

## Historical References to Vornkahls

Introduction. The parish records of Nettlingen and other villages start in the year of 1649. But, of course, there were Vornkahls on the pages of history long before 1649. We have found the Vornkahl name in historical records as early as 1406 and would not be surprised – we are even hopeful – that we will find earlier references to the name.

The name is found most frequently in two neighboring villages, Nettlingen and Berel (see Figure 125), located in the present day German state of Niedersachsen. For much of their histories, these two villages – only 3.5 kilometers (about 2 miles) from one another – were on opposite sides of the boundary separating the bishopric of Hildesheim and the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg.<sup>[3187]</sup> Nettlingen, with the exception of brief periods of time, was in the territory of Hildesheim while Berel was in the territory of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. Both villages are old. Nettlingen will reach a documented age of 1,000 years in 2022.<sup>[3188]</sup> Berel celebrated its 1,200<sup>th</sup> birthday in the year 2008, dating its origins to 808 A.D.<sup>[3189]</sup> It is in these time frames that we wish to examine the scattered records of the Vornkahl name and the times in which they lived before 1649. We also include in this section several accounts of Vornkahls and their exploits after 1649.

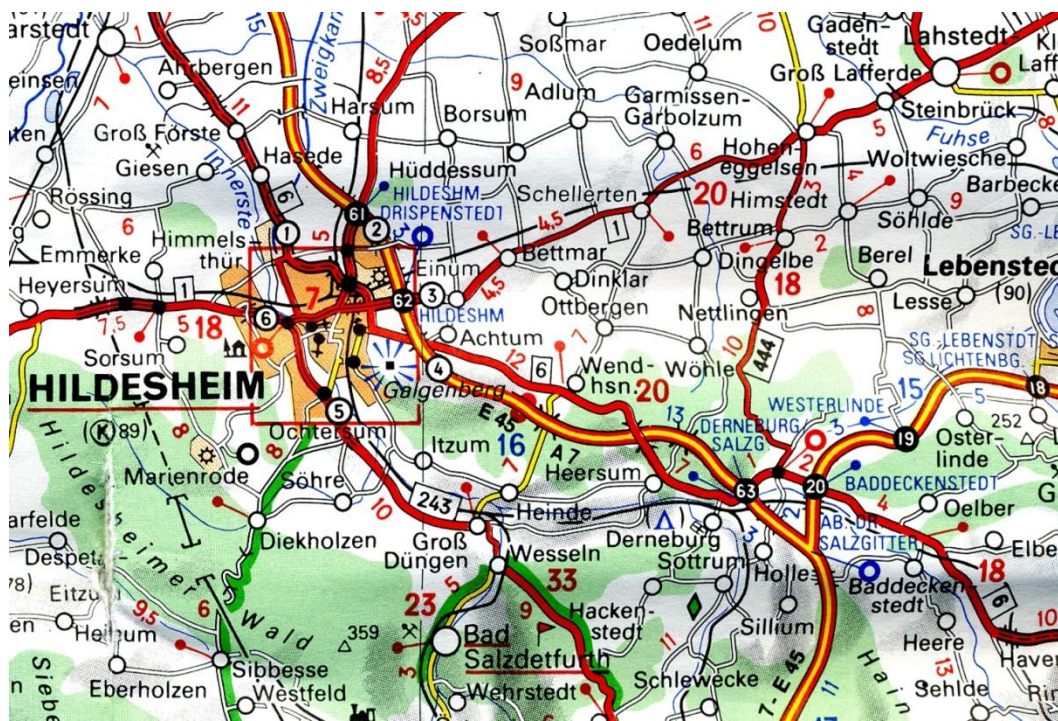


Figure 125. Detail from Michelin road map (2000) showing Hildesheim and vicinity. The villages of Nettlingen, Berel, Hoheneggelsen, Dingelbe, Hackenstedt, and others may be found on this map.

The town of Hildesheim originally was a fort on the trade route between Cologne and Magdeburg. The origin of the bishopric dates to 815 when Hildesheim was made the seat of an episcopal see (a bishopric) proposed a few years earlier by Charles the Great (Charlemagne).<sup>[3190]</sup> Although the fortunes of the Hildesheim bishopric waxed and waned throughout the centuries, it remained a discrete entity for nearly one thousand years (815-1803). In comparison, the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg did not come into existence until 1235 when the lands were granted as an imperial fief to Otto the Child of the House of Welf (Guelph). Before 1235, the area of northwest Germany that became the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg was the duchy of Saxony (see Figure 126). In the centuries after 1235, the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg underwent splits and name





Figure 126. Central Europe, 919-1125.<sup>[3191]</sup> The Duchy of Saxony is the light yellow area near the top of the map.

changes from one Welf generation to the next, however, all the Welf lines bore the title of Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneberg until the Holy Roman Empire ended in 1806.

The Holy Roman Empire, Bishoprics, and Duchies. The geographical and political entity that evolved into the state of Germany over a period of a thousand years (803-1806) was the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>[3192]</sup> The birth of the Empire is sometimes considered to coincide with the reign of Charles the Great (ruled 772-804).<sup>[3192,3193]</sup> The Empire was constituted from numerous smaller geographical and political units of which two of the most important were bishoprics and duchies. A stylized map showing the extent of the Empire as well as the many units of which it was comprised in the year 1400 is shown in Figures 127 and 128. At the head of the Empire’s political structure was a king and/or emperor – often the same person. The king/emperor was, for most of the history of the Empire, elected to the position. In the early centuries, those who elected the king/emperor (the “electors”) were the princes, dukes, and bishops of the territories of which the Empire was comprised.

The election process was given a more exact form in 1366 when the king Charles IV issued the Golden Bull, setting the number of electors at seven. The office of elector was assigned to three ecclesiastic bishoprics and four secular principalities.<sup>[3192,3194]</sup> The seven electors were:

- the Archbishop of Mainz
- the Archbishop of Trier
- the Archbishop of Koln (Cologne)
- the Margrave of Brandenburg (Markgraf von Brandenburg)
- the King of Bohemia (König von Böhmen)
- the Count Palatine of the Rhine (Pfalzgraf bei Rhein)
- the Duke of Saxony (Herzog of Sachsen)





Figure 127. Stylized map of the Holy Roman Empire of 1400. Map by: Ziegelbrenner [GFDL (<http://www.gnu.org/copyleft/fdl.html>)] published in the Wikipedia entry for the Holy Roman Empire. The duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg (yellow-orange) is located near the top of the map. The bishopric of Hildesheim is the violet area immediately below Braunschweig-Lüneburg. See Figure 128 for an enlargement of this area of the map.



Figure 128. Detail from map in Figure 127 showing the Duchy (Hzm. = Herzogtum) of Braunschweig-Lüneburg and the Bishopric (Bm. = Bistum) of Hildesheim.

Although there were minor changes following issuance of the Golden Bull, this format for electing the king/emperor remained in effect until the demise of the Empire in 1806. Throughout this history, effort was made to prevent the position of king/emperor from becoming strictly a hereditary position. This effort was modestly successful as there were a number of times when a son of an emperor was not appointed successor. On the other hand, the position was maintained within ruling families for generations through the election of uncles, cousins, etc., especially in the later years of the empire.

**Duchy of Saxony and Duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg.** The name Saxony is derived from the Saxons who had lived in northwest Germany from at least as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The duchy of Saxony took form after the subjugation and conversion of the Saxons to Christianity by Charles the Great in the period 772-804. From this time forward, the duchy of Saxony, until it was partitioned into numerous territories in 1235, was a part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Several dukes of Saxony were king/emperors in the period from 919 to 1024, which was known as the Ottonian (Saxon) Dynasty. Henry the Fowler was the first Saxony duke to be king of the Holy Roman Empire and ruled from 919 to 936.<sup>[3192]</sup> His grandson, Henry II (reigned 1002-1024), was the emperor when Nettlingen first appeared on the pages of history. Henry II also was the last of the Ottonian Dynasty to be emperor. The Ottonians were succeeded by the Salian (Frankish) Dynasty in 1024 which remained in power until 1125.



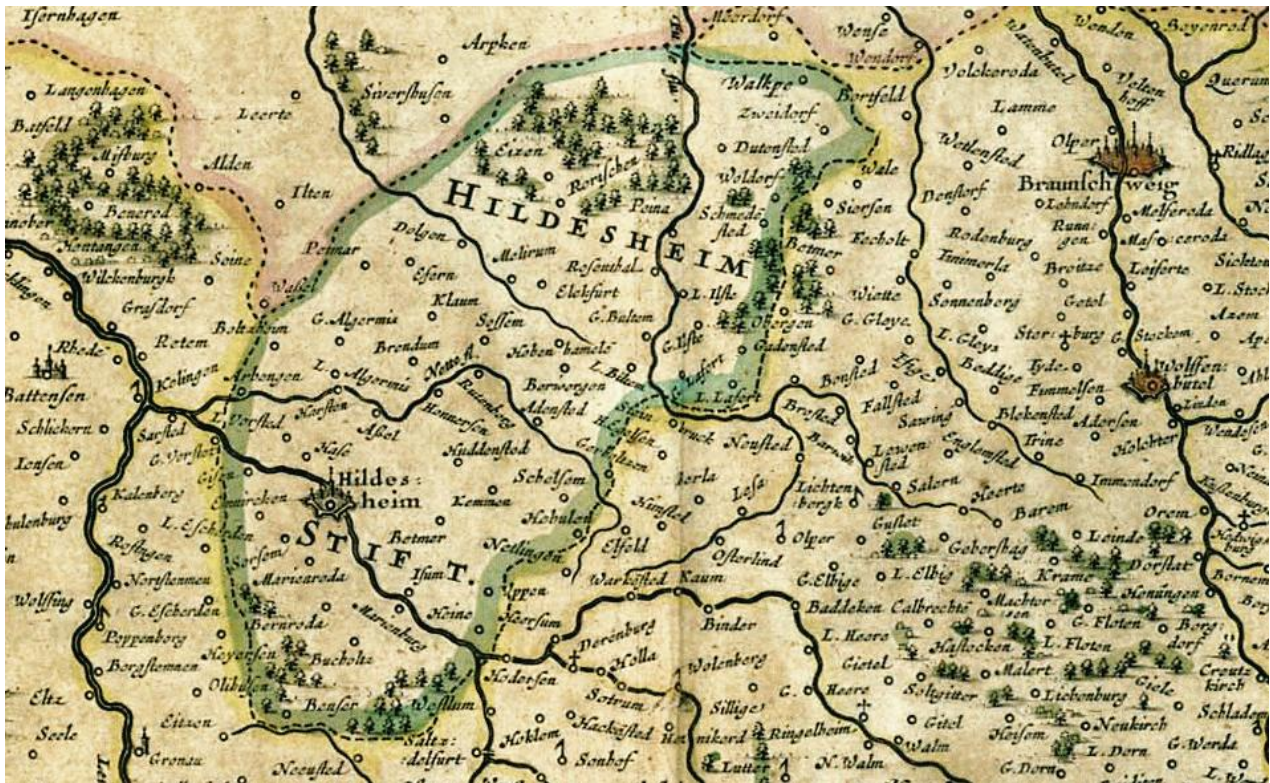


Figure 129. Detail from an old map<sup>[3197]</sup> of the Duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg in which the Bishopric of Hildesheim is seen surrounded by the duchy. Nettlingen (Netlingen) is shown to the east and slightly south of the city of Hildesheim and is located just outside the boundary of the bishopric. Hoheneggelsen (H. Eggelsen) is to the northeast of Nettlingen and also outside the bishopric boundary. (The names of both villages can be found written across the green border marking.) This map is much older than the atlas dated 1645 from which it is taken. The map may show the Bishopric of Hildesheim at the time of its most reduced size following the Hildesheimer Stiftsfehde.

The duchy of Saxony underwent dramatic change in 1181. In 1180, Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony, after years of conflict with Emperor Frederick I (Barbarossa) was stripped of his lands by a court of bishops and princes convened by Frederick. In the ensuing military conflicts, Henry was forced to concede defeat and was exiled from Germany for several years. The duchy of Saxony was divided by Frederick into a number of territories, leaving Henry with only his hereditary lands. When Henry's grandson, Otto the Child, transferred these lands to Emperor Friedrich II in 1235, he was in turn enfeoffed with the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg.<sup>[3192]</sup>

**Bishopric of Hildesheim.** The fortunes of the Hildesheim bishopric varied greatly through the centuries between its founding in 815 and its demise in 1803. The bishopric flourished and became firmly established under the leadership of St. Bernward, bishop from 993-1022, and several of his successors, and enjoyed considerable freedom in its activities in these early years and prospered accordingly. When the name Vornekale appears in a 1406 document, the prince-bishop of Hildesheim was John III.<sup>[3190]</sup>

With passing time, the bishopric came under increasing pressures from a growing local domestic trade community and from quarrels with neighboring states. The most serious of these quarrels was the Hildesheimer Stiftsfehde (1519-1523), a diocesan feud between Hildesheim and the principalities of Braunschweig-Wulfenbüttel and Calenberg.<sup>[3195]</sup> Although Hildesheim prevailed in the military clashes between the two sides in the Stiftsfehde, the settlement enforced by Charles V left Hildesheim with only three of its eleven districts. During the time of the Stiftsfehde, the Protestant Reformation, initiated by Martin Luther and the publication of his "Ninety-five Theses" in 1518-19, was sweeping across central Europe and threatened the survival of Hildesheim as a Catholic institution. Maps of 1540 and 1550 show the border between Hildesheim and Braunschweig-Lüne-





Figure 130. Detail from an old map of the Bishopric of Hildesheim.<sup>[3196]</sup> On this map, Nettlingen (spelled Netlingen) is found due east of Hildesheim; Hoheneggelsen (spelled Hogen Eggelsen) is in upper right section just above the name STEINBRVGGE. Three of the more than twenty districts of the Bishopric can clearly be seen, they are: Marienburg, Steurwaldt, and Steinbrugge. The area of indentation on the right side is a part of the Duchy of Braunschweig-Wulfenbittel. The map is not dated but is the work of Johann Michael Gigas, 1582-1637.

burg shifted so that both Nettlingen and Hoheneggelsen (Vornkahl's were living in Hoheneggelsen after the year 1800) were in the area of Braunschweig (for example, see Figure 129). This marks the change of Nettlingen and Hoheneggelsen from Catholic villages to primarily Lutheran villages, an orientation that persists throughout all their subsequent history.

