

## The night when the Dreisbachs left Wittgenstein

### Part 1. Documented reports

*There is so much archival and published information available relative to Simon Dreisbach's final period in Wittgenstein that we have chosen to begin this account as a narrative written in the present tense. Information on sources used will be found in the **Research Notes** section.*

#### **Out of the dark – an "Adieu"**

It is late in the evening of May 15, 1743. A young man is walking among the darkened houses of Oberndorf, the village he grew up in. He is Adam Dreisbach, twenty years old, second son of Simon Dreisbach. At the house known locally as *Grosse*<sup>1</sup> he stops at the window and says, "Adieu". Inside, Gilbert Wunderlich is in bed. He is thirty years old, is married and has a son. Wunderlich recognizes the voice and knows immediately what lies behind Adam's brief farewell. The Dreisbach family has chosen this night to begin the long journey to Pennsylvania.

Wunderlich gets up and makes his way along the dark village roads, crossing the little bridge over the Oberndorfer Bach and following the uphill path to the *Am Aberge* farmhouse, which stands alone on



*Fig. 1. Detail from the "Forstatlas" of 1739, showing the Aberg hill in the foreground, and the Oberndorfer Bach flowing eastward through the village of Oberndorf. The arrow indicates the approximate location of Simon Dreisbach's house, "Am Aberge" (no longer standing). Documented since ca. 1610, it was situated on the north-facing slope of the Aberg hill but, standing apart, it was somehow missed by the Count's mapmakers. In order to leave secretly, the Dreisbachs would have headed west, probably following the road on the left. Photo: Marcia Dreisbach Falconer.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Today it is called "Six" and has the address, Zum Hollerstrauch 5.

<sup>2</sup> The *Forstatlas* is a volume containing a unique set of hand-drawn maps documenting the forests and villages of Wittgenstein-Wittgenstein, and is in the Princely Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein Archive in Bad Laasphe.

the slope above the stream. There is no danger of alarming close neighbors, for there are none. That the Dreisbachs were planning a departure must have been known or at least suspected by many in the village, but the actual time of departure can only have been known to a few. Not until the following morning will Count Friedrich's district official (*Schultheiss*) learn of the Dreisbachs' departure.

Wunderlich comes to the Dreisbach farmhouse and sees that Simon and his son Jost are busy with their preparations. At first his arrival causes alarm among the three men (two relatives and a villager) who are helping the Dreisbachs get ready for departure. They suggest he take some of the things the Dreisbachs are leaving behind, and Wunderlich trundles home with a wheelbarrow containing an iron kettle, a tub and a sauerkraut vat, compensation for various as yet unpaid blacksmith work he had done recently for Simon. Then Wunderlich goes back to *Am Aberge*, only to find that the whole family has just left.<sup>3</sup>

Gilbert Wunderlich will have more to tell about events at Simon's house that night, in answer to further questioning, but first we must see what measures the Count's local official, the *Schultheiss* (we shall call him the sheriff), takes.

### **The morning of 16<sup>th</sup> May – Sheriff Jung goes out to investigate.**

The sheriff for the large Feudinggen district, Herman Jung, lives in Feudinggen. The news of the Dreisbachs' unauthorized departure reaches him on the following morning. As the sheriff, he knows there are two principal sides to this event. One is Simon Dreisbach's act of disobedience to his feudal lord – leaving the territory without permission, and thereby depriving the Count of his 'rightful' income in fees, goods and manual labor. That is a matter for the Count's judiciary. Sheriff Jung is not expected to chase after the fugitives, but it is his duty to gather as much information as possible. Who helped the Dreisbachs? Which way did they go? Did they hide anything of value that the Count can impound?

The other aspect is that of appointing a new householder, and the necessary assessments leading up to it. Here too, Sheriff Jung has his work laid out for him. The state of the abandoned house and lands must be inspected. Has anything been damaged or stolen? The house and out-buildings must be closed. Jung must then go back to Feudinggen and write his report, to be carried to the castle this very day.

Jung's first step is to get himself to Oberndorf, northwest of Feudinggen, and inspect the now abandoned *Am Aberge* house and property. Like Gilbert Wunderlich the night before, he crosses the Oberndorfer Bach and follows the road to the house on the slope of the Aberg hill. There are no animals. He sees that the interior of the house is in disarray, but decides not to mention this in his first report. He will surely be sent back again to make a proper inventory. Jung closes up the house and goes back into the village to continue his investigation.

