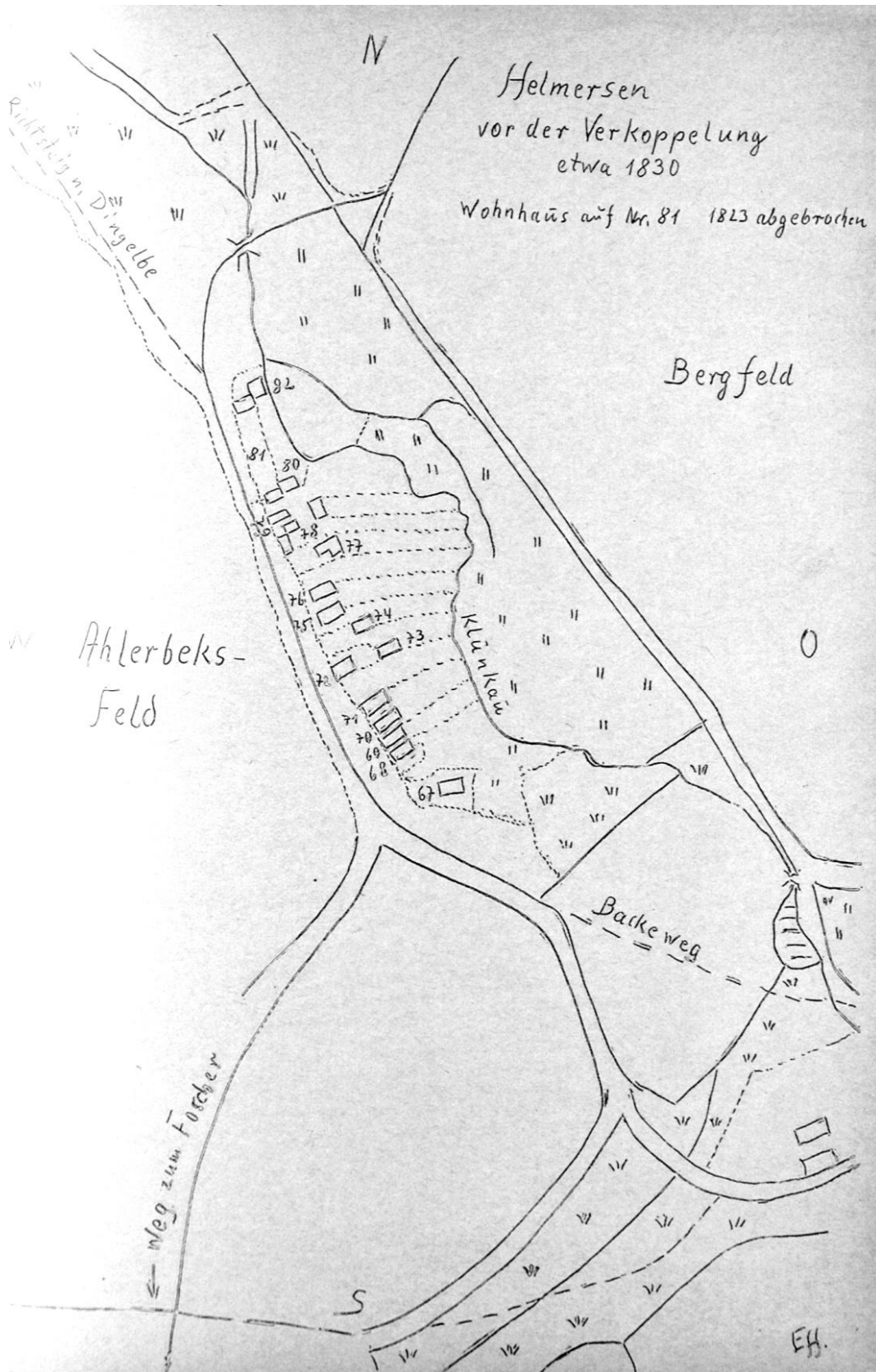


Figure 79. Map of Helmersen, about 1830, hand-drawn by Ernst Hüpsel in his chapter, "Helmersen" in the "Chronik Nettlingen" by Dr. Fr. Spanuth, 1967.

In his chapter on Helmersen, Mr. Hüpsel included hand-drawn maps of the hamlet as it existed in 1830, 1853, and 1967, (see Figure 79) showing the location of individual homes and farmsteads. These are identified by fire insurance numbers (Asse Nr.) that have long been in use in Germany and are somewhat equivalent to house numbers. Sixteen farmsteads are shown on the 1830 map, numbered from 67 through 82. The numbering begins with 67 because the system of numbers continues from those used in Nettlingen. In the Hüpsel chapter, the map is accompanied by a list of residents for each homestead over a period of time from the 1700s to 1967.

Living at Nr. 75, Johann Heinrich and Marie Elisabeth had two sons, Johann Heinrich Anton (1780) and Johann Matthias (1783), before Johann Heinrich died in 1784 at the age of 28.^{[1794][2150]} In 1805, Johann Heinrich Anton married Johanne Catharine Sophie Bartels.^[1511] The couple remained at Asse Nr. 75 in Helmersen. Their son, Johann Friedrich Christoph, was born on Christmas Day in 1805. Johanne Catharine died of consumption just two years later on 14 Mar 1808. Heinrich remarried in 1809; his second wife was Johanne Marie Elisabeth Greve and together they were the parents of three children, a son and two daughters. However, Heinrich's son Friedrich with his first wife remained at Asse Nr. 75 after marriage in 1832.

On 12 Jan 1832, Johann Friedrich Christoph married Sophie Caroline Henriette Bartels of Nettlingen. They made their residence at Nr. 75 as had Friedrich's father and grandfather before him. Their son Johann Diedrich Friedrich, born in 1834, died in 1853 when he was run over by a wagon. Their daughter, Johanne Sophie Friedericke, born in 1842, remained at Nr. 75 after her marriage in 1870 to a distant cousin from Nettlingen, Johann Heinrich Carl Theodor Vornkahl. Heinrich's family in Nettlingen lived at Asse Nr. 11.

Johanne Sophie Friedericke represented the fourth generation of her Vornkahl family to live at Nr. 75 and, because of her marriage to Heinrich, the homestead retained the Vornkahl name. However, she and Heinrich had only two daughters. After the marriage of the eldest daughter in 1897 to Johann Friedrich Theodor Carl Müller, the homestead became the Müller residence. Hüpsel's map of Helmersen in 1967 shows Nr. 75 together with the adjacent Nr. 74 as the property of Karl Müller.