Beginning in 1573, the bishops of Hildesheim were chosen from the ducal House of Bavaria which was in the hands of the strongly Catholic Guelphs (Welfs).<sup>[3195]</sup> Under bishop Ferdinand of Bavaria, much of the territory lost in 1523 was regained although it remained Protestant in faith. Nettlingen was again within the boundaries of the Hildesheim bishopric although it, too, remained Protestant. In the map shown in Figure 130, both Nettlingen and Hoheneggelsen are seen in the Hildesheim bishopric.

The bishopric of Hildesheim was secularized in 1801, then was granted to Prussia in 1803, to Westphalia in 1807, to the kingdom of Hannover in 1815, and finally was annexed (as part of Hannover) to Prussia in 1866.<sup>[3194]</sup> Although the bishopric ceased to exist in 1801, soon thereafter a Catholic diocese was established in the city of Hildesheim and to this day remains the active center for the Roman Catholic faith for the surrounding area.<sup>[3195]</sup>

An Incident in 1400. To get a sense of the political and social environment in Germany when the name Vornkahl first appears, we outline the following events. In 1400, Wenzel (Wenceslaus) the Lazy, from the House of Limburg-Luxemburg, was the king of the Holy Roman Empire. Wenzel had been selected as king in 1376 but after a few years he left Germany, leaving the Empire to look after itself.<sup>[3192]</sup> The ineptitude of Wenzel as king eventually led to his dismissal by the electors of the Empire. Negotiations regarding the election of a new king began in Frankfurt-on-Main on May 22, 1400. Friedrich, Duke of Braunschweig and a member of the House of

Welf, was nominated by his brother-in-law, Duke Rudolf III of Sachsen-Wittenberg, as a candidate for the position. However, the archbishop of Mainz, Johann II of Nassau, together with the two other archbishop electors selected Ruprecht, Palsgrave-by-Rhine, as their candidate.

A conflict between the two groups ensued and Friedrich departed from the selection meeting in disagreement. His entourage included his brother, Bernhard (Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg), Rudolf III von Sachsen (Elector), the Counts of Schwarzburg and Barby, and Konrad von Vechta, Bishop of Verden. On Pentecost Saturday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 1400, the group reached the village of Kleinenglis, a few miles south of Fritzlar. There they were attacked by Count Heinrich VII von Waldeck, senior bailiff for Mainz in Lower Hesse, and his allies Friedrich von Hertingshausen and Konrad (Kunzmann) von Falkenberg with two hundred armed men. Duke Friedrich died in the ensuing encounter. As the attackers were all liege men of Johann II, archbishop of Mainz, it was believed that he instigated the attack. Because it was strictly forbidden to attack attendees of such gatherings on their way to and from the meeting, it was expected that the Empire would impose a ban on the murderers and punish them. However, after he became Emperor, all Ruprecht did was to oblige them to donate an altar and an eternal requiem to the church of St. Peter in Fritzlar.

On August 20, 1400, Wenzel was formally accused by the archbishops of Mainz, Trier, and Köln and by Ruprecht, palsgrave (count palatine) by Rhine (Pfalzgraf bei Rhein), *i.e.*, four of the seven electors of the above list, at Lahneck castle in Oberlahnstein to be futile, dull, careless and a dishonourable possessor of the Empire and he was declared dismissed. The next day in Rhens the same four electors selected Ruprecht from the House of Wittelsbach as king.

After this time, conflict between the dukes of Braunschweig and the bishop of Hildesheim continued to smoulder for decades with serious consequences for the two principalities. In the end, the bishopric of Hildesheim was virtually bankrupt. All castles and estates were pledged and the bishop had to ask the estates (Landstände) for approval to raise an extra tax, the so-called “Bede” (from the German word Bitte = to ask or request) to cover war costs. The financial problems of the bishopric lasted until the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the thrifty bishop Johann started to reclaim property pledged a century earlier. By this time nobles, such as those of the von Saldern family who granted fiefs to Vornkahls, refused the monetary offerings, preferring instead to keep the castles they now had held for two or three generations. The conflict eventually found expression in events such as the Hildesheimer Stiftsfehde (Hildesheim Diocesan Feud) of 1519–1523 and the formation of marauding bands of robbers such as the one led by Kurt Vernekohl (see below).

This incident sheds some light on the circumstances in Germany in those times. A succession of weak kings strengthened the power of the local sovereigns. Conflicts were not solved in court but by feuds, violence, and arbitrary despotism. Lawlessness, particularly of the nobility and their executives, was widespread.

Vornkahls before 1649. We now return to our discussion of the Vornkahl name as we have found it in records before 1649. In 1406, “the Vornekale” appears – without first name – in two related documents.<sup>[3198]</sup> The documents are in regard to a legal quarrel between dukes Bernhard and Heinrich of Braunschweig-Lüneburg and bishop Johann of Hildesheim. The first of the documents spelled out a lengthy list of grievances against Hildesheim for which the dukes wished to have redress. The claim was that Johann had distrained (held property for a debt) the Vornekale, something that had never happened before. The “Vornekale” was just one of many persons named in the lengthy document which was signed 27 Jun 1406. The second document of 1406 was the written response from Johann to the dukes of Braunschweig-Lüneberg outlining the settlements of the claims made in the first document. In the case of the Vornekale, it stated that he (or they) were distrained because they were committed to service and Beede to the bishop. This document was signed 17 Aug 1406.

What was the status of “the Vornekale” in the villages of Nettlingen and Berel in the 15<sup>th</sup> century? Scattered records show that Vornkahls were fief-holders in Nettlingen during this time. Before outlining further the enfeoffment of the Vornkahls, a brief description of a fief, adapted from the article, “What is a Fief” by Mary McMahon,<sup>[3199]</sup> is given below:

“A fief was a tangible good given in exchange for loyalty during the feudal period in Europe. Fiefs traditionally took the form of plots of land, but the rights to manorial rents, a noble title, or an office might also be considered to be fiefs. A fief could be granted by an overlord or suzerain to a vassal, and as long as the vassal loyally served his lord, he would retain the fief.

“The system of feudalism in Europe was a political, social, and economic system which concentrated power in the hands of the nobility. The feudal system started with the monarch, who could grant lands to individuals loyal to him. These individuals, in turn, could seek out vassals and distribute parts of their estate to these vassals. While fiefs were technically granted to individuals, they took on a hereditary aspect. If either lord or vassal were to die, it was anticipated that the fief would be renewed, as the arrangement benefited both parties.

“In exchange for a fief, a vassal was expected to render a variety of services to his lord. In some cases, the vassal would be expected to contribute to the wealth of his lord by turning over part of his collected rents, along with farm products. The vassal would also be expected to go to war when ordered to, and to keep the fief in good order, with buildings in usable condition and acreage kept under cultivation. If a vassal did not hold up his end of the bargain, the fief could be confiscated and passed on to another individual.

“One of the key elements of a fief was the aspect of military service. Individual members of the nobility could not afford to equip and maintain standing armies and relied on their vassals to supply equipped armed warriors when they were needed. By surrounding themselves with small armies, lords could protect themselves from incursion by other lords while building up their wealth and social position.”

At the top of the feudal system in the Holy Roman Empire was the king/emperor. He granted territories of land as fiefs to higher nobility, such as bishops and dukes, in exchange for their loyalty and service. The bishopric of Hildesheim and the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg are examples. The bishops and dukes in turn granted fiefs to families of lower nobility. These land holdings, still too large for the individual noble family to manage, were further divided and granted as fiefs to the peasantry (free men). Several brief references show that Vornkahls in Nettlingen and Berel were recipients of fiefs in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1415, Albert, the abbot of St. Michaelis monastery in Hildesheim, granted a fief of two hufes<sup>[3200]</sup> of land and a hof<sup>[3201]</sup> (a farmstead) in Nettlingen to Cord Fornikahle.<sup>[3202]</sup> In 1423, the payment of eleven Hildesheim marks by Heinrich and Sivert Vornekahl to the vicar of Oelsburg, was confirmed by Heinrich von Saldern, canon of Hildesheim and provost of Oelsburg.<sup>[3203]</sup> With the payment, they bought out an annual rent of one mark on two hufes of land in Nettlingen enfeoffed from the abbot of St. Michael's monastery in Hildesheim.

The von Saldern was a noble family whose feudal holdings were enfeoffed to numerous peasants in the territories around Hildesheim, Saltzgitter, and Braunschweig. They were important landowners in the area where the villages of Nettlingen and Berel lay. A history of the von Saldern family from 1102 to 1500 has been published in two volumes.<sup>[3203,3204]</sup> On page 1 of Volume I, for the year 1102, it is stated that, “Die von Saldern warden von Konrad I, Abt des Michaelisklosters in Hildesheim, mit dem Zehnten in Nettlingen belehnt.” (“The von Saldern were enfeoffed by Konrad I, abbot of St. Michaels monastery at Hildesheim, with the tithe in Nettlingen.”) A similar description of the family's origins is found in Wikipedia:<sup>[3204]</sup>

“In 1102, the family is mentioned for the first time in the chronicle, *Chronicon coenobii Sancti Michaelis*, in Hildesheim. According to this document, the knightly family of von Saldern was enfeoffed that year with tithe rights (“mit den Zehnten”) by St. Michael's Abbey near Nettlingen.”

In his *Chronick Nettlingen*, Fr. Spanuth has written a 40 page section titled “Nettlingen und die von Saldern.”<sup>[3205]</sup>



Despite a lack of detail, these records from 1415 and 1423 tell us that the Vornkahls were already fief-holders in Nettlingen by these dates. The next record we have is from 1494 where it is recorded that Hinrich von Saldern, with the consent of his cousin Ludolf von Saldern, granted an inheritable fief to Sivert Vornekahl.<sup>[3206,3207]</sup> The enfeoffment was of two hufes<sup>[3200]</sup> of land and two hofs<sup>[3201]</sup> in Nettlingen and one hufe and one hof in Berel. This was a renewal of a fief that previously had been granted to Sivert's "ancestor," Hinrich Vornekahl, presumably his father. It is unlikely that Sivert Vornekahl would have operated all three farms himself but, rather would have "sub-leased" (to use modern terminology) one or more of the farms, most likely to other members of the larger Vornkahl family. This seems an especially practical solution to working the farm that had been granted in Berel. It is noteworthy that this was an inheritable fief meaning that later generations of the Vornkahls would maintain operations of these farms as long as the terms of the enfeoffment were met.

There were two conditions under which a fief was renewed, either the death of the grantor (*i.e.*, the lord – called a "lord-fall") or the death of the grantee ("man-fall"). In the case of the 1494 enfeoffment, the grantor was Heinrich X von Saldern (d. 1515), the son of Hildebrand von Saldern who died in 1457. These dates rule out that the renewal of the fief was because of lord fall and, therefore, was because of a man-fall. Furthermore, fiefs were customarily renewed within a "year and a day," which at that time was defined as one year, six weeks, and three days. This implies that Sivert's father, Hinrich, had most likely died in 1493.

A photograph of the hand-written enfeoffment document of 1494<sup>[3207]</sup> and the transcription and translation of this document are shown in Appendix 1 (page 324). In 1629 Burchardt von Saldern and his cousin Jacob enfeoffed Hanß Vornekahl with land and property in the villages of Nettlingen and Berel having the same description as in the 1494 document.<sup>[3207]</sup> Whether or not this is a renewal of the 1494 enfeoffment is not stated but seems to be a likely possibility. The hand-written copy, the transcription, and translation of the 1629 enfeoffment are shown in Appendix 2, page 328.

There are several details in the 1629 enfeoffment worth further mention. First, the enfeoffment is made to Hanß as the *eldest* Vornekahl and then continues to list a large number of cousins and other Vornekahls and their deceased fathers. The complete list of those named is given below:

Hanß (the eldest of the named Vornekahls) and Thile Vornekahl, sons of Henning (deceased)

The cousins:

Henning and Ludeke Vornekahl, sons of Heinrich (deceased)

Hanß Vornekahl, son of Hans (deceased)

Ludeke Vornekahl, son of Hildebrand (deceased)

Peter and Christoff Vornekahl, sons of Herman (deceased)

Heinrich Vornekahl

Other Vornekahls:

Hanß, Siverdt, and Cuerdt Vornekahl, sons of Curd (deceased)

Herman Vornekahl

Ludeken Vornekahl

At Elze:

Rev. Heinrich Vornekahl, son of Heinrich (deceased)

This document shows that a large Vornkahl family was in existence in 1629 (which, coincidentally, was at the time of the devastating European Thirty-Years War). This document also brings us to within one generation of the beginning in 1649 of the parish records as kept by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nettlingen.

Another listing of Vornkahls in Nettlingen at about this same time is found in the "Verzeichnis der Lehns-güter in Nettlingen" ("List of fiefs in Nettlingen") in the year 1624.<sup>[3208]</sup> That list is as follows:

Henni Vornekoll            von den von Salder, v. Ludeken Leinemanns, Erbe samt seinem Bruder.

## VORNKAHL

Thile Vornekoll	von den von Salder, Lehengut von denselben, zuvor Hans Block gehabt.
Cordt Liekevett	Erbe von Hermann Vornekoll (erbe = heir, successor)
Curdt Vornekoll	Erbe
Hermann Vornekoll	Lehengut, Erbe, Pfandt (pfand = pledge, mortgage, security)
Hans Vornekoll, jr.	Erbe, Pfandgut (pfandgut = (real) estate given in mortgage)
Matthias Guldemann	Erbe, Eve Johann Vornekoll, Witwe
Henrich Vornekoll	Lehngut
Ludeke Vornekoll	Erbe
Hans Vornekoll	in der Kornstrasse von den von Salder, Erbe, vom Pastor
Andreas Kruckemann	Erbe, von Chr. Vornekoll Witwe
Hans Vornekoll	hintern Dor, Erb und Lehengut zur?