### **What the sheriff learns: The group is larger than he had thought. A single woman and a young family have also left Oberndorf, but at separate times.**

Sheriff Jung represents the Count's authority at the village level. Some of those he questions may be cooperative and tell what they know or surmise. Others will be more cautious and not give information that could lead to the Dreisbach group being apprehended.

In Oberndorf, in addition to the *Am Aberge* property, the Count has feudal title to nine other houses. The sheriff goes about, asking his questions of their inhabitants until he is satisfied that he has extracted as much basic information as he can get. His report on the emigrant Simon Dreisbach family will be succinct: the Dreisbachs have taken with them "all their movable things" and also a cow, a calf, a horse and two carts.

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<sup>3</sup> From Wunderlich's statement in holding WA D 53, "Dreisbach, Simon / dessen Gut betr." (concerning the farm property of Simon Dreisbach), in the Princely Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein Archive, Bad Laasphe.

Jung learns something more. The eldest Dreisbach son, i.e. Jost, "also took along a serving-girl from Oberndorf". The sheriff learns that she comes from the village of Glashütte and is the daughter of Johannes Wolf. Perhaps he hears this at the house in Oberndorf where the young woman was working, or another informant may have supplied this information. For Jost Dreisbach's American descendants this is a puzzling piece of news to which we must return. Herman Jung, however, will give her only brief mention in his report as she is of little economic interest to the Count.

Jung is more interested in the young family of Conrad Wied and Magdalena nee Hackler. At the time of the baptism of their daughter Maria Elisabeth on 5 November 1742, they had been living in Oberndorf, presumably in the house called *Bäckers*.<sup>4</sup> There Jung can question Conrad's mother, Anna Elisabeth (Weber) Wied, and his step-father, Johan Jost Hackler. It may be here that the sheriff learns of the chest containing clothing which seems to be the only thing the young Wied family has left behind. Jung also learns that the little family had recently moved from Oberndorf to Weide, to the house called *Hacklers*,<sup>5</sup> where Conrad's wife, Magdalena, had been born.

Thus, when Jung has finished his investigations in Oberndorf he heads south to Weide to question Magdalena Wied's mother. Anna Maria Hackler, a widow for the past seven years, is firm; there is no such chest at her house. She refuses to say to whom Conrad Wied can have entrusted it. Sheriff Jung is no match for her and has learned of nothing that could help fill the Count's coffers.

From Weide the sheriff goes straight home to Feudingingen and hurriedly writes up the events of this unusual day. He will add one more detail: he thinks it is probable that the Dreisbachs and Wieds went via the border town of Lützel, and from there headed for Cologne.

**Approximate translation of the text shown in Fig. 2, the report Schultheiss Jung sent to the Count's administration in Castle Wittgenstein, on 16 May 1743.**

After the usual highly stylized salutation to the Director and the Councilors of the Count's Administrative and Judicial Chamber (four lines not shown on this photo), the letter addresses these "High governing gentlemen (*Hoch gebietente herrn*)" and begins:

*I must hereby humbly report that this morning I learned that Simon Dreisbach of Oberndorf this past night fled from his house with his family and all his movable things, taking along a cow and a calf and a horse and two carts, in sum all that he had, and his eldest son also took along a female servant from Oberndorf who is the daughter of Johannes Wolf of Glashütte; further, Conrad Wied of Weide had already absconded yesterday in the afternoon from the Hackler house in Oberndorf, leaving the territory with his wife; however he left behind nothing but a chest with clothing, concerning which his mother-in-law refuses to say where he can have left such a chest; and it is probable that the two runaway subjects (of the Count – i.e. Dreisbach and Wied) took the way via Lützel and then through the territory that is governed by Cologne. This morning I was in Weide and Oberndorf. I have personally inspected such things and closed up the Dreisbach house.*

*Feudingingen, 16 May 1743*

*most humbly*

*Herman Junck [Jung] Schultheiss of Feudingingen*

<sup>4</sup> The present address of *Bäckers* in Oberndorf is Siegener Strasse 49.

<sup>5</sup> The present address of this house is Obere Weide 7.