The sequence of Vornkahls living at Nr. 75 is shown in Chart 3B and can be summarized:

Johann Heinrich Vornkahl & Marie Elisabeth Bartels	
(b. 1756 – d. 1784)	(b. 1758 – d. 1803)
-	
Johann Heinrich Anton Vornkahl & Johanne Catherine Sophie Bartels	
(1780 – 1829)	(1779 – 1808)
-	
Johann Friedrich Christoph Vornkahl & Sophie Catharine Caroline Henriette Bartels	
(1805 - 1879)	(1813 – 1890)
-	
Johanne Sophie Friedericke Vornkahl & Johann Heinrich Carl Theodor Vornkahl	
(1843 – 1903)	(1836 -1887)
-	
Henriette Wilhelmine Sophie Vornkahl & Johann Friedrich Theodor Carl Müller	
(1872 - ?)	

Johann Heinrich Vornkahl and Marie Elisabeth Bartels' second son, Johann Matthias, also became a resident of Helmersen after his marriage in 1811 to Johanne Marie Sophie Catharine Kummer. She was the daughter of the spritzenbauer (fire-engine builder), Johann Heinrich Kummer, living at Asse Nr. 77 in Helmersen. Matthias worked as a master carpenter. His son, Johann Heinrich Friedrich Christian, his grandson, Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Theodor, and his great-granddaughter, Juliane Friedericke Hermine, all lived at Nr. 77.

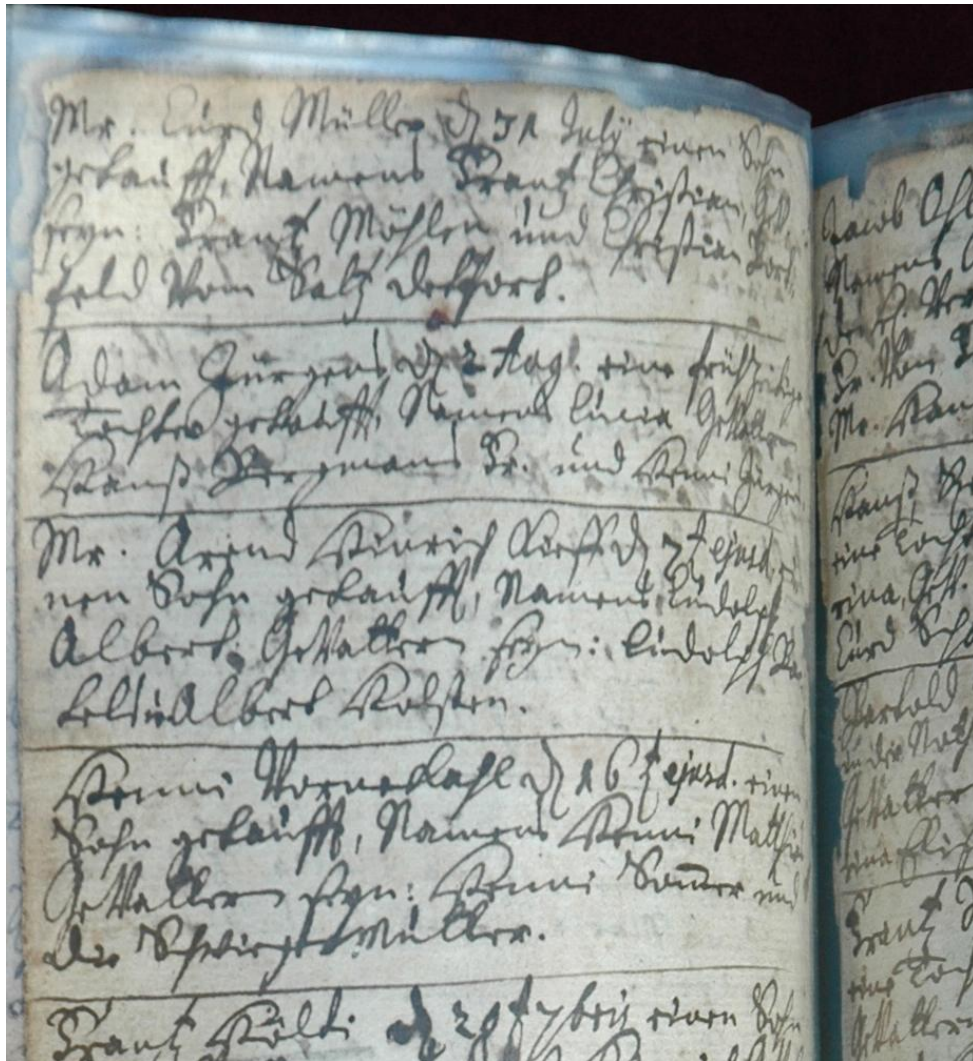


Figure 80. Photograph showing part of the page in the Nettlingen Kirchenbuch for 1649-1735 on which the birth in 1711 of Henni Matthias Vornekahl is recorded (the last complete entry).

See text for the transcription and translation of the entry.

The sequence of Vornkahl families at Nr. 77 is shown in Chart 3B and can be summarized:

Johann Matthias Vornkahl
(1783 – 1866)

-

Johann Heinrich Friedrich Christian Vornkahl
(1812 - 1902)

-

Johann Friedrich Wilhelm Theodor Vornkahl
(1841 – 1912)

-

Juliane Friedericke Hermine Vornkahl & Heinrich Wilhelm Christian Ludwig Mejer
(1866 – 1899)

