

GERMAN ANCESTORS OF ABRAM HEY

This information comes from Delores Irene Hey Toner (a distant relative, born 1902). (It was written in 1965 following her trip to Germany and France.) I wrote to Mr. Henry Hey, Dixon, who turned my letter over to a sister, Mrs. Mary A. Harshman. Aunt Mary, as the people in Germany, and I called her, was in her 80's and very active, a small, European motherly type of woman. We corresponded quite a lot and visited her in her pretty home in Sterling, Ill. She was a member of the Evangelical church there. At the end of WWII the church offered their help to the churches in Germany. A list of names and addresses came and one was a widow Hey. So they became acquainted through correspondence. Later a nephew (Emil Hey) came to Illinois to work under her sponsorship in the ice cream factory.

We visited in the quaint town of Kandel. The house was at least 200 years old. The family before WWI were large soap manufacturers. When the father died the mother sold the factories for a large sum. But because of the terrible inflation in Germany in the 1920's her money was almost worthless. This was the widow Hey who asked for help through her church. Now her son William made an Ivory type of soap and peddled it over the countryside. Everything was sparkling clean and their garden precise and beautiful.

It was just after the meal when others left the room that the boy Wilfried, about sixteen, who was now studying English, and his mother and I talked about the Huguenots. They had several large illustrated books on the subject and told me they were a part of the Heys who escaped from France across the border into Germany. In fact they were living only ten or fifteen miles north of the French border.

According to history, Martin Luther led the reform movement in the Catholic church. His teachings began to spread to France, Scandinavia, and the Netherlands. By 1520 there were 400,000 French Protestants who were called Huguenots.

On the night of August 24, 1572, 70,000 Huguenots were killed at different places in France. Catherine de Medici, close friend of the Pope and the mother of the king, gave the order for the massacre. It was then that two Hey brothers escaped across the sealed border.

In the afternoon we drove to the village of Muhlhofen. They told us that the house my great-grandfather lived in was torn down. In its place was a large garden, called Hey's garden. It had a brick wall and an iron gate. Beautiful climbing roses were blooming around the gate. The young farmer wore lederhosen. His wife was pretty and shy. ...they only Hey in town. They had a six-year old son....twenty head of cattle, twenty pigs and 37 acres of land, which lay outside the village. He is considered a wealthy man.

[One of the families we visited] had an important looking gold embellished paper on which their ancestors were listed:

1. Peter de la Hey - born 1675, died 1746 in Winden/Pfalz
2. Peter de la Hey - born 1708, died 1746 in Winden
3. Johannes Hey - born 1739, died 1814 in Winden
4. Johannes Philip Hey - born 1774, died 1813
5. Jacob Hey - born 1813, died 1898 - to America 1813
6. John Philip Hey - born Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 1856 - died 1945 the father of
7. Mary Harshman, Clement, Henry, Abram and Ira Hey, and Verna Harshman

I have tried to find out more information....from a Prof. Christmen of Kaiserslauten Germany. He said that the name de la Hey in the 17th and 18th century told him "This is a French name and means the one living by the fence, or the one from Hays; there are two

towns in France by that name, one in the Jura province of France near the Swiss border-- the other is on the river Seine. How the name came from these locations to Alsace Lorraine on the German border I don't know. From here the name remained de la Hey in the vicinity of Bad Bergzabern."