Sein gebieter Herr

Habe mir bey muthwilligst Schreyen, solten  
 das ich diese mangel in beschreibung gekommen  
 das der Herr Herr Schreyer zu Oberndorf; diese  
 Abgangent nach; aus seinem Haus mit der Herr  
 und alle seine Mobilie unterwisen; und hat  
 auf mich seine Kiste und ein Korb und ein Pferd  
 und diese kam sama alle was er noch gehabt  
 mit genommen; und sein großer Hofe hat auch  
 eine Dinstung von Oberndorf mit genommen;  
 welche das gesammte veltet; Geyster in Ingels  
 Gütts ist; und Conrad veltet in der veltet  
 veltet aus der Herr Herr Schreyer zu Oberndorf  
 unterwisen ist auch gehen; nach mittag; an dem Land  
 mit seiner Frau unterwisen; welche aber nicht gehabt  
 als einen Korb; mit Kinde; welche aber die  
 Schwinger miltre in der veltet nicht wil gehen  
 so veltet sein gebracht; Gütts ist aber der miltre  
 das die Gütts unterwisen unterwisen; aber die Kiste  
 und diese das Kiste für den gemacht; welche ich  
 das diese mangel in der veltet und Oberndorf geht  
 und selbst in ab dem sein genommen; und das die Herr  
 für gebracht;

findung 16. May 1743

muthwilligst  
 Herrman Jensch & Schreyer von findung

Fig 2. Schultheiss lung's report of 16 May 1743 to the Count's administrative authorities, inholding D53, Princely Sayn-Wltgenstein-Hohenstein Archive, Bad Laasphe. Photo: Heinrich Imhof



**More details emerge: Simon wants to get an extra horse for his second cart, and departure is delayed.**

Gilbert Wunderlich was later questioned by another sheriff, Schultheiss Schaumann, and Schaumann's report was inserted into the minutes of the Count's judicial and administrative chamber of 2 September 1743: *Dreisbach had already wished to leave the night before, and to this end he wanted yet another horse in addition to that from his own estate-in-fee, but since he was not able to get one, the departure was delayed a day, until the following night, when Dreisbach's son first took one cart full of goods across the border and then came back with the horse, and fetched the other loaded cart, at which time Dreisbach and his wife and other children went along.*<sup>6</sup>

**Part 2. What happened when? A possible order of events****We can now put together a rough chronology of the departure of the Dreisbachs and the Wieds.**

**Early 1743:** In various parts of Wittgenstein-Wittgenstein there are a number of single men, and also some families, who are planning to immigrate to Pennsylvania in the spring. Many of them will travel in groups, and some of these groups, converging in Rotterdam in late spring or early summer, will take passage on the ship "Lydia", just as the Simon Dreisbach family does. Thus far researchers have identified some twelve other Wittgensteiners on the "Lydia", though only a few are from nearby Feudingen, and the others are from more distant parts of the territory.

The Dreisbachs' plans were surely long in the making. We have no indication when the decision became final, but practical planning and the final preparations must have gone on for months. The Wied family probably joined the emigration plans after the Dreisbachs had started making their plans. The mere practical aspects of undertaking such a long journey with young children can have been daunting. Though young Simon Jr. was thirteen, George was still nine, and would have his tenth birthday during the trip; John was eight and Anna Catharina had just turned five.

**Why did the Wieds come along?**

We know that this young family had no house or land of their own, and had been living with in-laws. Their main motivation for emigrating was probably the hope of one day having their own house and land in Pennsylvania.

**14 May 1743: the exodus of the Wieds from Oberndorf in the afternoon.**

Apart from sheriff Jung's report of 16 May, there is no mention of the Wieds' departure in the other archival documents concerning Simon Dreisbach and the property he had abandoned. Being propertyless, Conrad Wied was of no significant interest to the Count and his administration. Sheriff Jung writes in his report that Wied and his wife had already left one day before the Dreisbachs. They started not from Weide where they had been living, but from the Hackler house in Oberndorf, where Conrad had grown up. This suggests that the original plan was for the two families to travel together, and that it was better for the Wieds to leave from Oberndorf than from Weide which lay a few kilometers farther south.