There are eight names common to the two preceding lists but it is not possible to confirm which of the identical names on the two lists are the same person.

A second notable detail in the document of 1629 is the naming of the Reverend Heinrich Vornekahl of the town of Elze who is described as the son of the deceased master Heinrich. From other sources (see Section titled "Johannes Vorncaius") we have found information outlining the lives of these two men who were pastors in several villages near Elze. Their inclusion in the enfeoffment is consistent with other evidence that they were originally from a Nettlingen Vornkahl family.

The monastery of St. Michael of Hildesheim was another land holder from whom the Vornkahls were enfeoffed. A brief record of a transaction between Vornkahls and the monastery in 1415 has been mentioned above. From another source, documents from 1604 to 1669 are collected together as the Enfeoffment Protocol Book of St. Michaelis Abbey in Hildesheim.<sup>[3209]</sup> In one of the documents (see Appendix 3), the sequence of lehn (fief) holders appears to be documented from 1573 to 1613. They were:

Ludeke Vornekahl	1573
Henni Vornekahl	1577
Siuvert Vornekahl	1580
Hinrich Vornekahl	1590
Hanß Vornekahl	1596
Cordt Vornekahl	1604
Hanß Vornekahl (von Berel)	1613

If this is, indeed, a record of fief holders, the turnover rate is quite rapid. We can speculate that this is because the sequence of names is not linear, *i.e.*, the fief is not inherited by the son from the father, but rather the fief is passed from eldest to next eldest within an extended family of heirs.

We have discovered a later enfeoffment document from 1768 (see Appendix 4) in which St. Michael's monastery of Hildesheim enfeoffed Andreas Heinrich Vornekahl together with a large number of his brothers, cousins, and other Vornekahls in Nettlingen.<sup>[3210]</sup> Included in the fief were: (1) one hufe of land and one-half of a hof with wood-gathering rights; (2) one-half of a hufe of 16 Morgen; (3) one-half of Tassenhof (the name of a hof) with wood-gathering rights; (4) another one-half of a hufe; (5) another one-half of a hof; and (6) one additional right to wood-gathering in and around Nettlingen. Ludwig, assistant bishop and abbot of the monastery, signed the grant for the fief on 9 Nov 1768. The complete list of the Vornekahls included in the enfeoffment is:

Brothers (sons of Andreas):	Andreas Heinrich
	Hans Heinrich
	Cord



*Vornkahl History*

Cousins (son of Henni):	Cord
(sons of Bernd):	Hans Heinrich Caspar Johann Bernd
(sons of Cord):	Henni Hans Heinrich Hans Jacob
(son of Henni):	Henni Matthias
(sons of Hanß):	Henni Matthias Bartold
As well as (sons of Thies):	Bartold Curd Hans

Another holder of land and property in the area of Nettlingen was the family, Bock von Wülfingen. In the preface to the *Cantica germanica elegantissima* of 1580 by Johannes Vorncalius (see Section titled “Johannes Vorncalius,” below), he has written “Domino Vvulbrandio Boccio a Vvulfing, Nobili meo & Domino feudi.” This can be translated as “Lord Wulbrand Bock von Wülfingen, my noble and feudal lord”<sup>[3211]</sup> and we interpret this to mean that Wulbrand Bock von Wülfingen was a feudal lord of Johannes Vorncalius of Nettlingen. We have other references, as well, to a feudal relationship between the Vornkahls and the Bock von Wülfingens described in the following paragraph.

In a recent history of the Bock von Wülfingen family, Jürgen Huck gives an account of the numerous fiefs granted by this noble family over many centuries.<sup>[3212]</sup> A brief entry for Vornkahl reads:

“74. Vornkahl\* zu Nettlingen

a) 1693 - etwa 1850

b) 1693 hat Sievert Vomekohl als Afterl. 2 Hu, 2 Holzteilungen, 1 Wiese u.

1 Wort zu Berel. 1734 Andreas Vornkahl bel. 1. H. 19. Jh. Prozesse der

BvW mit den Vornkahl wegen deren rückständiger L-Ware. Vor 1856 all.”

[Abbreviations: Hu = Hufe; u. = und; bel. = belehnt; H. = Hof, Höfe; Jh. = Jahrhundert; BvW = Bock von Wülfingen; L = Lehen; all = Allodifikation, allodifiziert.]

[\*Bornhard, F.V.: Beiträge BvW, S. 52 (1800 Jan. 7) und 59 (um 1800).]

We conclude from this entry that in 1693, Sievert Vornkahl of Berel received as a secondary fief two hufes of land, two parcels of woodland, a meadow and a Wort from Bock von Wülfingen. Also that in 1734, Andreas Vornkahl received one hof as a fief from Bock von Wülfingen. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were lawsuits between the Bock von Wülfingens and the Vornkahls because of the lack of development by the Vornkahls. The fief had allodial status before 1856.

Vornkahls in Berel. As archivist and historian for the village of Berel, Mr. Eike Bock<sup>[3213]</sup> has traced back to the 1500s many of the families of Berel. Among his sources of information are a series of records, the “Lichtenbergisches Erb- und Scheffelschatzregister,” for the years 1548, 1566, 1579, 1593, 1622, and several later editions. These “rent and inheritance” records give very brief descriptions of the properties held by the fief-holders of Berel and from whom the fiefs had been granted. They also give brief descriptions of the “rent” payments made and in some cases the relationship of the payer and payee is indicated. Frequently, payment is made by a Vornkahl in Berel to a Vornkahl in Nettlingen, consistent with the contention that the early fiefs (such as the one to Sivert Vornekahl in 1494) were further sub-leased to family members in Berel.

## VORNKAHL

The history of Vornkahl households in Berel can be followed by house numbers. The house numbers are derived from Assekuranz Insurance Numbers (Asse No.) which were assigned in 1753 to farmsteads for agricultural insurance purposes. These numbers are still in use today and, in Berel, have been extrapolated back into time by Mr. Bock as he has recorded the history of the village (for examples, see Figures 109 and 110, pages 284-285). The five house numbers of interest to us for this account are 34, 36, 48, 49 and 66. The information given below for these households can be found according to the year: 1540-48,<sup>[3214]</sup> 1566,<sup>[3215]</sup> 1579,<sup>[3216]</sup> 1593,<sup>[3217]</sup> and for 1622, 1688, and 1723.<sup>[3218]</sup> We are indebted to Mr. Bock for sharing with us the information for these households that we give below. The entries are only partially translated from German into English; we have retained the German in places to reflect more accurately the original note.

### Asse (House) No. 34

**1566** - Cuiert Vornekall, for one farm and one hufe, paid Henriche and Henning Vornekall of Nettling 1 Scheffel 6 Himbten rye and 1 Scheffel 4 Himbten oats and Hofzeins (house rent?) 6 Gl (Gulden 4 dbr.); he (also) farmed with his brother in Nettling ½ hufe.

**1579** - Cordt Vasterding minor, one hof with one hufe of land from the Vornekails of Nettlingen, payment of rye and oats. There is no Asse Nr. for this description in 1579 but may be for No. 34.

**1593** - Curd Ropken (from Berel map).

**1622** - (gestrichen: Heinrich Vasterding), Nachtragung zu 1622 Ulrich Schrader.

**1688** - Andreas Fasterling vor dem Schlage (beim Tie).

**1723** - Behrend Meyer; one hof with 1 hufe of land from the Vornkalen zu Nettlingen payment of rye and oats.

### Asse No. 36

In **1548**, Hinrich Vornekahl with a cottage farm and one hufe of land **enfeoffed from von Cramme**, makes payment of grain to Lüddecken Vornekahl in Nettlingen. From one-half hufe of a one hufe of land **enfeoffed from Burcharde von Saldern**, (he) makes payment of rye and oats to Lüddecken Vornekahl in Nettlingen.

In **1566**, Bartold Vornekall with a Huffeke from Boarken zu Elze.

Also in 1566:

Those from Nettlingen, harvested from Berel fields:

Ludeke Vornekall, 0.75 morgen rye (yielded) 2.25 himbten rye;

Heinrich Vornekall, 0.75 morgen oats (yielded) 2.25 himbten oats;

Siuert Vornekall, from Nordassel and Berel fields, 5 morgen oats and 0.5 morgen rye (yielded) 1 scheffel and 3 himbten oats and 1.5 himbten rye.

In **1579**, Siuert Vornekail with one cottage farm and one hufe of land **enfeoffed from Bock and his cousins**, makes payment of rye and oats to Hanß Vornekail in Nettlingen. From one-half hufe of land **enfeoffed from Salders**, (he) pays his cousins in Nettlingen rye and oats.

In **1593**, Siuerdt and later Hillebrandt Vornkahl with one-half hufe of land **enfeoffed from von Saldern**, makes payment to von Kalen of Nettlingen.

**1622** – Hildebrandt Vornekahl

**1688** – Michel Vornekahl

**1723** – Heinrich Vornekahl



*Vornkahl History*

Asse No. 48

In **1548** at Asse No. 48 was Drewes Fasterdingh (Vasterding) with 1 cottage farm and one-half hufe of land; in addition 0.5 hufe enfeoffed from the von Bortfelde.

**1566** - Curdt Vasterding included in his record, (from) ¼ Huffele paid to **Siurde Vornekal** of Nettling 4 HI Roggen 4 HI Hafer.

**1579** - Cordt Vasterding has one-fourth hufe of land from **Siuert Vornekail** of Nettlingen (and) pays rye and oats.

**1593** - name unclear on Berel map.

For **1622**, **1688**, and **1723**, no entry identified for Asse No. 48.

Asse No. 49

In **1548**, Siuvert Fornekaill, with one cottage farm and two hufes of land from **vorne Kahlen** in Nettlinge, makes a payment of rye and oats from one hufe to **vorne Kahl**. From one hufe of land from **vorne Kahlen** belonging to his father, no payment is made.

In **1566**, Heinrich Vornekall, with a cottage farm **enfeoffed from von Saldern**, makes payment of 9HI rye and 9HI oats to his uncle in Nettlingen.

In **1579**, Hinrich Vornekall, with one cottage and one hoof of land **enfeoffed from von Saldern**, together with his cousins makes payment of grain to Hanß Vornekail in Nettlingen. (From) one and three quarters morgen by mortgage from Hansen Vornekail in Nettlingen, payment of oats.

In **1593**, Henni Ulrich (from Berel map).

**1622** – Heinrich Ulrichs

**1688** – ...ich Witkopff

**1723** – Hinrich Wittkopf

Asse No. 66

In **1548**, Hans Olrichs, for one cottage farm from **Hans Vornekahlen** of Nedtlinge pays about 1 (no further description).

**1566** - Hans Ulrichs, for one hof pays **Hanse Vornekall** in Nettlingen 6 Gl 4 ds br (?). For 1½ hufes, (he) pays Bartoldt von Gadenstdt 3 Scheffel rye 2½ Scheffel oats.

**1579** - Hanß vlrichß (Ulrich), (from) one Hof gibt den **vornekahls** ... 6 gr 4 d. For 1½ hufes of land from the von Gadenstede pays rye 3, oats 2½ Schl. Tudt 15 gr.

**1593** - **Hanß Vornkal** (from Berel map).

**1622** - (gestrichen: Hans Bulteman), payed arrears to 1622 Curdt Lickefett.

**1688** - ...m Lickefett.

**1723** - also; one hof payment to the Vornekalen 6g (?), 4 ds (Doppelzentner?); ½ hufe of land from the von Gadenstede, payment of rye and oats.

Of the five homesteads, only two, numbers 36 and 49, were occupied by Vornkahls for an extended period of time. Both were occupied by Vornkahls when the first records were written down in 1548. The records, although brief, show that both homesteads were fiefs that originally were part of the enfeoffments granted to the Vornkahls in Nettlingen because rents are recorded as being paid to the latter. The fiefs were granted by the von Saldern and also, in the case of No. 36, by the family of von Cramme. Homestead No. 36 has the longest history of Vornkahl occupancy in Berel, dating from before 1548 and continuing to about 1840. This is the ancestral home of one of the authors (Ulli) whose great-great-grandmother, Christine Sophie Vornkahl, was born there in 1821.

It is conceivable that the homesteads at 34 and 48 were at an earlier time parts of 36 and 49, respectively, since 34 lies next to 36 and 48 is next to 49. In only one of the years, 1566, was there a Vornkahl recorded at No. 34; this was Cuiert (or Cueri) Vornekall. Although the occupants at 34 and 48 were not Vornkahls, they both paid rent to Vornkahls in Nettlingen. At homestead number 66 there is a continuous record of rent payments to Vornkahls in Nettlingen.

### Johannes Vorncalius, Lutheran Pastor

We should not be surprised to find Vornkahls scattered throughout Germany in locations other than Nettlingen and Berel. Several have left their mark on history. The first of these is a Johann Vornkahl (full name probably Johann Heinrich – one of many Vornkahls so named!) from Nettlingen. He was born in about 1551-52 and comes to our attention as a result of his activities as a pastor in the Lutheran church in Germany. Indeed, we probably would not know of Johann if not for the fact that detailed records were kept by churches throughout these times. The language of these records is either Latin or German and often is a mix of the two. When Latinized, the name Johann Vornkahl becomes Johannes Vorncalius (also seen as Vornkadius, Vornkahlius, Vornecal) and Nettlingen becomes Nettlingensis.

The attendance of “Joannes Vornecal Nettlingensis” at the University of Helmstedt in 1576 is recorded in an academic album of the university.<sup>[3219]</sup> The “Journal of the Society for Niedersächsen Church History” adds that Johannes Vornkadius of Nettlingen studied in Hildesheim, Braunschweig, and at the University of Helmstedt.<sup>[3220]</sup> Although it is stated that he was not enrolled in theology, he nevertheless was ordained by D. Becker in Hildesheim in 1582. An additional statement is that Heinrich von Saldern had been his patron “contrary to expectations.”<sup>[3220]</sup> The reason for this patronage may have been a long-standing lord-vassal relationship between the von Salderns and the Vornkahls of Nettlingen. The fact that it was contrary to expectations may be a reflection on the times wherein there was a big quarrel between the Catholic church and the newly emerging Lutheran denomination. The chronicle of Henneckenrode<sup>[3221]</sup> tells us that Heinrich von Saldern represented the Catholic branch of his family whereas Johannes Vornkahl was a Lutheran. Apparently the feudal bonds between the families were stronger than their religious differences.