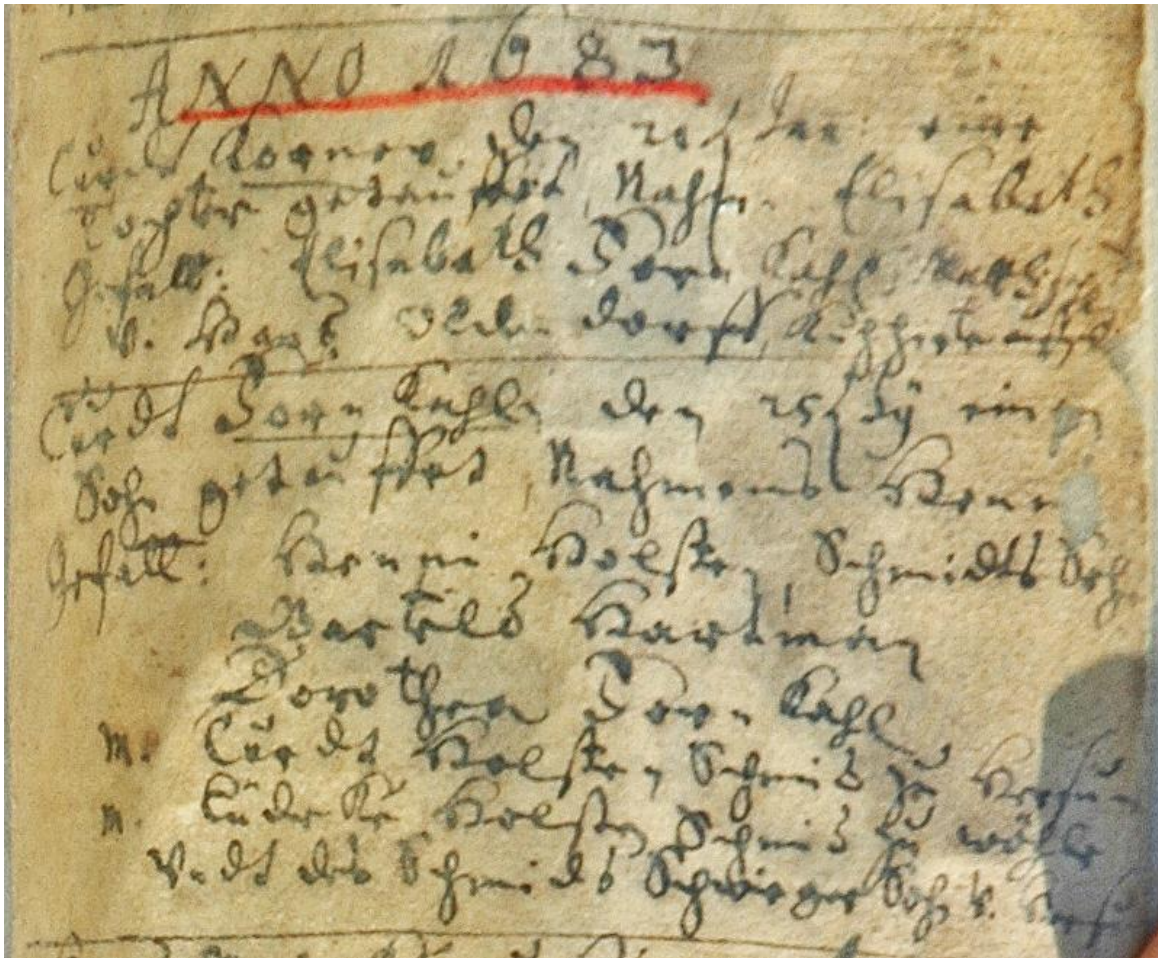


Figure 81. Detail from Nettingen Kirchenbuch 1649-1735; page 58r, 1683, in which the birth of Henni, son of Curdt Fornkahl, is recorded. See text for a transcription and translation of the birth record.

Henry and Ernst's Great-grandfather, Henni Matthias Vornkahl. Henry's paternal great-grandfather, Henni Matthias, was baptized on 16 Aug 1711 in Nettingen. The recording of his birth in the Nettingen Kirchenbuch (church book) is illustrated in Figure 80 and reads: "Henni Vornekahl des 16t e-?- einen Sohn getauff, Namen Henni Matthias, Gevattern sein: Henni Sommer und des Schwiegermutter" An approximate translation: "Henni Vornekahl on 16th of the above month had a son baptized and named Henni Matthias; godparents are Henni Sommer and the mother-in-law."

Henni Matthias was married to Johanne Dorothee Busse although the date of their marriage is unknown. Also unknown is her place and date of birth. Her death, recorded on 11 Sep 1785, states she was 65 years old at the time^{[1797][2104][2153][2381][2415]} so her birth should have been at some time in 1719-20. The births of all their children are recorded in Nettingen, which suggests that the family lived in this village most of their lives. However, the deaths of both Henni Matthias and Marie Dorothee are listed in the parish register of Dingelbe.^{[2104][2152][2394]} It is possible that in their old age, they lived with their son (Hans Matthias) and daughter-in-law in Dingelbe.

Henni Matthias was one of eight children of Henni Vornkahl. Two of his siblings may have died in childhood as there are entries in the Nettingen parish death registry for the burial of a "young daughter" of Henni Vornkahl on 1 May 1707^[1706] and of a "young son" on 3 May 1715.^[1708] The oldest sister, Anna Catharina,²⁰⁰ may have married Gerhard Block on 30 Jan 1731^[1454] but we cannot be certain since there was a second woman with the same name and about the same age in Nettingen at that time who could have been married to Block.^[164]

A second sister, Margaretha Elisabeth (b. 20 Oct 1709),^[235] can be identified as having married Heinrich Christian Pieper (Piper) on 12 Aug 1732.^[1456] The identification is made from an entry in the Nettlingen Civil Records wherein the death of Margarethe Elisabeth (nee Vornkahl), widow of Heinrich Christoph Piper, on 23 Mar 1763 at the age of 54 years is recorded.^[2126] The age of 54 years places her date of birth in 1709, the same year in which the birth of Henni's daughter of the same name is recorded. The Piepers were parents of several children (see page 69).

Of the remaining four siblings, there are no further records for three and the fourth is Henni Matthias, Henry and Ernst's great-grandfather, born on 16 Aug 1711. From Henni Matthias' birth record (Figure 80), his father's name was found to be simply Henni Vornekahl.^[241] He is the subject of the following section.

Henry and Ernst's Great-great-grandfather, Henni Vornkahl. Using a 30 years-per-generation rule, Ulli suggested that Henni Vornkahl would have been born in about 1680. Once our photographic copy of the Nettlingen parish records was completed, Henni's birth on 25 Jan 1683 was found (Figure 81). The birth (baptism) record reads: "Curdt Fornkahl den 25 Jy einen Sohn getauffet, Nahmens Henni, Gefatt: Henni Holsten, Schmidts Sohn; Bartold Hartman; Dorothea Fornkahl; M. Curdt Holsten, Schmid zu Hersum; M. Ludeke Holsten, Schmid zu Wöhle; undt des Schmidts Schwager Sohn v. Hersum." An approximate translation is: "Curdt Fornkahl on the 25th of January son was baptized, named Henni. Godparents were Henni Holsten, smith's son; Bartold Hartman; Dorothea Fornkahl; master Curdt Holsten, smith in Heersum; master Ludeke Holsten, smith in Wöhle; and the smith's brother-in-law from Heersum."

There were no other Henni Vornkahls born in Nettlingen in this time period so it is reasonable to conclude that this is Henry and Ernst's great-great-grandfather. Henni was married, in about 1703-4, but the name of his wife has not been found. He was the father of eight children, described in the preceding section and shown in Chart 3A. The name given for Henni's father in the birth record is Curdt. There were several Curdt Vornkahls in Nettlingen at the time and the identification of which was his father is outlined in the following section.

Great-great-great-grandfather Curdt Vornkahl - but which Curdt? In the 1683 birth record for Henni Vornkahl (Figure 81), the name of Henni's father is given as Curdt (Fornkahl) Vornkahl. Because there were several Curdt Vornkahls in Nettlingen at the time, the challenge is to identify, if possible, which was Henni's father. If we again use a 30-year per generation rule, Henni's father would have been born in about 1653.