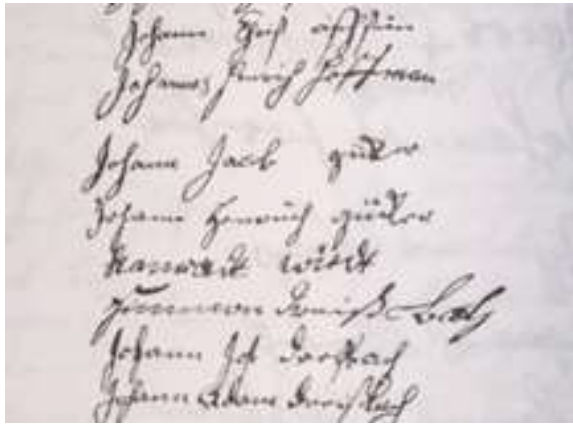
By the afternoon of the 14<sup>th</sup>, Simon Dreisbach must have realized that he would not be able to procure a second horse. The Wieds were certainly informed of this, and for whatever reason, it was decided that they should set off as planned. The sheriff's report mentions only Conrad Wied and his wife, but he is silent

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<sup>6</sup> Author's translation, minutes of session of 2 September 1743, holding WA D 53, in Princely Archive, Bad Laasphe.

about the baby daughter. As there is no record of her death in Wittgenstein, it may be assumed that she traveled with her parents.

That the Dreisbachs and Wieds did connect and travel together receives some rather late confirmation from the three lists of male adult passengers on the ship "Lydia", which arrived in Philadelphia on 19 September 1743.<sup>7</sup> On 20 September these adult males were escorted to the Philadelphia Court House to abjure their loyalty to their former rulers and swear fealty to the British government. In all three lists, Conrad Wied's name appears next to that of Simon Dreisbach, as exemplified in *Fig. 3*.



*Fig. 3: A portion of the signatures of the "Lydia's" adult male passengers written at the Court House in Philadelphia on 20 September 1743 when swearing loyalty to the British government. The eight names shown here have been identified as part of a larger group of young men and families on board the "Lydia" who were from the territory Wittgenstein-Wittgenstein, the southernmost of the two Wittgenstein Counties. The last four signatures here are those of Konrad Wiedt, Simmon Dreißbach, Johann Jost Dreisbach and Johann Adam Dreisbach. Detail of second list (99B). Photo: Marcia Dreisbach Falconer, detail of List 99 B.*

### **15 May 1743: The enigma of co-traveler Anna Elisabeth Wolf**

We have seen that the sheriff reported that Jost Dreisbach had "taken along" a female servant from Oberndorf who was the daughter of Johannes Wolf of the village of Glashütte. Questions arise. Was there a romantic attachment here? Did she go with Jost when he left earlier in the evening with some of the Dreisbachs' baggage, or did she go later when Jost had returned and the whole Dreisbach family left together? We know the young woman's name – Anna Elisabeth Wolf, and we know that Jost Dreisbach's wife was called Elizabeth. Did she become the mother of Jost Dreisbach's many children? We have some answers, but not all.

With the generous help of Jochen Karl Mehldau of Karlsruhe, Germany, parts of this young woman's story have emerged. Her father was a blacksmith from neighboring Hessen who married Gertrud Wied of Oberndorf. The family lived in Oberndorf for a few years, but by the time Anna Elisabeth was born in late 1718, they were living in Glashütte. Baptized Juliane in November 1718, she went by the name of Anna Elisabeth. The last trace of her in the Wittgenstein records was in the house tally of the Count's subjects in 1741. Blacksmith Wolf died in 1742 and his widow Gertrud nee Wied lived on in Glashütte till her death in 1747. Anna Elisabeth was apparently working in one of the households in Oberndorf. We can deduce from her family connections that her contact network in Oberndorf was large, for she had four Wied uncles there and numerous cousins. Moreover, a deceased Wied uncle had been the second husband of Margaret Dreisbach, the mother of Simon Dreisbach, and had even been the 'houseman' of *Am Aberge* until his early death. There were opportunities and contacts aplenty to further the acquaintance of Jost Dreisbach and

<sup>7</sup> R. B. Strassburger and W. J. Hincke, *Pennsylvania German Pioneers, A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia From 1727 to 1808*, 3 vol.s, Pennsylvania German Society, Norristown, PA, 1934. List 99 A is the Captain's list of the "Lydia's" adult male passengers, dated 19 September 1743. Lists B and C are two sets of the same men's signatures, though not always in the exact same order as List A. These signatures were made at the Philadelphia Court House in conjunction with the swearing of fealty to the British government. Reproductions of the actual signatures are found in Vol. 3, pp. 354-357.

Anna Elisabeth Wolf. In May 1743 she was 24½ years old, and Jost was four months from turning 22 – a not unreasonable difference in age.

There is another reason that may have induced Anna Elisabeth Wolf to emigrate with the Dreisbachs and the Wieds. She was a first cousin of Conrad Wied. Her mother, Gertrud Wied, was the sister of Conrad Wied's father with whom she had grown up in the house "Bäckers" in Oberndorf. Conrad Wied was not much older than his cousin Anna Elisabeth Wolf, who could have been a good help to his wife and little daughter on the journey.