During the years of 1576 to 1582 while Johannes was engaged in studies, he also was author or co-author of a number of documents that are still in existence today. A list of these documents is found in Appendix 5. Photographs of selected pages are also shown in the Appendix. From the “Cantica Germanica elegantissima” of 1580, we learn that Johann’s father was Henning Vornkahl.<sup>[3222]</sup> Using our thirty years per generation rule, Henning would have been born in about 1520. From the date of the Cantica, we can assume that Henning died in 1579 or 1580.

In addition to the writings that survive, Johannes is named in other contexts in several historical records. He had influential friends, among whom was Joachim Brandis the Younger, a wealthy merchant, councilor, and town mayor of Hildesheim, who wrote in his diary in 1581:<sup>[3223]</sup>

“Our brother-in-law Asmus Smet had been indisposed for a while and did not become better, so that on Sunday, January 15th he went to bed. Monday noon he had the first parocismum [note: should probably read paroxysm], the Tuesday he had several consecutively and the night several times. The Wednesday his speech worsened and [he] stayed nonetheless sane and prudential. The subsequent night between Wednesday and Thursday between 2 and 3 strokes [of the tower clock, *i.e.*, between 2 and 3 o’clock] good Asmus Smet passed away very quietly and calmly in right invocation of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he committed himself in the presence of m. Heisen Sengeber, a brother [note: here the use of brother probably is in the sense of the brotherhood of the church] of the Doctor Johan Vornkal and others. I had left at 12 strokes. On Friday, January 20th, he was buried at St. Andreas in the



church in front of the sacristy. The good Lord have mercy upon him and have pity and bestow on him and afterwards also upon us a blithesome resurrection through Christ his son our saviour! Amen!”

The daughter (or granddaughter) of the above Asmus Smet was married to Jacobus Uldarici (Jacob Ulrich) who later became chancellor of the bishopric of Verden. Jacob Ulrich earned a doctoral degree in law at the University of Marburg in 1594. Johannes Vornkalius was one of the authors of a collection of congratulations issued for the occasion.<sup>[3224]</sup>

In 1589 the St. Vits house in Hemmendorf was sold to Curd Weneken in order to pay for the repair of the church spire. The letter was signed and sealed by superintendent magister Henricus Bunting, bailiff Johannes Wiedt, and Johannes Vornkalius, pastor and honourable councillor.<sup>[3225]</sup> Evidently he made it into the council of Hemmendorf, probably due to the help of his son-in-law, Johann (Hans) Gerdes, who for 24 years was the respected town mayor of Hemmendorf and husband of his daughter Catharina.

The Lauenstein district of the Evangelical church, in which Hemmendorf lies, carried out a series of church visitations in 1588 in which the pastors of the district parishes were examined for their knowledge of ecclesiastical subjects. On 21 Apr 1588, Johannes Vornekahl together with four other pastors was tested for his knowledge in the Latin language on the topics of: the scriptures, of the sacred word of God, God, the angels, man, the cause of sin, free will, sin, the law, justification, penance, good works, the invocation, the sacraments, and the Supper.<sup>[3226]</sup> He was judged to be “uteunque.” Johannes Vornkalius died 15 Sep 1598 at Hemmendorf.<sup>[3227]</sup> In 1638 Hemmendorf was almost completely destroyed by a fire and virtually all old documents were burned.

Johannes Vornkalius’ daughter, Catharina, was born in about 1585 in Hemmendorf-by-Salzhemmendorf.<sup>[3228]</sup> She married Johann (Hans) Gerdes in about 1610<sup>[3229]</sup> and their daughter, Maria Catharina Gerdes, was born shortly thereafter.<sup>[3228]</sup> Maria Catharina married Johann Duve, a silk merchant in Hannover, on the 20 Sep 1626.<sup>[3223]</sup> Duve, who was born 21 Jan 1600 in Hannover, died on 12 May 1641 at the age of forty-three without having any children.<sup>[3228]</sup> Heinrich Vornkalius, pastor in Heyersum and uncle of the widow, contributed an eulogy to the printed memorial of the funeral.<sup>[3230]</sup>

After the death of her husband, Maria Catharina was re-married on 14 Sep 1642 to Melchior von Westenholz. von Westenholz was born 15 Nov 1612 in Hannover, the son of the councilor and treasurer Hermannus Westenholtz and his wife Mintha Paxmans, daughter of the pastor, Gerhardus Paxman, at Burgwedel. As was usual for prospective scholars, he first learned Latin and Greek in a (public) school in Hannover and then studied philosophy, mainly ethics and politics, at the University of Rinteln in 1631. Subsequently, from 1631 to 1638, he studied law at the University of Rostock. In 1640 he studied at the University of Helmstedt where he was conferred the degree of Doctor of Canon and Civil Law (doctor juris utriusque) in 1642. In 1645 he was elected town syndic of Hameln, a position he held until 1652 when the Duke of Braunschweig and Lüneburg, Georg Wilhelm, appointed him privy councilor (Hofrat) and judge on probation (Gerichtsassessor) in Hannover. He held those offices honorably until he died 17 Jun 1661. He was buried 24 June, the day of John the Baptist, in the Heilig Kreuz churchyard. The funeral sermon was held at the princely court chapel, which was reserved for the ducal household and close employees, by the court chaplain and superintendent of Calenberg, Justus Gesenius. In the funeral sermon it was stated that “either parent consented to the marriage,” indicating that Maria Catharina’s mother, Catharina Gerdes, nee Vornekahl, was still alive.

The relationship between the Maria Catharina and Melchoir von Westenholz was described as harmonious and they became parents of six children: 1.) Hermann Johannes, 2.) Melchior Ludwig, 3.) Mintha Catharina, 4.) Anna Catharina, 5.) Anna Maria and 6.) Margaretha Elisabeth. Only the two boys and the youngest daughter survived. Maria Catharina died in 1676 and her burial in Hannover is recorded as having taken place 21 Jan 1676.<sup>[3231]</sup> We have little information on their children. Only Melchior Ludwig became famous. He became legation secretary for the Duchy of Braunschweig and Lüneburg at Nijmegen (Netherlands) and privy councilor and monastery councilor (Klosterrat) at Hannover. He was ennobled by the emperor, hence called von Westenholz.



Figure 131. Photograph of bell installed in the Heyersum church tower in 1645.

Johannes Vornkalus' son, Heinrich (date of birth unknown), followed in his father's footsteps, attending the University of Helmsedt (?),<sup>[3232]</sup> serving as school rector in Elze in 1624 and thereafter as pastor in the parish of Heyersum starting in 1625.<sup>[3233]</sup> The church of St. Mauritius in Heyersum dates to 1350; the present church building was constructed in 1836. There also is reference to his service as a pastor in both Heyersum and Mahlerton. There exists a publication of the chronicles of Heyersum in which a blood-chilling story is recorded.<sup>[3234]</sup> The event occurred in 1639 while Heinrich was pastor in Heyersum although he is thought not to have been involved. A woman from Nordstemmen who was accused of being a witch was burned on a hill in Heyersum. According to the account, her three children were beheaded before her eyes before she was burnt.

In the enfeoffment document of 1629, discussed earlier above, the reverend Heinrich of Elze, son of "the master Heinrich," was among the Vornkahls named in the document.<sup>[3207]</sup> The Hildesheim tax registry of 1664<sup>[3235]</sup> lists Heinrich Vornekahl, pastor of Heyersum. Other records then indicate that he died in 1665.<sup>[3227]</sup> Shown in Figure 131 is the bell that was installed in the church tower of Heyersum in 1645 during the time that Heinrich Vornkahl (Vorcal) was pastor. The bell is inscribed on the lower rim with the following rhyme that includes his name, spelled as Vorcal:<sup>[3236]</sup>

“Im Tausendsechshundertfünfundvierzigsten Jahr,  
als Heinrich Vorcal Pastor war,  
zugleich auch war edituus  
aus Eltz Laurentz Huntius,  
auch dem Altar Fürstunden true  
W. Karsten schon, Hinrich Salgee neu,  
dise Glocke gegossen ist,  
ir Schutzer sei der Herre Christ.”

Mit Gottes Hülff goes mich M(eister) Hinrich Quenstaedt in Hildesheim for de in  
Heyrsm 1645

An entry in the Heyersum church book in 1667 records the burial of Ilsebe Kallens on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July in the churchyard at Heyersum. She was the wife of Henry Vornekahl, pastor of Heyersum, etc.<sup>[3237]</sup>



## Kurt Vernekale – Rogue or Robin Hood?

Another son of Nettlingen, Curt Vernekale (Curdt Vornkahl), left an entirely different mark in the pages of history.<sup>[3238]</sup> In 1639, he and his accomplices were arraigned before the Imperial Court (Reichskammergericht) in Speyer, Germany, for raiding, plundering, and extorting citizens in the eastern regions of the Hildesheim bishopric. (Speyer is located about 200 miles south of Hildesheim.) Bringing the complaints against Verneckal was Bishop Valentin of Hildesheim. Also named in the suit was the bailiff of Lichtenberg, Berthold von Drachsdorf. Verneckal was the leader of a small raiding party; some of his accomplices were named in court records and were: Joachim von Assel, a nobleman from Hohenassel; Jacob Niegemeyer, Hans Helfack, and Henning Bietendüfel from Burgdorf; “Black Hans” from Lesse; from the Steinbrück district, Hilmar Vischer, Hennig Höegers, Hans Vastelabend, and Hans and Hennign Eylers; also, Meyer from Eggelsheim (Eggelsen); Bernward Eveninges; the tavern keeper, Heinrich Fliege; Hans Berthold and the sexton from Bettrum; and Hennig and N. Fliege from Feldbergen.

Warrants (imperial ban) for the arrest of Verneckal were in effect at least through 1544. Some of the charges against him and his raiders were that: he had shot horses of Lüdecke Bosse in Nettlingen; he had stabbed a cow belonging to his brother, Hennig Verneckal (with whom he had dispute over his inheritance); he had take three horses from Arnoten of Wöhle when Arnoten was driving to the mill in Astenbeck; he grabbed Daniel Eilers and took four guilders from him; and so forth.

A more detailed account of this story has been published in the German language.<sup>[3238]</sup>

## Demise of Henry Vornkahl, a Railway Worker in Australia

The following is a brief account of Heinrich Vornkahl who emigrated to Australia in about 1881. A death notice was written in the *Border Watch*, a newspaper published in Mount Gambier, South Australia:

“**Vornkahl.** – on the 20<sup>th</sup> instant, at Mount Gambier Hospital, Heinrich Vornkahl (late of the Duchy of Brunswick), aged 20 years. Home papers please copy.”

(Note: the correct age of Mr. Vornkahl is 25 years; see report of his death certificate, below.)

A copy of the death notice and other information was received 19 Feb 2011 by Ulli Schröder from Georgina Bliss. Ms. Bliss kindly provided a transcript of a longer report from the same newspaper on the same date:

“Our Penola correspondent mentioned in Saturday's issue that a young German labourer was found lying in an old hut at the rear of the police station on Thursday in a very dangerous state, having had an epileptic fit. He was conveyed by Mounted Constable Ewens to the Mount Gambier Hospital on Friday, where he died on Saturday. It was ascertained that his name was Heinrich Vornkahl, and that his age was 20 years [sic]. He was a native of the Duchy of Brunswick, Germany, and has no relatives in the colony. His mother resides at Braunschweig [sic]. He had been a colonist about four years. For some months he had been employed by Messrs Moore, Blanch & Co on the Mount Gambier and Narracoorte railway works, and when he took ill he was about to proceed with his mate, August Shultz [sic] to some piece-work on the works. The cause of death was cerebral abscess, caused, it is believed, by a fall from a wagon which he sustained when 14 years of age. The body was interred in the cemetery on Monday, The Rev F W Matchoss, of the Claraville Lutheran Church, officiating at the grave.”

Ms. Bliss adds that she had seen the death certificate for Heinrich Vornkahl and that it had no further information about him other than that his age was 25 years, not 20 as stated in the newspaper reports. She stated that she had found no trace of his name in passenger lists of persons arriving in South Australia. She adds that he may have entered from another state since Penola and Mount Gambier are very close to the border with Victoria. Ms. Bliss has compiled a book of South Australian deaths in which Mr. Vornkahl presumably is listed.<sup>[3239]</sup> Information in the Government Gazette:

“Information from the police report in the Gazette states he was 5 feet 7 inches tall, hair was light-brown, and he was blind in his right eye. It also states he was sent to Mount Gambier hospital from Penola on 18 February 1886 and died there on 20 February 1886 from an abscess of the brain. He had been in South Australia for about 4 years, and had not been long in Penola. He had intended to work on the railway there, but was unable to do so because of illness. He was subject to fits. His mother lived at Braunschweitz, Germany.”

### Johann Vornekahl, Mercenary in the British Army

During the American War of Independence (the Revolutionary War), 1775-1783, British forces attempting to subdue rebellion in the North American colonies relied heavily on infusions of mercenary soldiers from Germany. By the end of the war, 29,867 German soldiers had been sent to North America, the bulk of them arriving in 1776.<sup>[3240]</sup> Smaller numbers of reinforcement and replacement troops arrived in 1777-1782. The troops originated from six principalities in Germany: Brunswick (Braunschweig; 5,723 men), Hesse-Cassel (16,992), Hesse-Hanau (2,422), Ansbach and Bayreuth (2,353), Waldeck (1,225), and Anhalt-Zerbst (1,152).<sup>[3240]</sup> Of the nearly thirty thousand troops sent to America, 17,313 returned to Germany after the war. Of the 12,554 troops that did not return, it is estimated that 1,200 were killed or died of wounds, 6,354 died due to illness or accident and 5,000 deserted.<sup>[3240]</sup> Desertions were more prevalent from prisoner-of-war camps than from the battlefield.

