The Schild Family in Bellenberg, Lippe, Germany

I’d like to tell you a story about a small part of time in our Schild ancestry. It will connect the two Schild lines given in the manuscript “Our Ancestors” written by Arlene Schildroth on July 20, 1959 and some explanation of how it came to pass that Schilds are in America.

Let’s go back to a small farming community called Bellenberg where Schilds have been found from 1707 until the 1940’s. There were only about 40 houses in the whole town and the Schilds lived in House #29 as far back as 1790, when house numbers became part of the public record.

Now, let me introduce our common ancestor and start our story. His name is Johann Simon Heinrich Schild, whom I just call Simon Heinrich, and he was born in 1766 in Bellenberg. He is an only child because his older sister died just 10 months earlier at the age of four and a half years. No other brothers or sisters could be found in the records.

The German society that existed at this time was a feudal society with aristocrats, nobles and serfs. These serfs either lived off the land, which was generally owned by someone else or belonged to artisan guilds with its masters and apprentices. I believe that our family belonged to that Serf class as an artisan evidence of this is 1) the name “Schild” referred to a painter or maker of shields, 2) when occupations became part of the public record Carpenter was given, and 3) I couldn’t find any land records.

Twenty-two years later, on 16 November 1788, Simon Heinrich married Anna Louisa Charlotte Mentzen, who I’ll just call Anna Louisa. Then, just after their first anniversary, Simon Heinrich and his wife Anna Louisa age 29 are enjoying the birth of their first child, a girl, who they named Ernestine Charlotte Louise Schild. Remember the name, Ernestine, because she will become very important as to why you and I are here.

But happiness for Simon Heinrich would be hard to come by. They buried their second child, another daughter, in 1794 after only 16 months of life. Much to their joy they had a son the very next year but Anna Louisa was dying. Knowing that she would be leaving to her husband a six-year-old daughter and a four-month-old son, she became part of an arrangement that, upon her death, her younger sister would marry Simon Heinrich.
Anna Louisa passed away in September of 1795. Five months later Simon Heinrich married Anna Margareta Ilsabein Mentzen or, simply, Anna, age 18. But hard times were still ahead. A year-and-a-half later Simon Heinrich buries his only son shortly after the boys second birthday leaving no male heirs and only one child left out of the four that he has fathered. Who is the only child left? Whose name was it you were supposed to remember? Ernestine, that’s right.

Finally, in October of 1798, Simon Heinrich and his new wife have their first child together, a son named Johann Berend Christoph Simon Heinrich Schild. Let me take a moment to tell you about the naming customs in this part of Germany. Godparents, usually three to five of them, were always present at christenings. The child’s Christian name would include parts of all of their names. If it was a son then, generally, a Johann was placed on the front for good measure. What you were called - as you walked down the street - would be a lot shorter, otherwise, you would be gone before anyone could finish saying your Christian name.

Now back to our story. Tragedy strikes Simon Heinrich twice, first with the death of his infant son in October 1800 and then a second time on the December 27, 1800 when his 70-year-old mother dies.

Now for a short review – over the last dozen years, Simon Heinrich has 1) seen his mother die, 2) watched his first wife pass away along with two of their three children, and 3) married the sister of his first wife and seen their first child die. Thus leaving him with an only child named what? Ernestine.

I think it is time to have some cheerful events.

First event – the date is 14 September 1801 and their first son, Johann Jürgen Simon Friedrich Anton Schild, is born. He will marry and have a son on the 14 of August 1829 who will be named Simon Anton Schild. This Simon Anton Schild is at the head of first group of Schild’s in the manuscript “Our Ancestors”.

Second event – Simon Heinrich and Anna Schild have their second son on the 18 of January in 1804 named Johann Bernhard Friedrich Christoph Schild. This is the head of the second group of Schild’s, known as “John Schild I”, in “Our Ancestors”. Therefore, Simon Anton’s relationship to John Schild was that of a nephew to his uncle. John Schild would eventually
marry Amailia Sophia Holsta of Billerbeck, Lippe, Germany on December 18, 1831.

Happy event #3 and #4 – Simon Heinrich and Anna Schild had two more children – a son, born in 1807, and a daughter born in 1811.

I got so carried away with the cheerful events that I failed to mention that Simon Heinrich’s father passed away in 1806 at the age of 75.

Now, in 1812, Simon Heinrich was the patriarch of the family living in House #29 consisting of his daughter Ernestine (by his first wife), his second wife, Anna, and their four children consisting of three sons and a daughter. Life was good as he had male Schilds who would get the family house when he died.