Whatever the relationship to Jost Dreisbach may have been, Anna Elisabeth Wolf did not become his wife. Jost Dreisbach's children were born between 11 January 1750 and 1 April 1779, and there is no indication that he had more than one wife. The mother of these children was probably born ca. 1731-33 if she had her last child in April 1779. In that year Anna Elisabeth Wolf, born in November 1718, would have been about sixty.

### **The long day of 15 May 1743 and Jost Dreisbach's two exits.**

The Conrad Wied family having already left Oberndorf on the previous day, Simon Dreisbach was perhaps still making unsuccessful attempts to obtain a second horse. At *Am Aberge*, certain 'helpers' who knew of the imminent departure had arrived. Two of them were Simon's young Sassmannshausen cousins, Jost and Tebes Sassmannshausen, both still unmarried. They were the sons of Simon's uncle Arndt Sassmannshausen who lived in Amtshausen, north of Oberndorf. The third was one Johannes Weygand, a landless inhabitant of Oberndorf. Later developments indicate that he was eager to become the next houseman of *Am Aberge*,

At some time before nightfall, Jost Dreisbach made an initial trip "across the border". This is known from the testimony of Gilbert Wunderlich, the Oberndorf villager who had heard Adam Dreisbach's "*Adieu*" and had then got up from bed and gone to the *Am Aberge* house. Many weeks later, during the official investigation concerning the abandoned *Am Aberge* property, Wunderlich was questioned by a sheriff Schuman, who recorded his statement. Here Wunderlich says,

*"Dreisbach's son first took one cart full of goods across the border and then came back with the horse, and fetched the other loaded cart, at which time Dreisbach and his wife and other children went along."*<sup>8</sup>

Thus, Wunderlich did not see Jost Dreisbach's first exit with the horse and cart, nor did he see the exit of the whole family which had taken place, as we have seen, during his brief absence. He makes no mention at all of Anna Elisabeth Wolf. Sheriff Jung, however, reported that Jost had taken her along. Wunderlich may never have actually seen her. He had no apparent direct contact with either Simon Dreisbach or Jost, at *Am Aberge*, but spoke only with the 'helpers'. He does not even mention the rest of the family, who were probably inside the house while he was there. If Anna Elisabeth Wolf was in the house with them, he would not have known it. Wunderlich returned to the house too late to see the family's departure, and knew only what the 'helpers' told him.

Can Jost have taken Anna Elisabeth Wolf with him when he left with the first cart? We do not know, but there is reason to speculate. First of all, the distance to what Wunderlich called "the border" cannot have been very far if Jost could cover it three times in one evening. The border between Wittgenstein-Wittgenstein and the neighboring Principality of Nassau-Siegen was too far away for that to be possible.

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<sup>8</sup> Statement recorded in the minutes of the Chamber session of 2 September 1743 in holding WA D ...

There was, however, another type of border within Wittgenstein-Wittgenstein, one which separated the territory's three administrative districts. Such a border lay only a short distance to the west of Oberndorf, separating the Feudingén District to which Oberndorf belonged from the Erndtebrück District. As can be seen in *Fig. 1*, the Dreisbachs could take the road which goes west (which was the shortest way to the district border) without having to pass any of the other houses in Oberndorf.

That road led through the forest to a major north-south artery, along which lay one of the Count's manor farms, Ludwigseck. Here Jost Dreisbach had worked for a while in 1741, according to that year's house-count of the Oberndorf inhabitants.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that Jost took Anna Elisabeth along with him on his first exit, leaving her to stay with the first cart while he went back to *Am Aberge* for the other cart and of course the rest of the family.



*Fig. 4. Meadow at the former manor farm, Ludwigseck, looking east from behind the manor house. The Benfe stream is a dark curved line along the forest edge. Beyond the farthest hill, at a short distance, lies Am Aberge and Oberndorf. Photo: Marcia Dreisbach Falconer.*

Anna Elisabeth had a brother who was known to have been employed at Ludwigseck for what may have been a long period, though we do not know the exact length of his service there. He was three years

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<sup>9</sup> In the 1741 tally of the Count's subjects in Oberndorf, we find a remark added to the listing of 21-year old Johann Jost Dreisbach saying that he was employed at Ludwigseck until 1742. These words were later crossed out, indicating that Jost did not complete his period of service there. Information supplied by Heinrich Imhof during a visit to the Princely Archive in Bad Laasphe, 2012.



younger than Anna Elisabeth and would have been almost twenty-two in May 1743.<sup>10</sup> He was thus too young to have any responsible position at Ludwigseck, but was the same age as Jost, with whom he may even have worked in 1741.