The Brunswick troops arrived in Canada in 1776 where they joined British troops under the command of General John Burgoyne. They spent the winter preparing for an offensive in the following year that was planned to take them south on Lake Champlain and then on to the Hudson River. There they would meet British troops advancing up the Hudson from the south. These campaigns were designed to divide the colonies into two parts. The plan failed with the defeat of Burgoyne's army in the Battle of Saratoga in October of 1777. Several factors contributing to this defeat were logistical problems, the unconventional actions and tactics of the revolutionary army, and failure of the British to send forces up the Hudson to meet Burgoyne.

As a result of the defeat at Saratoga, the Brunswick contingent of soldiers in the British army suffered not only heavy casualties but the surviving troops were captured as prisoners of war. These prisoners were held near Cambridge, Massachusetts, from late 1777 to late 1778. They then were marched to Charlottesville, Virginia, where they remained until the end of the war.<sup>[3240]</sup>

One of the mercenary soldiers was a Johann Vornekahl. His name is found in a “Muster roll of the present officers and men of a detachment of Brigadier General Specht's Regiment Brunswick Troops, including the recruits sent over from Brunswick in the year 1780.” In this muster roll, Vornekahl is listed once as a private in Major von Ehrenkrook's company of Brigadier General Specht's regiment of the Brunswick troops.<sup>[3241]</sup> Although small numbers of additional troops were sent from Brunswick to North America each year after 1777, it is not clear where these troops were assigned, but presumably not with the original Brunswick contingent that now was a captive of the war. It is not clear if Vornekahl was among the additional troops arriving from Brunswick or if he was a prisoner of war from the original group. His fate after the war is unknown.



## The Memorable Baptism of Margarethe Vornkahl of Nordassel

Ulrich Schröder

(This story is inspired by an entry in the Nordassel Kirchenbuch, see Figure 132, for the birth and baptism of Margarethe Vornkahl.)

In the early spring of 1711 Andreas Vornkahl's wife was expecting a child. They were residents of Nordassel, a village in modern day Niedersachsen but in 1711 in the duchy of Braunschweig-Lüneburg. As for so many women in the two thousand years before her, she was accompanied by a midwife during the final stages of her pregnancy, while giving birth, and during the first months of life of her child. Unfortunately the English term "midwife" provides little information on the importance of this woman. The German word for midwife, *Hebamme*, derives from the Old High German *Hev(i)anna*, *i.e.*, ancestress/grandmother, who picks up/holds the newborn child. And indeed, from antiquity to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in order to ascertain experience and constant availability, it was the custom that only those women could become midwives who had successfully given birth but were no longer able to become pregnant themselves. As the midwives helped to deliver the newborn, they were colloquially called *Mudder Griepsch*, *i.e.*, Mother Grasp in Northern Germany.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century not only having children but also helping children to come into the world remained women's business. During the Middle Ages midwifery became a profession. Obstetrics was performed by women, not only because there were virtually no physicians, but also because the Catholic Church prohibited the presence of men during childbirth. The role of the father was to pray to St. Godehard († 1038, buried at Hildesheim), the patron against heavy births, and St. Norbert († 1134), the patron of a happy birth. There are historical rumors, however, that when in remote villages no midwife was available and the child was in a wrong position in the uterus, people would call the local shepherd to turn the child as he commonly did with wrongly positioned lambs.

After a successful birth, the midwife took care of the newborn by separating out and ligating its umbilical cord at a length of four fingers and finally bathed the child and scrubbed it with salt and sometimes with crushed rose petals or honey to free its body from the mucous. Because she bathed the newborn for the first time the midwife was also called *Bademutter*, *i.e.*, bathing mother, a term we regularly find for midwife in the old documents and parish records of the Braunschweig-Hildesheim area until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With her finger, she lubricated the palate and gum of the infant with honey to clean the inside of the mouth and to stimulate the appetite. For the next couple of weeks she regularly visited mother and newborn to make sure that everything was in order.

Although there were textbooks on obstetrics based on the experiences of midwives, such as the works of Soranus of Ephesus (117 A.D.), Moschion (220 A.D.) and Trotula of Salerno (11<sup>th</sup> century, *Passionibus Mulierum Curandorum*)<sup>[3242]</sup> it is unlikely that any midwife ever used them, as the common midwife was unable to read Greek or Latin. It is true to this day that women who wanted to learn the craft of obstetrics had to assist an experienced midwife in her work. The midwife who helped to deliver Margarethe Vornkahl was probably much older than the mother and had presumably learned her craft from Catherine Vornekahl. The latter is mentioned in the church register of Nordassel. There the pastor wrote in 1688: "December 12<sup>th</sup> buried at Nordassel the old *Bademutter* Trine Vornkahls, age 85 years." The midwife present at Margarethe's birth is noted to be Henrich Zimmermanns wife. In this case, Zimmermann is not her last name but is the occupation of her husband. Henrich was a Zimmermann, *i.e.*, a carpenter. The only carpenter in Nordassel with the first name Henrich was Henrich Vornekahl, apparently also Margarethe's grandfather.

The experience of the midwife was particularly important when it came to problems at birth. For severe pain she could administer remedies against birth pains. In case of an abnormal position of the child in the womb, the

midwife had to press the child back to the womb and change the position with her hands either from the inside or from the outside. This was not easy and required quite some experience. It became a little easier in 1690 after Justine Siegemund described the "double maneuver" by which the inner turn of the child was made possible with the help of a sling. Infants born too early were wrapped by the midwives in the fat of a newborn pig until they were able to maintain their body temperature themselves.

In the Middle Ages midwives enjoyed a high reputation. Even the Catholic Church took advantage of them. In the 13th century it became customary for midwives to pledge by oath to a Christian way of life and renounce the use of magical and abortive means. In the Synods of 1233 and 1277 it was imposed on them to baptize dying children and in many places they were permitted to shrive and absolve dying mothers, something that was otherwise reserved exclusively to priests. While a stillbirth was physically painful for the woman, it was emotionally almost unbearable for her not to have her child buried in consecrated ground. The un-baptized and suicides were buried outside the cemetery. Thus, if there were any signs that the child would die before it left the womb, the midwife was obliged to introduce a baptism syringe filled with holy water and to baptize the child. If the child died right after leaving the mother's body, everything still was not lost. In many places the child was quickly brought into the church and baptized at the moment it exhaled air for the last time. That this breath was nothing more than the collapse of the lungs was not known and the baptism was valid. The removal of the dead child from the womb was also an unpleasant task for a midwife. First she will have tried to do that through induction of an abortion with herbs such as castoreum, myrrh, rue or ergot. If that did not work she took out the child either in one piece using a speculum or two hooks or in fragments using claw-like instruments. If a child was born to an unmarried mother, the midwife had to investigate and report who the father was. She also had to report a mother if her child was born handicapped.

It of course sometimes happened that it was not the child who died but rather the mother. In this case the midwife was allowed to perform a "sectio in mortua," a cesarean section, on the dying or dead female. It is still unclear where this term originates from. The Franconians took over much of the Roman law and thus the term could have emanated from "Lex Regis," later called "Lex Caesarea," which established that the unborn child of a deceased mother should be buried separately from her. It is also possible that the term simply derived from the children who got to see the light of day this way and were designated as "caesones" ("cutlings," from the Latin "caedere," *i.e.*, cut). Interestingly, two cases have been handed down in which the mother survived the Caesarean section. It was reported that in 1264 a woman in labor started to die and therefore was opened by the midwives with a sharp knife at the left lower body. From her womb they took out a healthy boy. Then they wrapped the woman's body with bandages and laid her on a bier for the funeral. The wound, however, closed and the woman woke up just in time before she was buried. In 1500 there was the first report of a successful "sectio in vivo," a caesarean section on a living woman. The cut was not conducted by a midwife or by a physician. It is narrated that the Swiss Jacob Nufer from the canton of Thurgau, after his beloved wife had been suffering for days in childbed and because he would not give her up, in despair applied his practical experience as swine castrator. With one single deep cut he opened her uterus and pulled out the child. Then he sewed the abdominal wall of his wife in the same way as he used to do when operating on his sows.<sup>[3243]</sup> His wife not only survived this procedure, but in the following year she even bore twins - without Caesarean section.

In the 15th century the first midwife regulations emerged at Regensburg (1452) and Ulm (1491) governing the duties of a midwife as well as their remuneration. At the same time the first midwives were hired by towns and municipalities. Their once high reputation in the Catholic Church steadily declined and was rather low in the early Modern Times and during the late Renaissance. After Pope Innocent VIII in 1484 recognized the witch doctrine, the Dominican monks Henricus Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger presented their famous book, "Malleus maleficarum,"<sup>[3244]</sup> in which they clearly state: "Nobody harms the Catholic Church as much as the midwives." The book attained the rank of an ecclesiastical "Witches Code" for criminal judges and from that time midwives were in danger of being burned at the stake. Historical research has found, however, that midwives were not burnt more frequently than ordinary women.

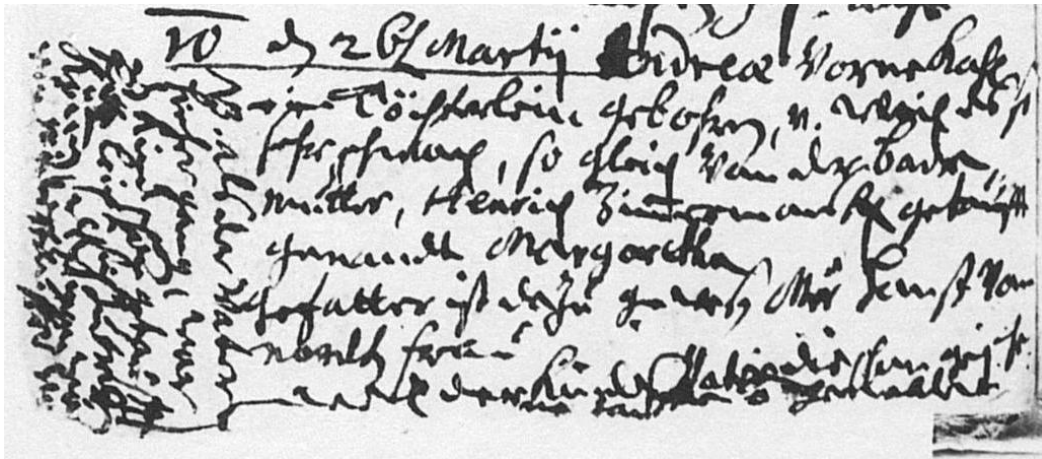


Figure 132. Entry in Nordassel Kirchenbuch for birth and baptism of Margarethe Vornekahl, 26 Mar 1711, p. 77.

Things were better in Lutheran areas after the Reformation. Physicians became interested in obstetrics and now felt called upon to test the knowledge of midwives before their employment. In many places, physicians formed medical advisory boards who conducted the examinations. Nevertheless there was a shortage of graduated midwives until the late 18th century. Thus the Duchy of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel implemented a new midwife order in 1757 and King George of England and Hannover issued several decrees between 1778 and 1796 making theoretical and practical training plus an examination mandatory for the employment of midwives.<sup>[3245]</sup> In the Kingdom of Hannover the future midwives had to undergo a four-month training at one of the newly emerging maternity clinics, mainly at Göttingen and Celle, where, in addition to free training, they were given free room and board and a weekly salary. Although there were maternity clinics with physicians available, most women still preferred to give birth at home in the presence of an experienced midwife. In the rural areas it remained that way until about the middle of the 20th century. Especially in their early days maternity clinics were mainly frequented by poor or unmarried women, prostitutes, and women who *a priori* expected complications that could not be met at home by a midwife. While the greatly feared puerperal fever was rather rare during a traditional birth at home (if at all it occurred after the first and about the seventh birth), 10-35 percent of the mothers in maternity clinics died of it in childbed until the Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis in 1847 introduced a solution of chlorinated lime for hand washing of the medical staff and the disinfection of tools.<sup>[3246]</sup>

It is not very likely that the midwives of Nordassel had training at a midwife school, but, as they were able to read, they may have owned the standard works of midwifery, published in German. One book was "Der Swangern Frauen vnd Hebammen Rosengarten" (loosely translated as "The rosegarden for pregnant women and midwives") by Eucharius Rößlin<sup>[3247]</sup> published in Germany in 1513. Writing of the book was encouraged by Katharine, Princess of Saxony and Duchess of Braunschweig and Lüneberg, when Rößlin served as her private physician. The book was translated into English and published in England in 1540. A new edition by Thomas Raynalde, "The Byrth of Mankynde," was published in 1545. Another book is "Die Chur-Brandenburgische Hoff-Wehe-Mutter" ("The Electorate Brandenburg midwife") by Justine Siegemundin (1690).<sup>[3248]</sup> The books have excellent illustrations with woodcuts by Erhard Schön and engravings by Samuel Blesendorf, respectively.

Why was Margarethe's birth so special that the pastor added a (poorly legible) note to the birth records? (See Figure 132.) He wrote: "the 26th of March (to) Andreas Vornekahl a little daughter born, and as it was very weak immediately baptized by the midwife Henrich Zimmermanns wife, (and) named Margaretha. Baptismal sponsor to that has been Master Hanß of Nordassel wife .... the child's father the already executed baptism. NB: when the father went here the child was already baptized." We learn from this note that when Margaretha was born, she was very weak and the midwife must have thought it unlikely that she would survive the next couple of hours. Thus she performed an emergency baptism. Meister (master) Hanß wife, who probably assisted the mid-



wife, served as baptismal sponsor. Well, Margaretha survived. Her father went to the pastor to arrange for her baptism and told him what the midwife had done. Many things had changed in childbirth from the Middle Ages to that date, but one thing that had not changed was that the baptism by the midwife was still valid also in the Lutheran church. Thus the pastor did not have to baptize her again and had only to make the entry in the birth registry. Her father was not aware that Margaretha was one of a few persons who were born and baptized the same day.