The parish records in Nettlingen go back to 1649 and show that two Curdts were born between 1649 and 1663. One of these Curdts, whose father was named Hans, was born in 1650^[001] (see copy of birth record reproduced on the title page of this book). The second, Curdt Henni whose father was Christian's Henni, was born in 1660.^[025] The first of these two, Curdt (1650), may never have reached adulthood since the burial of "Hans Vornekahl's son Curd" is recorded on 9 Oct 1662.^[1652] This would seem to leave only Curdt Henni (1660) as a candidate for Henni's father.

However, the birth records of Nettlingen show that there were at least two other Curdt Vornkahls having children in the time period 1649-1700. They must have been born before record keeping was begun in 1649. One of these Curdts married Lucia Grefen in 1661.^[1413] Lucia likely died in 1663^[1654] because the burial of Curd Vornekahl's fr. (fr. = Frau = wife) is recorded in that year. This Curdt probably married again in 1664, this time to Ilsebe Strufen.^[1416]

There was a second pre-1649 Curdt who married Margarethe Holsten in 1668.^[1417] The surname, Holsten, provides an important clue in our effort to identify the Curdt that was Henni's father. The reasoning leading to a possible identification of Curdt is outlined below.

1. At the time of Henni Vornkahl's baptism in 1683,^[106] six god-parents (Gevattern) were named (see Figure 81). The Gevattern as listed in the record book were:

Henni Holsten, Schmidts Sohn (smith's son)

Barteld Hartman
Dorothea Fornkahl
Curdt Holsten, Schmid zu Hersum (smith in Heersum)
Lüdeke Holsten, Schmid zu Wöhle (smith in Wöhle)
undt des Schmid's Schwager v. Hersum (and the smith's brother-in-law in Heersum)

Unfortunately, the birth records kept at this time did not identify the mothers of the children. But the fact that three members of the Holsten family were god-parents for Henni strongly suggests that it was Margaretha Holsten who was his mother and, therefore, that the Curdt to whom she was married was Henni's father. Another of the *gevattern*, Dorothea Fornkahl, may have been the daughter of Henni ("Christian's Henni"), because he had a daughter born in 1666^[050] named Dorothea. She would have been about seventeen years old at the time of Henni's birth and would have been eligible to be a god-mother.

2. The elapsed time between the marriage of Curdt Vornkahl and Margarethe Holsten in 1668 and the birth of Henni in 1683 is 14+ years. It is reasonable to assume that the couple had other children during this time. Among the births recorded in this period in which Curdt Vornkahl is named as father there are three for whom the mother may have been Margarethe Holsten.

a. On 24 Nov 1672, Curdt Vornekahl (v. Christ. Curdt) was the father of Hans Matthias.^[075] Matthias Holsten and Curdt Holsten were two of the five god-parents of Hans Matthias. The presence of two Holstens as god-parents is consistent with this being the son of Curdt and Margarethe. (Note that this is not the same Hans Matthias as Henry's grandfather.)

We also learn from this birth record that Curdt was known as "Christian's Curdt." This permits the assumption that other children born to Christian's Curdt were siblings of Henni. Such a case is described under item (b.) below.

b. On 26 Jun 1670, Curdt Fornkahl, vulgo Christ. Curdt, was the father of Heinrich.^[062]

c. On 24 Nov 1676, Curdt Vornekahl was the father of Ilsa Margaretha.^[087] Hinrich Holsten was one of two god-parents for the child. The other was Ilsa Margaretha Vornekahl, Christ. H. Tochter (*i.e.*, Christian Henni's daughter).

3. Curdt Vornkahl was god-father for Albert Holsten, b. 22 Jul 1680, son of Hinrich Holsten.^[100] This is another link between Curdt and the Holsten family.

Based on this evidence, we can tentatively identify Curdt Vornkahl and Margarethe Holsten as Henry and Ernst's gr-gr-gr-grandparents and the parents of their gr-gr-grandfather, Henni Vornkahl. This conclusion is based only on circumstantial evidence and should so be noted if Curdt is added to genealogical charts and reports.

Two earlier generations? The name Christian Vornekahl appears only once in the early entries in the Nettlingen Kirchenbuch and that is for his burial on 18 Dec 1657.^[1646] His birth date is unknown, having occurred before parish record keeping began in 1649. However, his name plays an important role in our analysis of Henry and Ernst Vornkahl's earliest ancestors in Nettlingen. Our first assumption is that Christian was not a widely used first name in the 1600s and that there was just the one Christian Vornekahl in Nettlingen. According to research by Mr. Friedrich-Karl Krentel, Christian Vornekahl was, in turn, the son of a Cord Vornekahl, a Halbspänner in Nettlingen in the last half of the 16th century [Source: Hufeschatzregister 1616-1622 (St. Archiv Hannover Hild. Br.2 J Nr. 464)].^[2233]

The name Christian is an important link to a second person in Nettlingen at this time, namely Henni Vornkahl v. Christian's Henni (v. = vulgo = commonly known as). There are numerous entries (at least 31) to Christian's Henni in the first fifty years of records culminating with his death on 8 Apr 1701.^[1696] Christian's Henni probably was married three times and was the father of at least 12 children in Nettlingen between 1654 and 1700. Although ages were rarely included in these early records, the burial entry for Christian's Henni gave his age as 74 years, 3 months and 1 day. Consequently his date of birth can be calculated as 9 Jan 1627. We now make a second assumption which is that Christian's Henni was the son of the aforementioned Christian Vornkahl. With this assumption, Christian's birth can be assumed to have occurred in the very early years of the 1600s.

Carrying this rationale further, we can link a third person with the name Christian. There are five entries in the period 1662-1672 in which the name Curdt Vornkahl v. Christian's Curdt is found. Again, we will assume that Christian's Curdt was the son of Christian Vornkahl. This is a key in our analysis of Henry and Ernst's ancestors because we know with reasonable certainty that their gr-gr-gr-grandfather was named Curdt Vornkahl (see section above).

Summary. The evidence we have used to establish four generations of Henry and Ernst's paternal Vornkahl ancestors has come from original records, primarily the church books of the Lutheran parishes of Nettlingen and Hoheneggelsen and the Catholic parish of Dingelbe. Consequently, we are reasonably confident that the chart shown in Figure 69 correctly illustrates these ancestors. Beyond this, we have attempted to identify which Curdt, from among several, can be assigned to a fifth generation ancestor and also to extend the chain backward by two more generations. We must, however, qualify these last assignments by noting that they are based on circumstantial evidence. In particular, we rely on several assumptions, namely: (1) that "our" Curdt was the one married to Margarethe Holsten, (2) that "our" Curdt was the one also identified at times as "Christian's Curdt," (3) that the two men identified as Christian's Henni and Christian's Curdt were sons of the Christian Vornkahl named only once in a burial record of Nettlingen, and (4) we rely on the report by Friedrich-Karl Krentel that links together Christian's Henni, Christian himself, and Christian's father, Curd Vornkahl.