### 16 May 1743 – The Wittgenstein Charcoal Road.

We lack detailed documentation on where the Dreisbachs went when they left Oberndorf. Their first stop was somewhere "across the border", perhaps in the early hours after midnight, at the unidentified place to which Jost had already taken the first cart. There they may have found Anna Elisabeth Wolf waiting, if she had indeed gone along with Jost and the first cart.

The westward road they had followed from *Am Aberge* through the forested hills would have been used by the Count's subjects in Oberndorf, Rüppershausen and other villages who were required to do obligatory work at the Ludwigseck cattle farm, forge and sawmill. It led to a valley whose main features – valley, stream and road – were oriented north-south. At the edge of the forest the road crossed the Benfe stream and traversed a meadow before going up a rise to encounter the *Wittgensteiner Kohlenstrasse* or Charcoal Road (Fig. 4) near which the manor house of Ludwigseck stood. This important artery was a commercial route used for transporting charcoal produced in Wittgenstein to the forges of Siegerland.



Fig. 5. 18<sup>th</sup> century roads near Am Aberge. The dotted blue and red line shows the approximate route from the Am Aberge house (marked with a star) to the Wittgenstein Charcoal Road and the manor farm Ludwigseck, marked in green. The blue trace is their presumed way south on the Charcoal Road, which would ultimately bring them to the city of Siegen. The rumor that the Dreisbachs went via the town of Lützel (marked in green) may have been a Dreisbach ploy to foil attempts to follow them.<sup>11</sup>

Having joined the Wied family at some appointed place, the group most likely turned south on the Wittgenstein Charcoal Road (*Wittgensteiner Kohlenstraße*), passing through the village of Benfe on the way to Siegen, the capital city of Nassau-Siegen. There they could join the ancient *Brüderstraße*, which crossed Europe from Leipzig in the east to Antwerp in Brabant in the west, and which would take them to Cologne. The route between Siegen and Cologne appears to be straight in our Figures 6 and 7, but at ground level it has many small bends and twists. The Dreisbachs and Wieds would have needed a good number of days to walk that distance.

<sup>10</sup> Genealogical table of this Wolf family, *Nachfahrenliste Wolf, Johannes 1678~*, was kindly forwarded by its author, Jochen Karl Mehldau, on 6 July 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Detail of map on p. 238 of *Erndtebrück, ein Heimatbuch des obersten Edertales*, Vol. 2, Erndtebrück, Jagdgenossenschaft Erndtebrück, 1977.

The young Wieds would have been glad for the long experience of Simon Dreisbach who, in his time as a carter had gained acquaintance with the major roads, and who had taken at least one load of bark from Wittgenstein to Cologne in 1725/6, as described in DERR no. 6. We have also seen that Simon had traveled to the city of Siegen at least once in the early 1730s (DERR no. 12, p. 5). We can be sure that the Dreisbachs' itinerary had been planned in detail months in advance.



Fig. 6. Historic roads the Dreisbach group may have followed to reach the Rhine River at Cologne. Route 16 on the right is the Wittgensteiner Kohlenstraße or Charcoal Road. The Dreisbachs would have joined it a few kilometers below Erndtebrück, somewhere near Ludwigseck, and followed it down the Benfe valley and then on to Siegen. At Siegen they could take route no. 6, the ancient and well-traveled road to Cologne (Köln), the Brüderstraße, originally a pilgrim road.<sup>12</sup>