## Three Tales of Marriage in the Old Days

### Michael's Story: A Marriage Makes a Pastor Happy

Ulrich Schröder

To marry was not always easy in the old days. In the early Middle Ages there were several forms of marriage, some of which sound strange today. The word marriage in German is Ehe and derives from the Old High German ēwa, ēwī and the Middle High German ē, ēwe (*i.e.*, law, right, eternity, legal contract). Marriage those days was considered as a permanent union between a man and a woman, but a divorce was legally possible. The form which persisted until today, though in a modified form, is the “Muntehe.” Munt is the Middle High German word for protection or guardianship. The legal term can best be illustrated by the role of the father: wife, children, in-laws and menial staff were under his Munt, *i.e.*, masterhood, protection, and jurisdiction. The paterfamilias decided what they had to do or not to do. Punishment by the master of the house could go from beating to killing, expulsion or disposal. Interestingly, although corporal punishment became illegal at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the case of wife and children it was still tolerated by society until far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Until far into modern times a fiancée was not just chosen but bought. In a Muntehe, the woman went from one guardianship - that of her clan - to another, that of the clan of her husband. The future wife and often even the future husband had no say in the selection and future marriage negotiations. The clans negotiated. Our ancestors would have never had the absurd idea of creating something as important as marriage and family on something as unreliable as a sense of personal affection and love. The purpose of marriage was the union of two clans for political, social or economic reasons and the production of legitimate offspring for a controlled transfer of property. Before the wedding there was what we call today engagement (Verlobung). An earlier term, trothplight,<sup>[3249,3250]</sup> deriving from the middle English term treuthe (in German Treue, Eid, Versprechen) indicates that the engagement included binding promises, namely that of the bride's family to perform the wedding ceremony and that of the groom to take home the bride. The engagement was preceded by courting, which was commonly done by matchmakers. In many areas it was considered improper for the groom to court by himself. In many rural areas the custom of matchmaking by others survived well into modern times, with good reason. As the population density was only a fraction of what it is today, appropriate candidates were rather rare and, in particular, in rural areas it was difficult to find a spouse elsewhere due to poor travelling conditions and long working days. Therefore peddlers often served as matchmakers. It may be difficult to understand for modern women, but the women those days may even have been grateful to their parents for the proactive assistance in initiating a

befitting marriage. The alternatives would have been to stay under the Munt of her father and later her brother for the rest of her life without a family of her own, to become a prostitute, or to become a nun, provided her family could contribute enough to the monastery. This situation did not change much until well into the 20th century.

Preceding the official engagement the bride price or bridewealth was negotiated. Under some Germanic laws the time and amount of payment were already fixed. In the beginning, a price was paid to a bride's family for the transfer of the Munt but already by the early Middle Ages it was given to a wife for her support in the event that she should survive her husband (*i.e.*, become a widow). This is reflected in the Old English expression *weotuma* and in the Old High German *widemo*, from which the words widow (English) and Witwe (German) as well as Wittum (dower) are derived. Dower was a gift into trust settled on by the bride at the time of the wedding. Dower must not be confused with dowry. A dowry (German Mitgift), also negotiated, is a transfer of parental property at the marriage of a daughter and remains under her ownership and control. Particularly in rural areas, it was regarded as her anticipated inheritance. Legally, the engagement was not different from a legally binding promise for the purchase/sale of a kind. The one who did not keep the contract lost the bride price and had to pay a high fine. It is worth mentioning that marriage by capture and by kidnapping of the woman have also been legitimate forms of marriage among the Germanic peoples. Both marriage by capture (against the will of family and woman) and by kidnapping of the woman (against the will of the family, but with consent of the woman) had the effect of creating a marriage. It was now the task of the wife's family to take revenge. The marriage endured if the family refrained from taking revenge or if the revenge was unsuccessful, since the resulting sexual relationship and cohabitation created the fact of a marriage. Since the remarriage of the captured woman was not so easy, the clans commonly agreed, most pragmatically, to compensation and legalization of the marriage by contract. These forms of marriage must still have been a relevant phenomenon in the late Middle Ages, as the town and land rights in the 13th and 14th centuries persistently condemn marriages through capture and abduction.

Once the legal stuff was settled our early ancestors could marry. Usually the wedding took place in the family home of the bride. This tradition, which endured in many places until well into the 20th century, sometimes makes it difficult for the genealogist to find the maiden name, place of origin of the wife, and related marriage data. In the old parish records of the 17th century and sometimes later this information is mostly missing. This is true for Nettlingen. Thus, for example, in the case of Conrad Vornkahl of Hackenstedt, the predecessor of the Missouri Fornkahls, we have been unable to find any information that would link his father (Johann Heinrich Vornkahl) to the Vornkahls of Nettlingen.

On the day of the wedding, the bride was passed on to the bridegroom according to local custom. Both wore their best clothes, which were colored. The white bride's gown became fashionable only in the Age of Romanticism (about 1795-1848). The bride wore her hair loose as a sign that she was unmarried and on her head she wore a wreath, mostly of flowers, a sign of her virginity. The bride transferred the ring she had received on the day of engagement as a pledge from the left to the right hand. Depending on the prevailing custom she often obtained another ring, the wedding ring, which was also worn on the right hand, as is customary in Germany even today. In the evening, bride and groom laid down together on the nuptial bed in the presence of witnesses. With that the marriage was considered consummated. As a quasi replacement for her lost virginity after the wedding night, the wife received a precious gift which remained her personal property and was intended to hedge her in the event that she would become a widow. This "Morgengabe" (morning gift), however, must not be confused with the dower. The "Sachsenspiegel," the first written record of the Saxon law that prevailed for our ancestors, drew a clear line between the morning gift and the "Leibzucht" originating from the dower. The Leibzucht was a life-long usufruct on estates granted to the wife by the husband. A farmer commonly also reserved such a usufruct for himself when transferring the farm to his son and that is why a retired farmer is often called Leibzüchter in parish records and old documents.

A country wedding with often more than a hundred guests commonly lasted several days and, as he had to pay for that, could bring the bride's father to the brink of ruin. The wedding ended with the "Heimführung," the taking home of the bride by the groom. At the same time this was a big show-off. Wife and dowry were loaded on farm carts and brought to her future home. The more carts needed and the more there was on those carts the more impressed people were. Until well into the 20th century girls started early to collect all the goods necessary for their own household, which they later would bring into the marriage. Many readers may smile at this and may think that those girls were a little naive, but we must not forget that until the industrial revolution in the 19th century virtually all items were handmade and thus even a simple broom was not really cheap. The dowry may have included a bed, furniture and live stock sponsored by the parents or relatives, but definitely included chest(s) filled with home textiles, tableware and other things considered as basic equipment for an own household. From now on the wife would braid her hair and hide it under a hood as a sign of her decency and dignity. Hence the German phrase "unter die Haube bringen" (literally, to bring under the hood) when marrying off a daughter. This tradition persisted until about 1800.

You may have missed two words so far: love and church. Well, marriage was in principle a secular legal business and love was not required but might have developed during the marriage. Besides the "Muntehe" in the Early Middle Ages there was also the so-called "Friedelehe" (from Middle High German vriedele = mistress and Vriedel = paramour), which was based in mutual affection of the partners - civil equality was not a prerequisite - and could be dissolved by either side at any time. There was no wedding ceremony, dower or dowry, but taking home and morning gift were mandatory. The "Friedelehe" could exist in parallel to a "Muntehe." A "Kebsehe" was a union between a free man, for example an overlord, and an un-free woman. Due to his power over his subordinates the overlord could force every un-free woman under his guardianship into a concubinage, but to be a "Kebsehe" the relationship had to be meant for lifetime and had to be made public. In the beginning the children resulting from such marriages were legitimate in most Germanic peoples and were fully entitled to inherit. A prominent example of such a marriage was that of William the Conqueror, the "Bastard of France." Then the (catholic) church gradually got involved.

By and by it became the custom at marriages to obtain the benediction of the church. The blessing was not carried out in the church but in the bridal house or in front of the church door. The Church propagated monogamy and from the 10th century proceeded against Kebsehe and Friedelehe as concubinage. As nobility, rich merchants, wealthy farmers, and patricians entered into Muntehen with peers for strategic reasons and while wishing to retain the possibility of a socially unacceptable marriage, the Friedelehe evolved into the so-called morganatic marriage or "marriage to the left hand," which was acknowledged by the Church as fully valid and was abolished only in 1919. Neither the wife nor the children of such a marriage were considered to be members of the husband's family and did not lead the noble title or coat of arms.

The rights of children followed "the worse hand," *i.e.*, if the mother was un-free they would also be un-free. Commonly they were not entitled to inherit from their father. For example, in 1540 the Hessian Landgrave Philip I, with the approval of Martin Luther and in the presence of the Reformer Philipp Melanchthon, entered into a morganatic marriage with Margarethe von der Saale at Rotenburg as a second marriage, while his marriage with his first wife Christine von Sachsen remained in effect. August the Elder, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg, lived with the bailiff's daughter, Ilsa Schmedecken, in a "marriage-like relationship" and had twelve children with her. Since the bailiff, as ministerialis, was probably un-free, one would have formerly called this relationship Kebsehe. In 1625 August had the children legitimized by the Emperor and together with Ilsa collectively elevated into the imperial nobility under the name von Lüneburg.

At the 2nd Lateran Council (1139) the marriage of priests was abolished. Existing marriages were reclassified as invalid and the priest had to separate from his wife and children. The latter became un-free people of the Church. This was a disaster for the priests of those days who did not draw a salary but lived off the income from official fees and what they could grow themselves on a piece of church land. They needed a wife for household chores and as helping hands in the field. Officially, this step was justified by the belief that celibate priests could



better care for their flock. Further decisions, however suggest a different motivation. The possessions of deceased clerics could not be inherited and therefore belonged to the Church and churches. So the Council wanted to avoid the inheritance of church property by offspring and the formation of priest dynasties. There was an outcry by the German priesthood and it took quite a long time until celibacy finally prevailed.

Another decision banned the union of blood relatives. Children of incestuous relationships were considered heinous and were excluded from inheritance. Whereas Germanic law allowed marriage between uncle and niece or between cousins, the Church forbade marriage between blood relatives up to the 7th degree. At the 4th Lateran Council (1215), this prohibition of marriage was reduced to the 4th degree. Counted were the generations to the first common ancestor, *i.e.*, those who wanted to marry could have only common great-great-grandparents. Coequal with blood relatives were stepparents and stepchildren, wards, adopted and illegitimate children. Even marriages between persons related by affinity through marriage were considered incestuous. Affinity by marriage did not end with the death of a spouse and thus the number of persons related by affinity increased with each subsequent marriage. Due to the spiritual relationship, marriages between godparents and godchildren and sexual contact between physical and spiritual parents of the godchild were considered incestuous and thus banned. These rules can also be found in the Lutheran church orders and have been restricted or eliminated only in the 18th and 19th centuries. Thus, today we are roughly back to where we were 800 years ago.

1790	Worwand Johannes Lorenz	Hand und Kloster als Kunde	11. 11. 1790	St. Blasius als Kunde	St. Blasius als Kunde	St. Blasius als Kunde	St. Blasius als Kunde	St. Blasius als Kunde	St. Blasius als Kunde	St. Blasius als Kunde
	Carl Friedrich Müllers	Müller	30. 7.	Jan. 1813	Ilse Lucie Elisabeth	Müller	18	Müller	Johann Conrad Vornkahl	Ilse Lucie Elisabeth
	Johann Conrad Vornkahl	Vornkahl	30. 7.	Jan. 1813	Ilse Lucie Elisabeth	Müller	18	Müller	Johann Conrad Vornkahl	Ilse Lucie Elisabeth
	Johann Conrad Vornkahl	Vornkahl	30. 7.	Jan. 1813	Ilse Lucie Elisabeth	Müller	18	Müller	Johann Conrad Vornkahl	Ilse Lucie Elisabeth

Figure 133. Marriage of Johann Conrad Vornkahl and Ilse Lucie Elisabeth Maseberg as recorded (lower horizontal row) in the parish records of Nettlingen<sup>[1523]</sup> in 1813. The names of the fathers of the married couple are given in the second and seventh vertical columns of the record book.

After about 1400, public bans and an obligation for consent to the marriage by both spouses had become prevalent. At the Council of Florence (1439) the first explicit doctrinal decision about marriage as a sacrament was made. This meant that matrimony became indissoluble and could be terminated only by death, by abrogation due to inability to attain coitus (genital mutilation), by close consanguinity, or due to a preexisting marriage. However, until the Council of Trieste (1545-1563), the "marriages in the corner" or clandestine marriages contracted without public bans and priestly blessing, were considered to be valid marriages. Thereafter, the formal religious ceremony in the presence of two witnesses became the prerequisite for the validity of a marriage.

For Luther, marriage was not a sacrament but "a worldly thing" and therefore a matter of secular jurisprudence. The secular government, however, played the ball back to the church. The church order by Duke Julius of Braunschweig and Lüneburg in 1569,<sup>[3251]</sup> which formed the basis for similar church orders in Lower Saxony and remained valid with some modifications until the 19th century, demanded the formal church wedding after bans and parental consent.<sup>[3252]</sup> The church records<sup>[1523,2482]</sup> of the marriage of Johann Conrad Vornkahl and

Ilse Lucie Elisabeth Maseberg (Figure 133) of Nettlingen in 1813 confirms that the parents still had to consent, although he was already 33 years old and a master shoemaker.