Appendix 1. Letter from Hermann Brandes to Frederick Vornkahl in 1913.

Hoheneggelsen 231, den 12 Februar 1913

"Lieber Friedrich!

Mit tiefstem Bedauern habe ich deine Mitteilungen vom Tode Deiner lieber Frau vernommen und ich spreche Dir und den Deinigen mein herzlichstes Beileid aus. Aber wie es im Ratschluß des Höchsten bestimmt ist – wir haben dagegen nicht zu murren. Du stehst doch jetzt nicht allein da und hast doch noch Kinder?

Für die Einlage in Deinen lieben Briefe besten Dank. Jetzt kann man sich doch einmal dein Heim vorstellen. Ich habe mir aber auch schleunigst eine Lupe – Vergrößerungsglas – genommen und obwohl die Gesichter etwas verschattet sind, so habe ich Dich sowohl wie auch Deine Frau recht gut den beobachten können.

Und auch auf dem Bilde sehe ich in Eurer Gesellschaft keine Nachkommenschaft.

Gerne hätte ich Dir nun als Gegenstück mein eigenes Wohnhaus im Bilde geschickt, aber leider besitze ich augenblicklich kein solches davon. Als Ersatz aber lege ich eine Karte bei, die voriges Jahr aufgenommen ist und Dir die Bekanntschaft ist von drei heutigen Verwandten vermitteln kann. No. 1 ist Else Lehrke, 21 Jahr alt, jüngste Tochter von Hermann Lehrke; No. 2 ist Lotti Othmer, die Braut von Wilhelm seinem zweiten Sohn Hermann, der jetzt Landwirtschaftslehrer und 25 Jahr alt ist, und No. 3 ist Wilhelm seine Tochter Henni, jetzt 16 Jahre alt. Wie du siehst, ist inzwischen ein junges Deutschland herangewachsen. Wilhelm sein ältester Sohn Wilhelm ist auf dem Hofe in Mölme ist 26 Jahr, war Verwalter, hat beim 10. Train in Hannover gedient 1 Jahr

und ist jetzt Vize-wachtmeister der Reserve, d.h. wie es hier bei uns ist würde er bei einer Mobilmachung als Offizier Dienst tun. Hoffentlich verziehen sich aber noch einmal alle Wetterwolken wieder, die hier im alten Europa gegenwärtig doch recht drohend am politischen Himmel stehen.

Von Vetter Wilhelm Himstedt habe ich einer Gruss zu bestellen, es geht ihm wir auch seiner Familie soweit gut, aber er selbst wird auch älter. Auch sein Sohn Hermann hat bereits gedient, steht aber noch in erster Reserve. Wilhelm sein Bruder Hermann wohnt jetzt bei seiner Tochter Ella in Teinsen bei Nordstemmen, seine Frau ist voriges Jahr gestorben und er selbst jetzt recht schwer krank.

Tante Vornkahl geht es den Umständen nach bei ihrem hohen Alter recht gut, bei den Meinen sind die Verhältnisse noch immer die gleichen. Wilhelm's Frau hat sich nicht wieder verheiratet und lebt als junge Witwe. Die einzige Tochter Johanne, die jetzt 12 Jahr alt ist, weilt gegenwärtig zur Erziehung in Braunschweig.

Von Wilhelm Himstedt seinen sonstigen Geschwistern weiß ich nichts, vielleicht schreibt er Dir selbst darüber, wenn er seine Absicht wahr macht.

Wenn ich eine schließlich auch von mir etwas mitteilen darf, es geht auch mir gut. Ich habe hier Haus, Hof und Garten, nebst einer kleinen Viehwirtschaft, darin wirtschaftete ich. Meinen Haushalt steht eine Haushälterin vor. Auch sonst darf ich von mir berichten, dass ich nicht ganz auf der Bärenhaut liege, an Beschäftigung und Arbeit hat es mir noch nie gefehlt.

Wie wäre es, mein lieber Vetter, wenn Du nun auch einmal nach hier herüber kommst, mir und ich bin überzeugt, auch Deinen andern Verwandten hier -würdest Du herzlich willkommen sein. Wohnen würdest du bei mir können, da ich Raum in meinen neuen zweistöckigen Haus, dass ich ganz allein bewohne, genug habe. Du wurdest Dich denn durch den Augenschein überzeugen können, dass aus hier in der alten Welt die Verhältnisse sich weiter entwickeln und nicht stillgestanden haben seit Deinem Hiersein. Wie wäre es?

Laß bald einmal wieder von Dir hören. Zum Schluß nochmal mein herzliches Beileid zu Deinem schweren Verlust, und mit besten Grüßen.

verbleibt
Dein Vetter
Herm. Brandes"

Translation of letter from Hermann Brandes to Frederick Vornkahl (by Ulli Schröder):

Hoheneggelsen 231, February 12, 1913

"Dear Frederick!

With deepest regrets I have (read) your communications on the death of your dear wife and I express to you and yours my heartfelt condolence. But as it is determined in the will of the Highest - we must not grumble about it. You are still not alone now and still have (your) children?

Thank you for the enclosure in your dear letter. Now one can finally picture your home. I have taken a loupe (magnifying glass) right away and although the faces are a little submersed in shadow I was able to observe you as well as your wife pretty well.

And also on the photograph I see no descendants in your company.

I would gladly send you a picture of my own dwelling, but unfortunately at present I do not possess such a thing. As a substitute, however, I enclose a card from last year and that can acquaint you with three actual relatives. No. 1 is Else Lehrke, 21 years old, the youngest daughter of Hermann Lehrke; No. 2 is Lotti Othmer, the fiancée of Wilhelm's second son Herman who now teaches agriculture and is 25 years old; and No. 3 is Wilhelm's daughter, Henni, now 16 years old. As you can see a young Germany has grown up. Wilhelm's eldest son Wilhelm is at the farm in Mölme, is 26 years old, was manager (of an estate), has served in the 10th supply

unit in Hannover 1 year and now is vice sergeant major in the Reserve, *i.e.*, as it is over here in case of a mobilization he would serve as an officer. Hopefully all weather clouds will disperse again, which are presently here in old Europe standing threatening in the political sky.