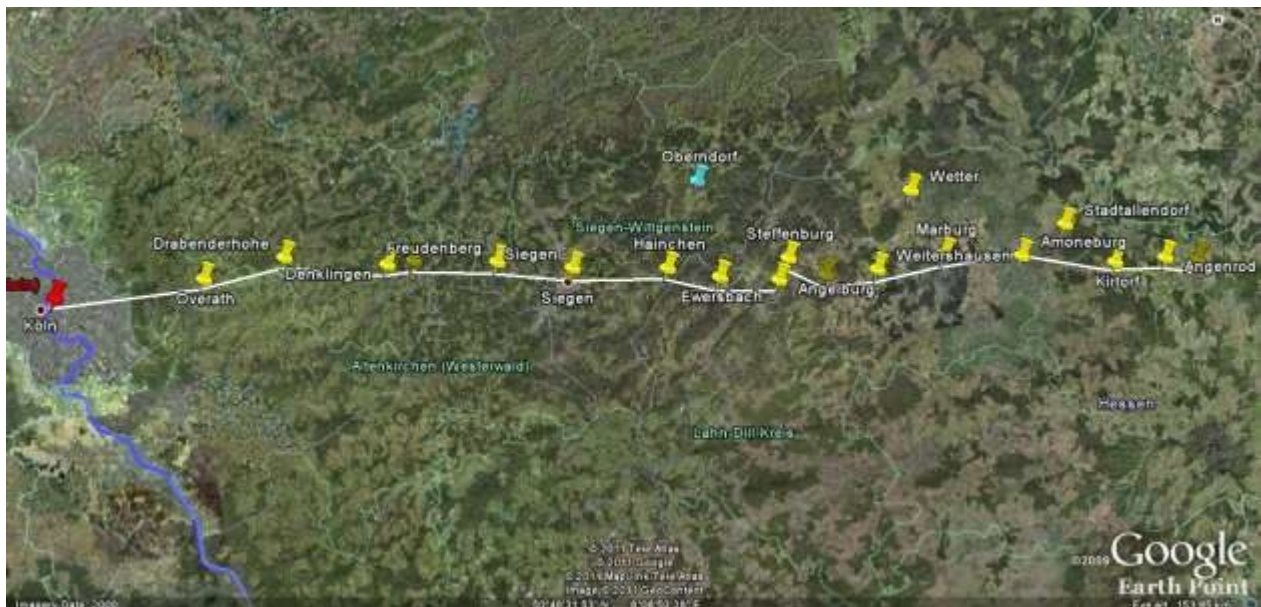


Fig. 7. The same road as route 6 in Fig. 5, the Brüderstraße, superimposed on a Google Earth view. The blue pin shows Oberndorf, the Dreisbachs' starting point.

<sup>12</sup> Small detail of the map, "Historische Fernstraßen im Nordostrheinischen Schiefergebirge" in: Herbert Nicke, *Vergessene Wege*, Martina Galund-Verlag, Nümbrecht, 2001.

We have now come as far as the known Wittgenstein documents permit. Simon Dreisbach knew from personal experience how to get to Siegen and to Cologne. He had certainly acquired information on prices and means of travel to reach the Dutch port of Rotterdam, from whence most of the ships to Philadelphia departed. Recruiters for shipping enterprises in Rotterdam were known to have been active far inland along the Rhine, and were certainly active in Cologne. But that is another story.

Our Wittgenstein journey with Simon Dreisbach from his birth in 1698 to 1743 is at an end. Our story has been based on a variety of documents for which we sometimes lacked a satisfactory context. We have nevertheless tried to avoid excessive conjecture. As a final gesture, however, we shall allow ourselves to indulge in constructing an image, based on Wittgenstein sources, of the Simon Dreisbach group of emigrants, somewhere along the way between Ludwigseck and Cologne.

### **One final image along the way.**

In this month of May 1743, Simon's wife Kette is forty-seven years old. Simon is forty-four, and will turn forty-five in early September at about the time, perhaps, when the "Lydia" nears the mouth of Delaware Bay. Kette will live until 1768. She will have nearly twenty-five years in Pennsylvania, most of them spent on a small farm in Northampton County. Simon will outlive her, dying in 1785 after almost forty-two years in Pennsylvania. They will both live to see all six children married and parents of a new generation.

After following many of the events in the first twenty-three years of Simon's and Kette's married life, we take leave of them by constructing one final image. It looks something like this:

*Somewhere along paths and roads leading away from Wittgenstein and toward the Rhine River we can envision a group of wayfarers. Moving at a pace suitable to children and farm animals, there are two middle-aged persons – the Dreisbach parents, Simon and Maria Katharina (Kette). With them are two grown sons – Jost, who will turn twenty-two shortly before the "Lydia" drops anchor in Philadelphia, and Adam, twenty and a half. There are three younger sons: Simon is thirteen; George will turn ten on the way, on about the tenth of June; John has been eight since early February. Little Katharina had her fifth birthday in Am Aberge in early May during a time of preparation she could scarcely understand. We see a horse, a cow, a calf. All are laden with packs. The horse and cow are pulling carts behind them, and the men lend a hand as needed in the deeply rutted roads. There are three more adults, all with roots in Oberndorf, all inter-related. Conrad Wied is about thirty, his wife Magdalena Hackler somewhat younger, and baby Maria Elisabeth is six and a half months old. She will be carried off the "Lydia" and into the streets of Philadelphia when she is ten and a half months old. There is also a woman in her mid-twenties whose place within this group is not fully understood. It may be that Jost Dreisbach had "taken her along" on the trip with a view to marriage, though this does not seem to fit the prevailing social pattern, and in any case did not happen. We might also consider that Jost had "taken her along" on a specific occasion, for a specific practical purpose – to stay with the first cart after Jost had left it on the other side of "the border". In any event, her presence will be useful to the two mothers and their small daughters. The last glimpse we get is of a group of five hopeful adults, seven children, some full grown and one still an infant, and three farm animals moving slowly westward toward Cologne where the animals will be sold and the next, waterborne, stage of the journey by river barge or boat will begin.*

## Research Notes

### 1. Our archival source material on Simon Dreisbach – is it truly unique in emigration studies?

We have asked this question previously in the *Research Notes* section of DERR no. 11, after showing how, piece by piece, the Wittgenstein documents had been communicated to us between March 2011 and February 2013: "*Is the life of any other 'ordinary' 18<sup>th</sup>-century immigrant to Pennsylvania as well-documented in his home territory as the doings of Simon Dreisbach in his native Wittgenstein-Wittgenstein?*" Now as then, the answer remains uncertain. We can only reiterate that the credit for making this wide range of information known is by no means ours. The explanation lies in a felicitous combination of well-preserved records and certain wise, diligent and most generous Wittgenstein researchers (Heinrich Imhof, Jochen Karl Mehldau, Andreas Sassmannshausen and others). The DERR and its readers have been at the receiving end of their unparalleled willingness to share information.

### 2. How great is the variety of documents behind Simon Dreisbach's story?

At the base of all our information lie the church records of baptism, marriage and death, some dating back to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, preserved in the office of the Evangelical Church in Feudingén. Most of our other sources are in the private (but accessible by appointment) archive of the Princes of Sayn-Wittgenstein-Hohenstein, which is now housed in the Princely *Rentkammer* (Exchequer) near Castle Wittgenstein. Here is a vast assembly of administrative and related documents from which Dreisbach history has emerged via diligent searching, and also by pure chance. Dreisbachs are found in various administrative lists, in household tallies, taxes due or collected, accounts of court hearings, measures taken after unauthorized exits, etc. Many of these documents have been photographed for us by Heinrich Imhof.

### 3. Two of our most important sources.

The lists and tallies relative to the Count's 18<sup>th</sup> century householders constitute only one source of Dreisbach information. There are other extensive records grouped in holdings, each with its own numbering, as exemplified below. Primary among them are:

**WA D 53** "*Dreisbach, Simon/dessen Guth betr.<sup>d</sup> 1743 –*" (Dreisbach, Simon/concerning his property, 1743 to –). Here are reports of the family's clandestine departure on the night of 15 May 1743, as well as many other facts we would otherwise not have known. This is basic material for Dreisbach research.

**WA P 464** "*Extractus Protocolli Inquisitionis / Johann Adam Milchsack und dessen Ehe Weib...*" (Extract of the Protocol of the Questioning of Johann Adam Milchsack and his wife...). Here we have the verbatim, but alas only partial reproduction of Simon's testimony in court in 1735. The same holding contains the much later account (1740) of the wily petty criminal Johann Adam Milchsack, who gives his version of Simon Dreisbach's beginner's attempts with counterfeit coins in the first half of the 1730s.

### 4. We have three letters penned by Simon Dreisbach: to Count August (1), and Count Friedrich (2).

**WA W 65 I** (dated 15 January 1727). In this holding we find a confident letter written by twenty-eight year old Simon, complaining that he had received an unjustified fine for not appearing in court, as the summons had come while he was away in Cologne delivering a load of bark.

**WA D 14** contains two letters of supplication for early release, written by Simon Dreisbach in mid-February and on 2 April 1737, during his imprisonment in Wittgenstein Castle. These moving documents from a farmer desperate to plant the year's crops to feed his family, give us insight into some of the factors which led to the family's emigration six years later.

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We will probably never have a full-rounded portrait of Simon Dreisbach, but we are extraordinarily fortunate nevertheless to have access to so many different stages of his pre-emigration life.