In 1665 Michael Vornekahl of Berel impregnated Anna Diekmann (Dückmanß), the daughter of the local cow herd. They did not marry. Such an incident was not rare those days and might have indicated a mere affair, but this case was different. Anna delivered her baby and pastor Pöhling noted (Figure 134):<sup>[2490]</sup>

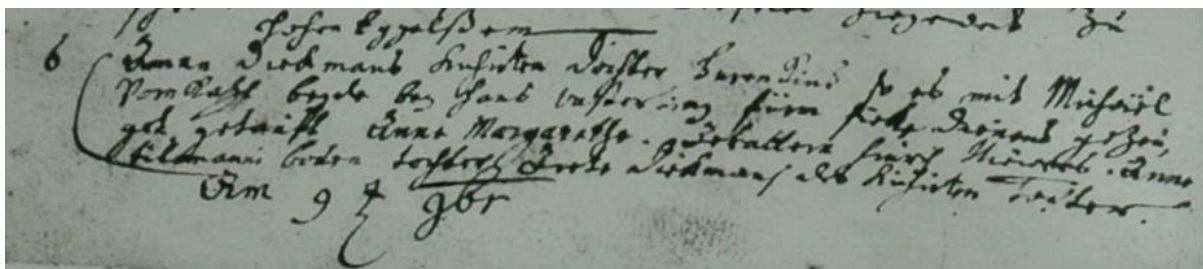


Figure 134. The birth of Anne Margarethe Vornkahl as recorded in the Berel Kirchenbuch I, page 10.<sup>[2490]</sup>

Transcription of the handwritten text of Figure 134:

*"Annen Diekmans Kuhbirten Tochter Hurenkind so als mit Michael Vornkahl beyde bey Hans Vasterling Ackermann fürm Sieke dienend gezeuget, getauft Anne Margarethe. Gevattern Heinrich Niewark (?), Anna Tilemanni Boden Tochter, Grete Dieckmans des Kuhbirten Tochter. Am 9ten 9br."* (1665)

Translation:

"Annen Diekmanns cowherd's daughter whose child so as with Michael Vornkahl, both serving at Hans Vasterling, Ackermann fürm Sieke, begotten, christened Anna Margarethe. Godparents Heinrich Niewark (?), Anna Tilemanni Boden daughter, Grete Dieckmans the cowherd's daughter. The 9th of 9br." (9 Nov 1665)

Anna Boden was Michael's cousin, the daughter of his aunt Anna<sup>[2593]</sup> and the highly respected sacristan, organist, and teacher Tilemann Boden.<sup>[2594]</sup> Grete was Anna Dieckman's sister and the child was named after the two godmothers.

Fornication, just as alcoholism or a breach of the Ten Commandments, was considered a sin that required public penance, which they apparently did when their sin could not be hidden anymore, *i.e.*, well before giving birth. The traditions for public penance for first-timers varied depending on time and area. It is not described in the records what Michael and Anna had to do. Commonly the pastor declared the sin from the pulpit or the sinner had to confess it himself in front of the parishioners and then repent publicly and promise not to do it again. Michael may have had to put on a hairshirt or to sit on the poor sinner bench and he most likely would have had to pay a fine.

What about re-offenders, incorrigible sinners? Well, the Church Order of 1569 was pretty strict on that. The superintendent and the consistory had to be informed and had to administer the punishment. After repeated exhortations, the pastor announced to the congregation that the delinquent is excluded from communion, may not attend Christian meetings except for the sermon and can no longer act as godfather. Then the sexton led the person out of the church. It was the duty of the Amtmann (senior civil servant) to ensure that the offender would not visit weddings, pubs or other gatherings and that whoever was found carousing with him would be punished. The excommunicated person had to stand in a special pew on Sundays and holidays during the time of preaching and prayer and then was led out of the church by the sexton. Should the excommunicated person

become fatally ill, the pastor could hear his confession, grant him absolution and administer the Holy Communion. Should he die before he could obtain absolution he should be buried in the absence of the congregation.

Regarding Anna and Michael pastor Pöhling wrote as shown in Figure 135:

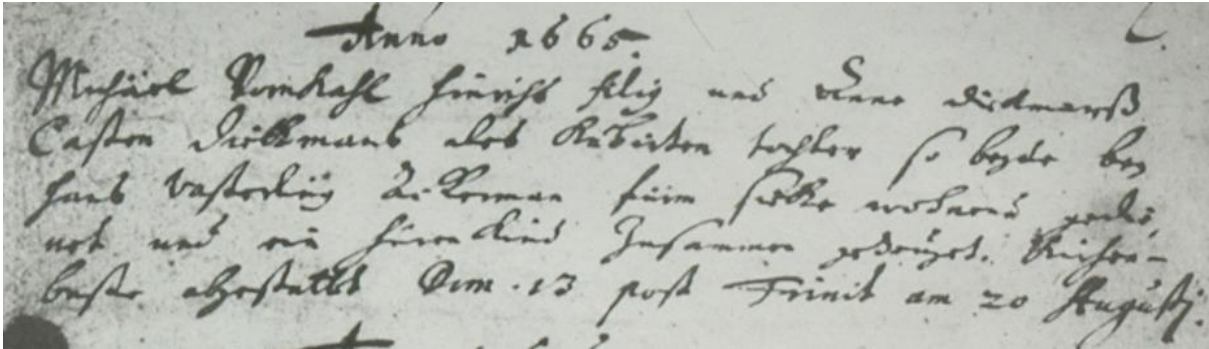


Figure 135. Pastor's comments concerning conception of a child out of wedlock by Michael Vornkahl and Anna Dieckmann as recorded in the Berel Kirchenbuch I, page 125.

Transcription of the handwritten text of Figure 135:

*"Michael Vornkabl Heinrichs filig und Anna Dückmanß Carsten Diekmanß des Kubbirten Tochter so bey Hans Vasterling Ackermann fürm Süke wohnend geburet und ein Hurenkind zusammen gezeuget. Kirchenbuße abgestattet. Dom. 13 post Trinit am 20 August." (1665)*

Translation:

"Michael Vornkahl Heinrichs son and Anna Dückmanß Carsten Diekmanß the cowherd's daughter as at Hans Vasterling Ackermann fürm Süke dwelling committed fornication and begot a whore child together. Public penance performed 13th Sunday after Trinity on 20th August." (1665)

They did not marry after the birth of their daughter but that was not because it was a mere affair. Although both were of legal age, it is more likely that the parents did not consent. Heinrich may not have been amused that his potential daughter-in-law was the daughter of a poor cowherd. This was not the same social class as that of a farmer's son or daughter; little dowry was to be expected. Carsten Diekman, on the other hand, may have asked the classical daddy question, to be answered by so many potential grooms during the past centuries: "How can you sustain a family?" A good question in this case because it is not completely clear whether or not Michael served as a farm hand for Hans Vasterling or whether he lived on the farm of his father. In the first case he would have earned too little to marry and in the latter case he would not have earned anything at all. Regardless of age, the labor of the children on their father's farm was not rewarded with pay, and, as mentioned above, fathers decided what would happen. Hence the saying so many older children may remember: "As long as you put your feet under my table... ." Thus, both parents might have refused to give consent for the marriage. Michael, however, loved his Annecken (diminutive for Anna = Ännchen, Annie). How do we know that? Well, they stayed together and they did it again!

Although they were expecting to do the penance for re-offenders, they were lucky. The record written by pastor Pöhling in 1669 (see Figure 136) is difficult to read, especially the Latin part at the end, but it says that:



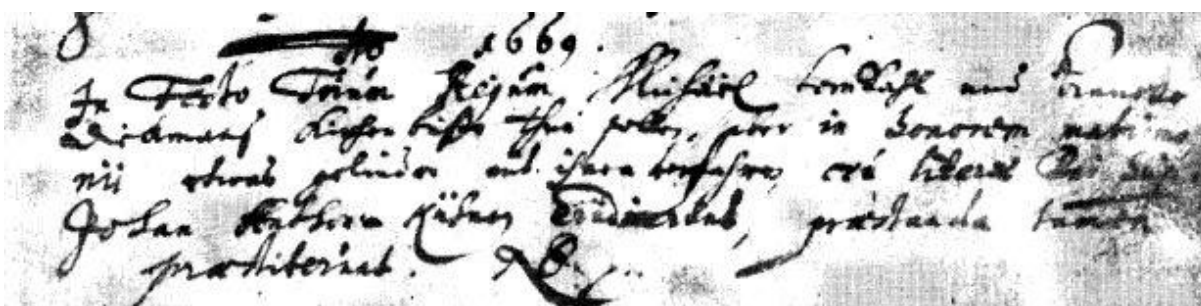


Figure 136.

“in festo trium regum (Epiphany, January 6th) Michael Vornkahl and Annecken Dieckmans performed public penance, which was lessened, however, by the superintendent Johann Anthon Kühne in honor of the matrimony (in honorem matrimonii)” (1669)

indicating that the degree of penance required was the same as for the first-time offense.

This time the parents finally consented, probably under massive pressure from pastor and superintendent. The Latin exclamation, Pax sancte dierum, roughly means “peace be with this holy day.” He might rather have written: “Hallelujah, glad that this sinning has finally come to an end!” As he was about 62 years old it is likely that Heinrich had transferred the farm to Michael, his only son, enabling him to sustain a family. In the “head tax description of the Principality of Braunschweig-Wolfenbüttel” of 1678 Michael is listed as Kotsaß with wife and Heinrich as Leibzüchter with wife and two daughters. This might have been a recording error because there was no female Vornkahl deaths recorded in the Berel parish records that could have been Heinrich’s daughters.

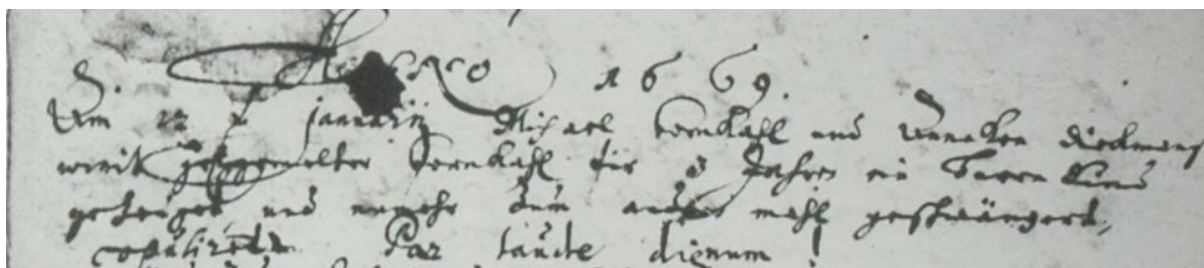


Figure 137. Pastor’s comments concerning conception of a second child out of wedlock by Michael Vornkahl and Anna Dieckmann as recorded in the Berel Kirchenbuch I, page 71.

Transcription of the handwritten text of Figure 137:

“Am 12. Januarii Michael Vornkahl und Anneken Dieckmans so mit vorgeanntem Vornkahl für 3 Jahren ein Hurenkind gezeuget und nunmehr zum ander mahl geschwängert copuliert. Pax sancte dierum!” (1669)

Translation:

“The 12th January Michael Vornkahl and Anneken Dieckmans as with aforementioned Vornkahl 3 years ago a whore child begotten and now for the next time pregnant copulated. Pax sancte dierum!” (1669)

Michael and Anna were married in Berel on 22 Jan <sup>[1669,2563]</sup> and their second daughter, Elisabeth, was born 29 May 1669.<sup>[2493]</sup>

## Heinrich Georg's Story: The Engagement Trap

Ulrich Schröder

Michael and Anna's son, Heinrich Georg (bap. 7 Jun 1683),<sup>[2497]</sup> had the opposite problem. He got engaged to Ilse Büring. Apparently the parents had consented to the marriage, but now he wanted to break off the engagement. We owe this narrative to pastor Gehrman who noted in the parish records in 1706:

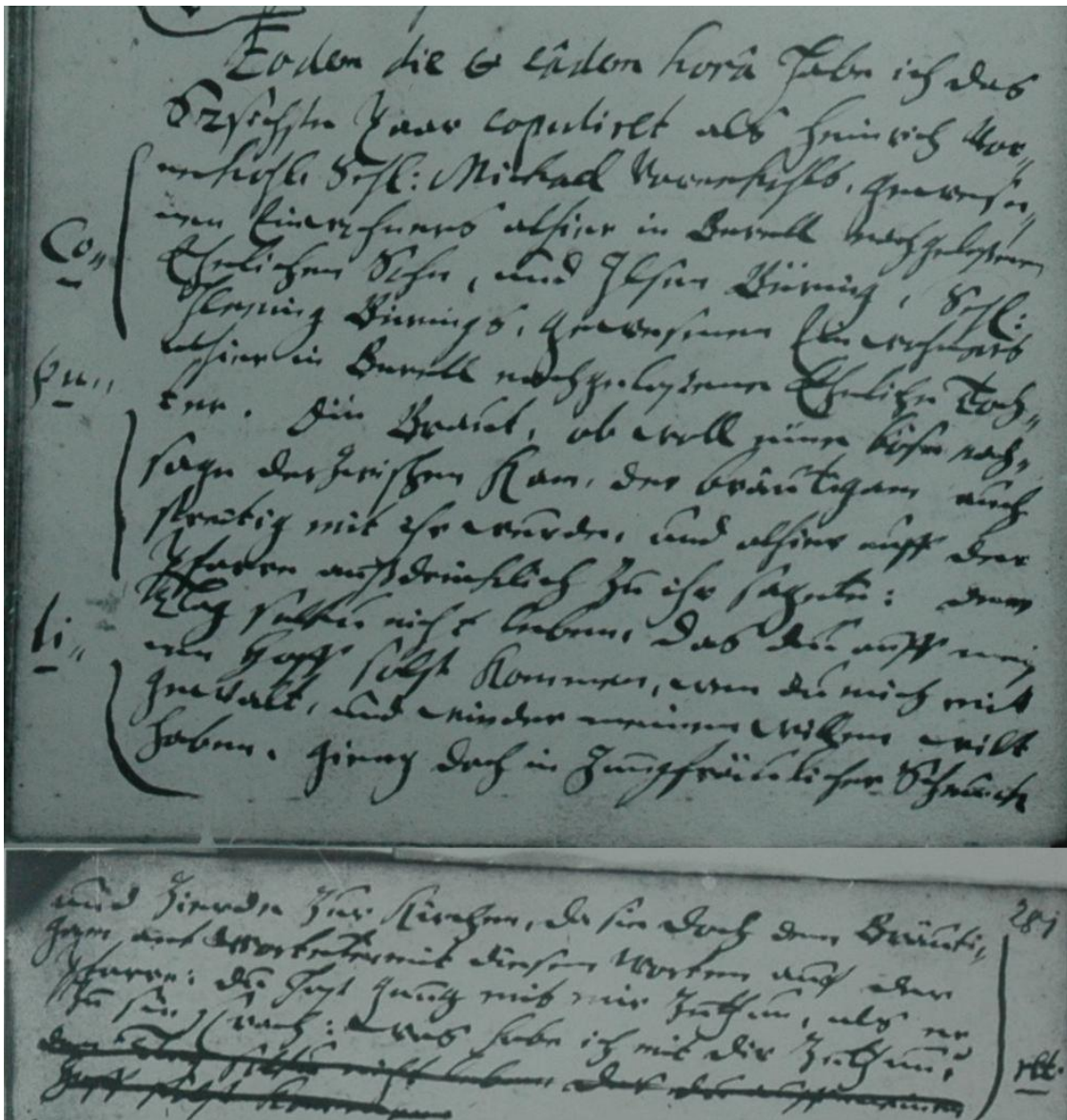


Figure 138. Marriage of Heinrich Vornekahl and Ilse Büring, Berel Kirchenbuch II, p. 280.<sup>[2568]</sup>

