



Our Family

by

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The Birth of "Our Family"

It all started with a burglary. After the death of my mother-in-law in 1976, we brought all papers, letters and documents we found to our house, to be gone through and sorted out at our leisure. We only finally managed to deal with this in 1983/84 after our "kind" burglar had strewn our complete household including all our papers all over the house. During sorting to ascertain what we had lost, the family papers came into our hands again and attracted our attention. We found a photocopy of the Marriage Certificate of our great-grandparents Salomon and Jeanette Scheidt of Mainstockheim, a photocopy of a birth certificate of their 9th child, Raphael Scheidt, our grandfather (we had no knowledge that there had been at least another eight), a very short family tree of our branch of the Sahlmann family of Burghaslach, prepared probably in the late 1920s or early 1930s, a copy of a will of great-great-grandfather Joseph Sahlmann of Burghaslach, a typewritten copy of a 1798 "Schutzbrief" (letter of protection) and an old photograph of a handwritten document. Luckily we were still brought up to read the old German script and subsequently to transcribe and translate any documents found. To our utter amazement the copy of the hand written document turned out to be a Deed of Conveyance of a house (including stables, well and baking oven) in Burghaslach, sold in 1783 by the rulers of Castell-Ruedenhausen to the Jew Schlom, our great-great-great-grandfather. We also found the Death Certificate for Samuel Gutmann, our grandfather, who had been born in Sugenheim and was deported from Nuremberg to Theresienstadt in September 1942 and died there a few days after his arrival.

We wrote to various villages but did not get any replies. So finally we decided in 1986 to go to Germany and visit the areas where the families originated. Thus awoke our interest in genealogy and in the Jewish history of the localities where the families had lived for some centuries. Since then we have been searching in the villages and cemeteries of Unter- and Mittelfranken (Lower and Middle or Central Franconia), taking photographs and personally digging around and turning up information and documents in numerous libraries and archives in Germany, Israel and America.

With the information gathered during our trips we have gradually been able to piece together some histories of our families which gave birth to "Our Family", four volumes covering ancestors, descendants and the communities of

1) The Scheidts of Mainstockheim

2) The Sahlmanns and Rosenblatts of Burghaslach

3) The Gutmanns and Schloss' of Sugenheim, recently updated and expanded to The Jewish Community of Sugenheim

and

4) The Ephraims, Levys and Alterthums of Province Posen and Berlin and the Koenigs of East Prussia and Berlin

Thea Ruth Skyte