But life around him was in turmoil, in that same year, 4/5’s of the men belonging to the Soldiers of Lippe died in Napoleon’s Russian campaign. By October 1813 Germans would rise up to kick the French out. For the next 35 years there would be strife, as Germans would try to form a succession of stable unified German governments.

On a personal basis, Simon Heinrich would experience sorrow with the passing away of his second wife of 18 years, Anna, in October of 1813. Now alone at age 47 with his 23 year old daughter, Ernestine, and four children under the age of 9 he must have felt the need for another wife. So, three months later he married for the third time. I know the question on your mind and the answer is “no” - it wasn’t to another sister. By May of 1815 he and his new bride gave him a son. Although this son died two weeks before his first birthday, they had at least one other son.

Now for the crux of this story – what happened for the oldest male, Johann Bernhard Friedrich Christoph Schild or John Schild age 44, to board the ship ‘George Washington’ in Bremen, Germany on the 14 of June in 1848 and sail to America leaving behind the family house?

Have you ever asked yourself, if the oldest male in the family inherits the house what about the other male children in the family – what do they get? And what if the oldest child is a female what happens to her?
Do you remember Ernestine? In May of 1815 she was 25 years old and still unmarried. The next oldest was her half-brother, John Schild, who was only 14 years old and potential heir to the house upon her father’s death. Or was he?

What is known is that on December 21, 1817, at the age of 28, Ernestine Charlotte Louise Schild married Johann Berend Christoph Blanka. He then changed his name to Schild thus making him the oldest male Schild and new heir to the family house, plus, each of their six children will also be named Schild.

Finally, in 1845 the Schild patriarch, Simon Heinrich, passed away 79 years of age leaving Ernestine’s husband, Johann Berend Christoph Schild, age 57, as the new ranking Schild.

Of great importance was that the Revolution of 1848 in Germany failed. This revolution was all about German Nationalism. For the people in Western Germany, there wasn’t a need for an aristocracy; the Germans in America were doing quite well without one. But the Prussian Germans, the majority of Germans, did not feel a need for change thus the Revolution for Nationalism failed.

If John Schild were a Nationalist or wanted his own house or just a better life, then he would have to leave. So, at age 44, he boarded that ship bound for New York with his family and others in the summer of 1848. From there he traveled to Stephenson County, Illinois to settle. Why Illinois? I’m not positive, but Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa were offering 160 acres to anyone wanting to settle and work the land. In 1852, he and his family moved to Benton County, Iowa.

Nine years after John Schild left Germany, his nephew, Simon Anton Schild, now age 28, left in the spring of 1857 to settle in Stephenson County, Illinois. Finally, he too moved to Benton County, Iowa in 1868.

Their reunion was short as John Schild died at the age of 65 in 1869. Simon Anton lived on until 1905 when he too passed away at age 75. Both are buried in the Irving Cemetery just east of the town of Irving in Benton County, Iowa.
As far as I know, there were still Schilts in Bellenberg into the 1940’s but my letters have yet to find any living descendents.

And that, friends and family, is end of that story of the Schild’s coming to America.

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The photocopy of the 1766 birth record for Johann Simon Heinrich Schild is on the next page and a map of the area around Bellenberg is found on the last page.

I’m very excited to tell you that I’m going to Germany this September in hopes of finding distant relatives, doing further research and to take pictures of the area. In preparation for this trip many, many hours were spent looking at microfilms of German Church records covering the time period of 1735 - 1863, correspondence with Schilts in Germany and with an Evangelic church official in Horn, Germany who was extremely helpful. In addition, a Professional Genealogist was used to review the work as well as extend the Schild line back to 1707 when the first record of a Schild appeared in the area. Of special interest is that there is a large town nearby, Detmold, that has a Schild genealogy going back into the 1400’s that we may, or may not, connect to.

In doing this research, it became quickly apparent as to how much support is needed to complete each step. Thanks to my wife, Barbara, for enduring many lonely days and nights as I poured over microfilms; to my German friends and neighbors, Ernie and Gudrun, for the translation work and to my parents for instilling me with a “love of family” spirit.

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If you are looking for more detailed genealogical information on the Schild’s in Germany then contact Michael Schield, 8705 S. Meadowlark Circle, Highlands Ranch, CO 80126-2146 or email me at mfschield@hotmail.com

One of my future goals is to post this information to the World Connect Project at www.rootsweb.com so that everyone can have access.

Another project would be updating “Our Ancestors” – any volunteers?