“Eodem die & eodem horâ habe ich das 62zigste Paar copuliret als Heinrich Vornekahl sehl: Michael Vornekahl, gewesenener Einwohners alhier von Berrell nachgelassenen ehelichen Sohn und Ilsen Büring, sehl: Henning Büring, gewesenener Einwohners allhier in Berrell nachgelassene eheliche Tochter. Die Braut, obwoll eine böse Nachsage darzwischen kam, der Bräutigam auch streitig mit ihr wurde, und allhier auff der Pfarr außdrücklich zu ihr sagete: Den Tag sollte nicht leben, das du auff meinen Hoff solst kommen, wenn du mich mit Gewalt, und

*wieder meinen Willen wilt haben. Gieng doch in Jungfräulichem Schmuck und Zierde zur Kirchen, da sie doch dem Bräutigam antwortete mit diesen Worten auf der Pfarre: Du hast genug mit mir zu thun, als er zu sie sprach: was habe ich mit dir zu thun ? den Tag sollte nicht leben das Du auff meinen Hoff solst kommen.”*  
(1706)

Translation:

“The same day and same hour [October 19th] I have officiated the wedding of the 62th couple as Heinrich Vornekahl deceased Michael Vornekahl, former resident here at Berrell bereaved legitimate son and Ilsen Büring, deceased Henning Büring, former resident here at Berrell bereaved legitimate daughter. The bride, although malicious gossip had come up and, in addition, the groom was in an open quarrel with her, and here at the rectory explicitly said to her: ‘thou shalt not see the day that thou shalt come in my farmyard if you want to have me forcibly and against my will.’ (She) went nevertheless in virgin array and ornament to church as she replied to the groom with these words at the rectory: ‘You have enough to do with me,’ when he said unto her: ‘What have I to do with thee?’ ”<sup>[2568]</sup> (1706)

So, Heinrich and Ilse were engaged and there was a rumor that Ilse committed what was regarded as adultery those days, *i.e.*, she had another lover. As stated above, an engagement was a binding contract and almost as good as the marriage itself. Adultery was a legitimate reason to break off an engagement. Unfortunately "the cap was not found in the wreath," as the pastor would have put it, *i.e.*, she was not pregnant and her potential lover would have done anything rather than confess. As Heinrich could not prove her adultery and as she apparently was unwilling to cancel the engagement he had to swallow the pill and marry her. He made a scene at the rectory, but the pastor clearly did not support him due to the lack of evidence. If he refused to marry her she could have blocked all further marriage banns of his and sued him. Even if she ultimately consented to break off the engagement this would have been very costly to him, particularly if she claimed that they had premarital intercourse. In that case he would have had to pay wreath money for taking her virginity in addition to the ordinary compensation. Interestingly, wreath money disappeared from the German law books only in 1998. Amazingly, Heinrich and Ilse were married for almost 47 years without killing each other and had five children together.

## Maria’s Story: Proving Your Husband is Dead Before Remarrying

Ulrich Schröder

Michael’s sister Maria had a marriage problem that was not uncommon among females those days. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, 1666, pastor Pöhling recorded her marriage in the Berel Kirchenbuch (see Figure 139).

Transcription of the handwritten text of Figure 139:<sup>[3253]</sup>

*“Am 27 7 bris Everd Martens Grobschmied und Einwohner in Adensted, Ambts Peine und Maria Vornkahl, Hans Eckermann gewesenen schwedischen Reuters nachgelaßene Witwe copuliret. Diese hat einen schriftlichen Schein vom Krüger zu Klaves unter des Pastoris Hand und Siegel gebracht worinnen erwehnter Krüger Henck betheuert, das er mit sei-nen augen gesehen, wie Hans Eckermans auf der Masowitischen grüntze niedergesübelt worden. Solche-nen Schein hat der Hr. Superintendent zum Lichten-berg Jochen Anthon Kühne in Verwahrung.”*



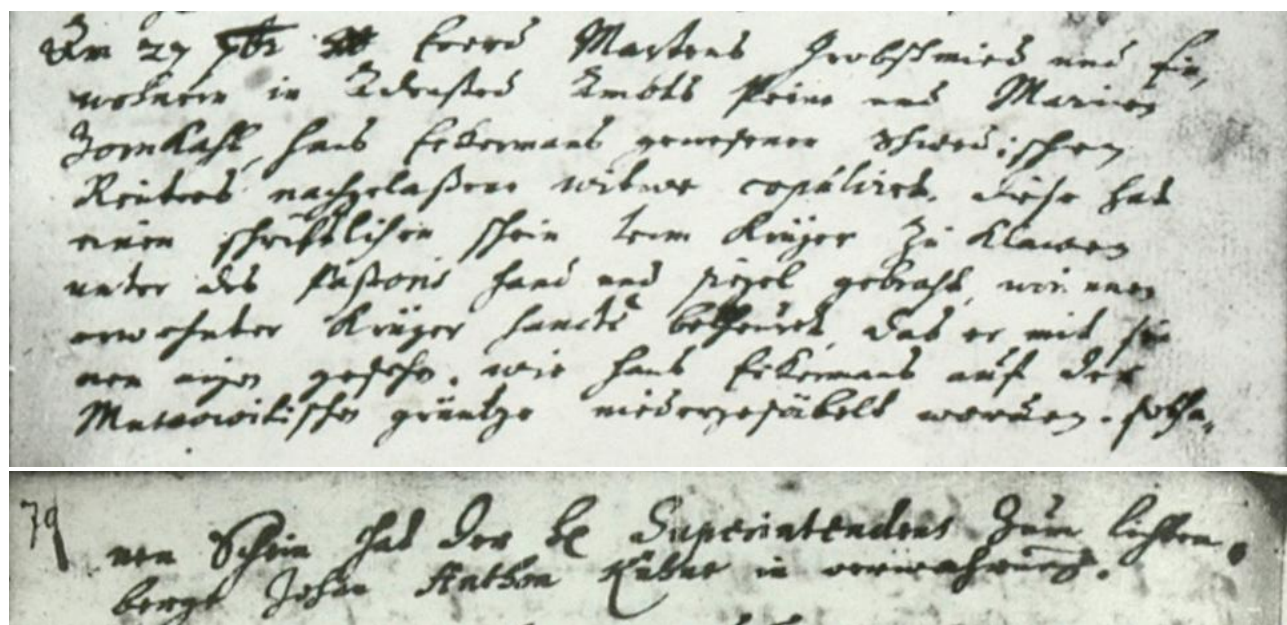


Figure 139. Copy of the marriage record of Maria Vornkahl to Everd Marten from Berel Kirchenbuch I, page 69.<sup>[2562]</sup>

Translation:

"On September 27<sup>th</sup> Everd Martens blacksmith and resident in Adensted,<sup>[3254]</sup> Amt Peine and Maria Vornkahl, Hans Eckerman's<sup>[3255]</sup> former Swedish Rider's widow married. The latter has brought a written testimony from the innkeeper at Klaves under the pastors<sup>[3256]</sup> hand and seal wherein mentioned innkeeper Henck<sup>[3255]</sup> affirmed that he saw with his eyes how Hans Eckerman was sabred down at the Masovian border.<sup>[3257]</sup> Such certificate has the Hr. Superintendent for Lichtenberg, Johann Anthon Kühne in custody. "

Maria Vornkahl had married Hans Eckerman of Klaves, which is nowadays written Clauen, a small village near Hohenhameln. Both grew up during the 30-years-war and, as Hans was probably a later-born son with no farm to inherit, it is not surprising that he joined the military forces to earn enough money for a future with a family. They must have married between 1647 and 1655. How do we know that? Calculating from her death in 21 Oct 1708 at the age of 81 years, 7 months,<sup>[2815]</sup> Maria must have reached her twenties in 1647. Hans had joined the Swedish cavalry and had participated in the Second Nordic War. He must have been killed September/October 1655, as Masovia surrendered after the battle of Nowy Dwór between the Wisla and Narew rivers on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Maria was not informed as there was no public mail system, no telephone, no internet and the Swedes would not send messengers to the families of the thousands of dead soldiers. Because it sometimes happened that a missing husband unexpectedly returned home, even after a decade, the Church order required that a wife prove that her husband was dead before being allowed to marry again in order to avoid bigamy.

However, Eckermann and Henck were comrades and it is likely that Maria also knew Henck. The war ended in 1660/61 and Henck probably retired after the unpleasant experience and returned home. The compensation he received possibly helped him to become an innkeeper with a steady income. He most likely visited Maria to inform her that her husband had died. A wife commonly lived at her husband's residence, so they must have met in Clauen where she lived with her in-laws. She then returned to Berel to live with her parents, Heinrich Vornkahl and Margarethe (Grete) nee Möhlen, suggesting she and Hans did not have children. If they had children, the children would have inherited their father's property, in which case Maria's in-laws and the children's



god-fathers would have taken care of the family. Hans did not leave enough to support her in the future and thus she moved back to her parents.

It was not easy in those days for a woman over thirty to find a new husband. The most likely candidate would be a widower with children. If we look through the parish records we frequently find that a widower with minors married again shortly after the death of his previous wife. Someone had to take care of the kids and the household while he was working. In Maria's case presumably family members served as matchmakers. Those days family still meant more than just parents, grandparents, kids and siblings. In a society with distinct social and economic classes, it was essential for survival to be integrated into a social network beyond consanguinity.

Maria's maternal ancestors, the Dieckmanns, were livestock herders. Hans Bohlen, the husband of Maria's cousin Maria Boden, was a shepherd's hand at Burgdorf. It is safe to assume that the shepherds of the area knew each other and that Hans Bohlen thus knew Heinrich Schütte, the sheep master of Adenstedt, Amt Peine, today part of Lahstedt and about 12 km from Berel. Schütte was acquainted with the master blacksmith, Eberhardt (Everdt) Martens, a widower who had just lost his 35-year-old wife Margarethe Ernst in childbirth on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1666.<sup>[2811,2812]</sup> In 1653, Everdt had married Margarethe Dannenbärgs,<sup>[2809]</sup> and, as he was already 42 years old then, this may not have been his first wife. It is also not clear if there was another wife between the two Margarethes. Thus, Maria Vornkahl was at least his third wife and it is likely that there were minor children. One of Everdt's sons was already old enough in 1666 to be a godfather for Schütte's son,<sup>[2806]</sup> and his daughter was married in 1670.<sup>[2810]</sup>

Before she could marry Everdt, Maria had to prove that her husband was dead. She contacted innkeeper Henck who testified before pastor Johannes Neumeier<sup>[3256]</sup> that he was eye-witness (hearsay would not have counted) to the death of Hans Eckermann at the Masovian border. The pastor wrote the story down, sealed the letter and passed the document on to the superintendent in Lichtenberg, who in turn authorized the pastor in Berel to perform the wedding. They were married 27 Sep 1666.<sup>[2562]</sup> Together, the couple had at least one son, Christoff, whose godfather was Heinrich Schütte,<sup>[2807]</sup> one daughter, Elisabeth,<sup>[2808]</sup> and one stillborn daughter.<sup>[2813]</sup> Maria died in Adenstedt in 1708 at the age of 81 (*i.e.*, born 1627),<sup>[2815]</sup> Everdt in 1691 at the age of 80<sup>[2814]</sup> (*i.e.*, born 1611). He thus was only 4 years younger than Maria's father and was 16 years older than she.

## Vornkahls in Poland

Konrad of Masowia, in about the 13th century, hired the knights of the German Order to Christianize the Pruzzians (Prussians) and, as well, to occupy and colonize their territory. The Order did so and founded the town and castle Thorn (Toruń nowadays) near the Weichsel river. Very early, the town, like Hildesheim, Braunschweig, Lüneburg, Hamburg, Bremen and Lübeck, became a member of the Hanse federation (Hanseatic League) which was one of the links between Torun and the areas our Vornkahl ancestors are from. Another link is the place of origin of the colonists. A number of them came from Westphalia, but some also probably came from Eastphalia (Brunswick and Hildesheim). Albrecht of Brunswick was a Hochmeister of the German Order at that time and it is likely that he brought fellow countrymen with him.

Among those people who settled in Thorn, there was a Vornkal. On April 10th, 1467, Niclos Vornkal bought a house from a Traude Beckerin (probably the widow or daughter of a baker) in the Czegengasse.<sup>[3258]</sup> Although the town became Polish in 1466 the official language was still German (High German even, although not in its modern form). Niclos is the Polish variant of Nicolaus. (Speaking of Nicolaus, Nicolaus Copernicus was born in Thorn on St. Annengasse in 1473.)

It is not clear if the Vornkal family came with the settlers or with the Hanse. The records indicate that the family was free and that they had citizen rights in Thorn, otherwise they would have not been allowed to buy property within the town. It is very likely that N[iclas] Vornkal was a merchant. According to the Kämmererbuch der Stadt Thorn (treasure chamber books) in 1461 he owed tax or duty for beer that he either was receiving



Figure 140. Plan of Thorn from 17<sup>th</sup> century engraving by Merian.

from or shipping to Danzig.<sup>[3259]</sup> The name Vornkal is mentioned in another document in 1468, but without a first name. In 1462 apparently there was a Beede for the king for a war. In the Kämmereibuch we find a P[eter] Vornkal and again N[iclas]. Following his name is the term mockerer, for which we have not found the meaning. The streets where the Vornkals had property in Thorn are shown on the map in Figure 140.