From Cousin Wilhelm Himstedt I have to send a greeting, he and his family are fine so far, but he himself is also getting older. His son Hermann has already served too, but still remains in the first Reserve. Wilhelm's brother Hermann now lives with his daughter Ella in Teinsen by Nordstemmen; his wife has died last year and he himself now is quite gravely ill.

Aunt Vornkahl is doing quite well in spite of her age; with my people the situation is still always the same. Wilhelm's wife has not married again and lives as a young widow. Their only daughter Johanne, who now is 12 years old, dwells in Braunschweig for education.

As to Wilhelm Himstedt's other siblings, I do not know anything, maybe he writes it to you himself if he carries out his intention.

Lastly, if I may tell a little about myself, I am also fine. I have here a house, courtyard, and garden, besides a small livestock production in which I busy myself. A housekeeper manages my household. Otherwise, I may report that I do not lie around, I never ran out of occupation and work.

How would it be, my dear cousin, if you would now come also over here. I, and I am convinced also that your other relatives here, that you would be warmly welcomed. You could stay with me, because I have room enough in my new two-storied house that I live in alone. You would then through personal observation be satisfied that here in the old world the conditions are evolving and not rested since your presence here. How would that be?

Let me hear something from you soon.

Finally once again my heartfelt condolence for your grievous loss, and with best regards

(I) remain
Your cousin
Herm. Brandes"

Appendix 2. Hermann Brandes: Self-taught Scientist.

Serendipitously we have come across a review article titled, "Things we lost in the fire: the rediscovery of type material from Ehrhard Voigt's early publications (1923-1942) and the bryozoan collection of Hermann Brandes."

The article is in a book, "Annals of Bryozoology 4: aspects of the history of research on bryozoans," and was written by Silviu O. Martha. Here is a brief definition of bryozoology, modified from Wikipedia: "Bryozoology is the study of bryozoans, a phylum of small (0.2 - 0.5 mm) aquatic animals living in colonies. The colonies usually have skeletons of calcium carbonate. Bryozoa are known informally as moss animals or sea mats. They generally like warm, tropical waters but live all over the world. There are about 5,000 living species, and 15,000 fossil species are known." The fossil species must have fascinated Hermann Brandes to such an extent that he assembled a collection of samples that became known as the Brandes Collection. As the author Martha asks, "Who was the man behind this collection?" His answer written in 2014^[3092] is reproduced, in part, below:

"Hermann Heinrich Brandes (Figure 82) was born on 31 March 1855 as the second child of Wilhelm Heinrich Brandes and Caroline Wilhelmine Elisabeth Brandes, nee Vornkahland (sic). He lived in Molme, a small village 40 km SE of Hannover. As a young man he suffered from severe typhoid fever for a long time, which forced him to give up his job as an administrator.



Figure 82. Hermann Brandes in Hoheneggelsen. Photograph from the Heimatverein, Hoheneggelsen, as shown in [3092].

Brandes appears to have lived on private means thereafter. In 1903 he bought a house in the nearby village of Hoheneggelsen, where he lived until his death. He never married and had no children (Söding 1968).^[3093]

“Brandes had wide interests and the only four publications that can with certainty be assigned to him deal with the cultivation of sugar beets (1884),^[3094] halophytes (1913),^[3095] the Upper Jurassic of Hoheneggelsen (1914),^[3096] and the history of the peasantry in the Hildesheim region (1934).^[3097] For the latter work he was named honorary citizen of the village of Hoheneggelsen. The street around the corner of his house now bears the name of Hermann Brandes. Most relevant for us is his interest in geology and paleontology. Brandes studied neither geology nor paleontology at a university, but was self-taught. He examined the geology of his home region and visited every well drilling, house excavation, and other possibility to undertake geological research (Rose 2010).^[3098] Brandes drew geological profiles and collected all types of fossils, including ammonites, bivalves, brachiopods, bryozoans, cephalopods, foraminiferans, sponges and many others. These he classified by reading books and corresponding with paleontologists.

“Hermann Brandes died on 8 December 1940 and was buried in Hoheneggelsen, where the *Heimatverein* (local history club) still takes care of the grave of their honorary citizen.”

From the birth date and parentage given by S.O. Martha, this clearly is the same Hermann Brandes as shown in Chart 3I. Hermann's birthplace in the village of Mölme is less than 2 km northwest of Hoheneggelsen.

Is this the Hermann Brandes who wrote to Frederick Vornkahl in 1913? Consider the following: (a) He was born in 1855; Frederick in 1853, so they were of a similar age. (b) He had a nephew, Hermann Otto Wilhelm, who would have been about 27 years old in 1913 and is less likely to have been the correspondent. (c) Her-

mann's description's in his letter of his relatives in and around Hoheneggelsen matches well with the family outline shown in our Charts 3F-3I. (d) In address lists of 1898^[2756] and 1927^[2781] there are no other Hermann Brandes' in Hoheneggelsen at these times. Although not proven, it is reasonable to conclude that this is the same Hermann Brandes who wrote the letter to Frederick.

Appendix 3. Two letters from Albert Rüter to Sophia (Vornkahl) Refior in 1948.

Letter 1.

“Albert Rüter
Töpingen, den 29 Febr. 1948
über Soltau (Han.)
Deutschland, Brit. Zone

Meine lieben Verwandte!

Euren lieben Brief vom 23 Januar haben wir am 12 Februar und Euer Paket am 26 Februar erhalten. Wir danken Euch für Euren Brief und die vielen schönen Sachen und unsere Freude war mal wieder recht gross. Es ist alles angekommen, wie Ihr es im Brief angegeben habt. Ida's Freude über die Kleider war natürlich ganz gross. Die Kleider passen zwar nicht, aber Ida kann sie ändern, denn Ida kann auch selbst Kleider nähen. Die Wollunterkleidung kommt uns sehr zunutze. Wir frieren wohl jetzt mehr als sonst, denn wir bekommen ja so sehr wenig Fett, besonders noch weniger als vorher, seit Dez., Januar, Februar und März. Und es wird vorerst nicht besser damit. Dazu kommt die wenige Feuerung. Seit der Kapitulation 1945 (1945) haben wir noch nicht eine einzige Kohle oder Briketts erhalten. In the Städten gibt es wohl mal einige Zentner für den ganzen Winter. Wir sammeln uns hier Holz aus dem Walde, aber es ist sehr mühsam und durch das Abfahren noch dazu sehr teuer. Wenn man einen Haufen Holz gesammelt hat, muß es schnellstens abgefahren werden, sonst wird das Holz noch gestohlen, aber oft findet man nicht sofort einen, der es abfährt. Drei Jahre ist der Krieg zu Ende, da müßten wir doch endlich Kohlen bekommen und auch den Frieden. Reis, 1 Fleisch und 1 Sardinen sollen uns gut schmecken. Reis und Sardinen hatten wir schon lange nicht mehr gesehen. Der Rock und die Hose dazu passen leider nicht. Die andere Hose paßt besser. Ich bin 1,80 (1,80 Centimeter) gross. Unser Siegfried hatte mich noch um einigen Längen geschlagen. Siegfried war 1,92 gross. Aus Rock und Hose will Ida sich entweder eine Jacke oder einen Rock machen, so findet es doch seine gute Verwendung. Im allgemeinen ist dieser Winter milder gewesen. November und bis mitte Dezember war kalt. Seit Mitte Dezember bis Anfang Februar hat es fast alle Tage geregnet und es war kühl dabei, bis auf einige milde, schöne Tage. Nach den Regentagen setzte kaltes Wetter ein, Nachts 15, 18, und 20 Grad, am Tage weniger.

Ob meine Großmutter noch eine Schwester und noch mehr Brüder gehabt hat, weiß ich leider nicht und Verwandte, die darüber noch etwas wissen könnten, sind alle verstorben. Aber ich habe sogleich nach Dingelbe and Hoheneggelsen an das Pfarramt geschrieben. Sobald ich Nachricht habe, werde ich Euch schreiben. Nun wolltest Du wissen l. Sophie, was ich für ein Geschäft habe.

Ich war Postbeamter (Postinspektor). Mußte aber im Dritten Reich meinen Dienst quittieren, weil ich die Wahrheit gesagt hatte. Ich habe jetzt Eingaben laufen, die aber noch nicht abgeschlossen sind.

Wir wünschen Euch ein frohes und segensreiches Osterfest. Die Karte, die wir beifügen ist schon viele Jahre alt, so etwas gibt es jetzt nicht mehr. Die Karte von Hoheneggelsen habe ich mir mal als Schüler zur Erinnerung gekauft, also auch schon lange her. Aber Hoheneggelsen hat sich nicht viel verändert, es sind wohl am Rande einige Siedlungshäuser hinzugekommen.

1 auf der Karte deutet die Lage des Hofes Himstedt (von dem meine Mutter stammt). 2 der Hof der Vornkahl's und 3 der Hof der Rütter's, den aber meine Schwägerin nach dem Tode meines Bruders leider verkauft hat, das heißt den Hofraum und die Gebäude, das Land hat sie noch behalten und verpachtet."

Translation of letter 1 (by Ulli Schröder):

“Albert Rütter
Töpingen, February 29th, 1948
Via Soltau (Hannover)
Germany, British Sector

My dear relatives!

Your kind letter from January 23rd we have received on February 12th and your parcel on February 26th. We thank you for your letter and the many nice things; our happiness was again great. Everything has arrived as you have specified in the letter. Ida's pleasure with the dresses was of course very great. The dresses do not fit though, but Ida can change them because Ida can also sew dresses herself. The woolen underclothing is very useful for us. Now, we probably freeze more than anything else because we get so very little fat, especially since December, January, February and March. And it will not get better for the time being. In addition, there is very little fuel. Since the surrender in 1945 we have not yet received a single coal or briquette. In the towns, there sometimes are a few hundredweight for the entire winter. Here we collect wood from the woods, but it is very laborious and, on top of that, very expensive to have it carried off. If one collects a pile of wood, it must be carried off as soon as possible, otherwise the wood might be stolen, but often one does not immediately find someone to carry it off. The war is over for three years now, so we should now finally get coal and also peace. Rice, meat, and sardines should taste good to us. We have not seen rice and sardines for a long time. The jacket with matching trousers unfortunately does not fit. The other pair of trousers fits better. I am 180 centimeters tall. Our Siegfried had me beaten by some length. Siegfried was 192 centimeters tall. Ida wants to make herself either a jacket or skirt from the coat and trousers; that way they will be put to good use. In general this winter has been milder. November and until the middle of December were cold. Since the middle of December until the beginning of February it has been raining almost every day and it is chilly in addition except for a few mild, nice days. After the rainy days, cold weather set in, at night 15, 18, or 20 degrees; less cold during the day.

If my grandmother had a sister and more brothers, I'm afraid I don't know and the relatives who would still know something about this are all deceased. But I have written straight away to the vicarage in Dingelbe and Hoheneggelsen. As soon as I have news, I will write to you.

Well, you wanted to know, dear Sophie, what my profession is. I was a post office official (postal inspector). However, I had to tender my resignation in the Third Reich because I had spoken truthfully. Now I have petitions running but they are not yet settled.

We wish you a happy and blessed Easter. The postcard that we have enclosed is already many years old, there is nothing like that anymore. I bought the postcard of Hoheneggelsen long ago when I was a student as a memento for myself. But Hoheneggelsen has not changed a lot; only some settlement houses have been added on the outskirts.

The 1 on the postcard indicates the location of the Himstedt farm (from which my mother stems), 2 is the farm of the Vornkahls, and 3 the farm of the Rütters, which unfortunately my sister-in-law has sold after the death of my brother – that means the courtyard and the buildings – she has kept the land and has leased it out.”

Letter 2.

“Albert Rüter
Töpingen, den 6 Juni 1948
über Soltau (Han.)
Brit. Zone

Liebe Verwandte!

Hoffentlich habt Ihr unseren letzten Brief zu Ostern erhalten. Wir hatten eine Ansichtskarte von Hoheneggelsen und eine Osterkarte beigelegt. Jetzt haben wir gestern endlich eine Antwort vom Pastor aus Nettlingen erhalten, die wir anliegend beifügen. Das sind aber nur die Kinder, die in Dingelbe geboren sind. Ich hatte in dem Brief an den Pastor in Nettlingen gebeten, den Brief an das Pfarramt in Hoheneggelsen weiterzuleiten. Da er dieses wegen der Gebühren nicht konnte, schreibe ich heute an das Pfarramt in Hoheneggelsen zur weiteren Auskunft. Sobald ich Nachricht habe, gebe ich sie an Euch weiter. Sophie Vornkahl, das 4. Kind, ist meine Großmutter. Sie ist gestorben in Hoheneggelsen am 29.2.1893.

Hoffentlich seid ihr alle gesund. Das Wetter hier im Mai immer sehr kühl, ja kalt mit Regen. Heut war mal ein schooner Tag. Lasst mal von Euch hören, ob Ihr diesen Brief und den zu Ostern erhalten habt. Durch Verwandte kann ich keine Auskunft erhalten, weil sie alle verstorben sind.

Herzliche Grüße an Euch alle.

Albert und Ida Rüter”

Translation of letter 2 (by Ulli Schröder):

“Albert Rüter
Töpingen, June 6th, 1948
Via Soltau (Hannover)
British Sector

Dear relatives!

Hopefully you have received our last letter for Easter. We had added a postcard of Hoheneggelsen and an Easter greeting card. Yesterday we have finally received an answer from Nettlingen that we have enclosed. However, these are only the children that are born in Dingelbe. I had asked in the letter to the pastor in Nettlingen to pass the letter on to the vicarage in Hoheneggelsen. Since he could not do this because of fees, I will write to the vicarage in Hoheneggelsen today to obtain additional information. As soon as I have news I will transmit it to you. Sophie Vornkahl, the 4th child, is my grandmother. She has died in Hoheneggelsen on 29 Feb 1893.

Hopefully you are all healthy. The weather here in May was always very chilly, actually cold with rain. Today finally was a nice day. Let us hear something from you, if you have received this letter and the one on Easter. I cannot get information through relatives because they all have passed away.

Kind regards to all of you.
Albert and Ida Rüter”

Data from the pastor of the Nettlingen church (translated):

“The children registered here of the married couple Johann Joachim Friedrich Conrad Vornkahl, Vollspänner in Dingelbe, and his second wife Johanne Dorothea Elisabeth nee Ohlendorf, are:

Johanne Dorothea Elisabeth, born June 18th 1817, died June 22nd 1817 (Reg. No 86/12)

Heinrich Vornkahl, born February 5th 1819, died 1820 (Reg. No 92/2)

Johann Heinrich Christian V., born January 10th 1821 (Reg. No 97/2)

Sophie V., born May 2nd 1823 (Reg. No 105/18)

Caroline Wilhelmine Elisabeth, born May 1st 1825 (Reg. No 112/15)

Nettlingen, June 3rd 1948

(signed)

(Pastor) Schönberg”

Appendix 4. Ehestiftung.

Many marriages in the 1700 and 1800s were accompanied by a document called an Ehestiftung, or marriage contract. The Ehestiftung first names the two principal parties, the bride and groom, of the marriage and then lists the material and contractual items each party was to bring to the marriage. These are descriptions of land, property, and household items that the couple would need as a family. The consequences in case of the death of either of the partners are also covered. The Family History Center of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints has microfilmed the original Ehestiftungen for a number of parishes including Nettlingen, Helmersen and Dingelbe. Ehestiftungen for the parishes of Hoheneggelsen and Berel are not included in these microfilm.

Included in the Dingelbe records is the Ehestiftungen for Hanß Matthias Vornekahl and Marie Dorothee Kiel (of Bettrum). Hans Matthias was the son of Henni Matthias and the grandfather of the brothers, Henry and Ernst Vornkahl. We have not completed the transcription and translation of the Ehestiftung but show the cover page in Figure 83. The document is dated 21 Nov 1779. A second Ehestiftung found in the Dingelbe records is for Hanß Matthias' sister, Anne Marie, and her husband-to-be, Jochen Segers (Joachim Seegers/Siegers), dated 13 Sep 1778.

The list of Ehestiftungen from Nettlingen and Helmersen includes the following persons having the Vornkahl family name:

Names (date of Ehestiftung if given)	Reference to marriage
Johann Caspar Vornekahl and Anna Maria Wehrspan	[1475]
Johann Peter Schoppen and Anna Elisabeth Vornekahl	
Sylvester Liekefett and Anna Hedewig Vornekahl,	[707]
Andreas Behrend Vornkahl and Catharina Sophia Liekefett (1783)	[1488]
Johann Heinrich Vornekahl and Heidwig Hennies	[748]
Joachim Hartmann and Anna Sophia Vornekahl	
Johann Heinrich Vornekahl (Dingelbe) and Maria Elisabeth Bartels (Chart 3B)	[1493]
Andreas Ohlendorp and Andreas Behrend Vornkahl's widow (geb. Likefett)	[1496][2139][2177]
Johann Ernst Kothen and Anna Elisabeth Vornekahl	[1501]
Erich Hans Ohlendorff and Anna Sophia (geb. Vornekahl) Danckmeijer	[1502]
Heinrich Bultemann and Marie Catharine Vornekahl	[1504]
Johann Ernst Kothen and Maria Christine Vornekahl (8 Jan 1796)	[2187]

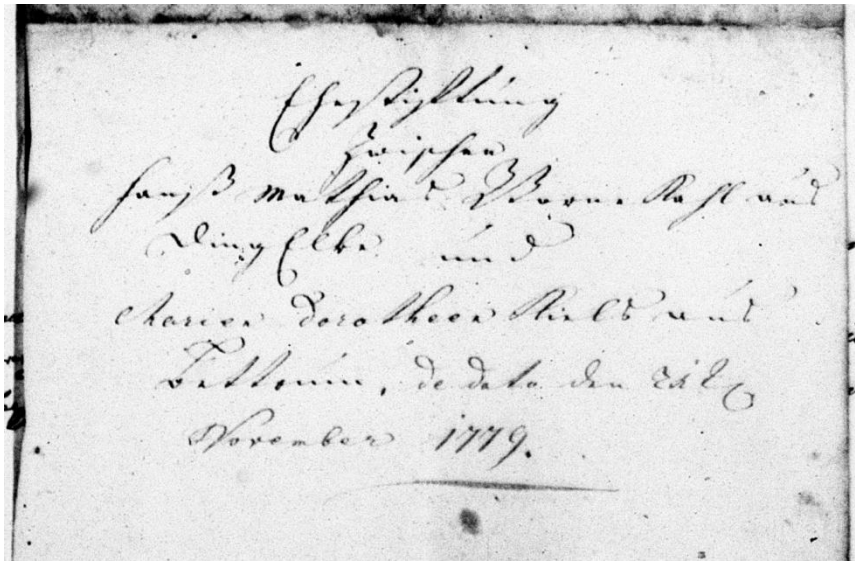


Figure 83. Cover of Ehestiftung for Hanß Matthias Vornekahl and Marie Dorothee Kiel, dated 21 Nov 1779.

Heinrich Christian Vornekahl and Anna Maria Hedewig Warnebold (22 Nov 1797)	[799][1833]
Johann Andreas Piper and Ilse Sophie Vornekahl (24 Feb 1802)	[1507]
Johann Christian Vornekahl and Maria Sophie Vornekahl (Dingelbe) (2 Jun? 1802)	[1506]
Johann Heinrich Holland and Christian Vornekahl's widow (4 Jun 1803)	[1509]
Johann Berend Wittekop and Johanne Marie Eleonore Vornekahl (13 Jul 1803)	[1508]
Andre -- (corner of page torn off) and Marie _?_ Vornekahl (19 _?_ 1803)	

Helmersen:

Hans Heinrich Bartels and Catharine Elisabeth Vornkahl	[1485]
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References and Notes are found in the Sources section of this book.