

# Welcome

Hi, welcome to our homepage. Hefersweiler is situated Northern of Kaiserslautern, near to the Air Base Ramstein, 80 miles Southwest from Frankfurt. We are in the heart of the European Union. Only 40 miles to the French border. The scenery is hilly like in Wisconsin. Hefersweiler is a little village with about 550 people.

## History

In the area settled the Celts, but the Roman emperor Julius Caesar beat them 50 b.C. The Donnersberg, in English >Hill of Thunders<, is our highest hill, about 2.100 feet high. On the top was the Celtic center, a city with 40.000 people, protected by a wall of 7,5 miles around the city. The Romans moved them with all their stuff to the Rhine River, where they founded Mainz, Oppenheim and Worms. So they took all, the archeologists couldn't find anything, not even a nail or a worthless coin. Caused by the Germans attacks in the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Roman Empire collapsed. The Franks and with them Hunsfried (Hefersfried) and his family came to our place. They built huts with thatched roofs, cleared the valleys and hills and bred livestock. For centuries nothing is reported. In 1223, we found a notice about Hefersweiler in an old document. Estate and farmers became the property of a noble. In the next 300 years the owners often times changed. Finally the Dukes of the Palatinate were the sovereigns, living in the castle of Heidelberg. In 1560 the Duke changed religion and all the subjects had to do the same. (Since that time the Northern Palatinate is Lutheran) The pope, the catholic kings and emperors didn't accept the change and so the religious wars started in 1618/1648. In the middle of Europe the horrible war caused havoc. A war between the holy catholic German emperor, simultaneously king of Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and on the other side the Lutheran dukes of Hess, Thuringia, Prussia, Lower Saxony, Saxony. At the first glance both parties were fighting for the true faith, but in reality they were running for their own power and advantages. The war(s), battles went back- and forwards and the country was devastated in the same measure by friends and enemies. New Warlords, as the French king, Spanish troops, the Swedish king Gustav Adolf with 40,000 fighters played a deadly game, to reach their inhuman aims. All villages in our area were destroyed, the harvests exterminated. With an incredible brutality people were tortured, killed and raped. In July 1635 catholic troops from Austria (Croatians) stormed Kaiserslautern and only 50 – 100 people of former 2,300 citizens survived the bloody mass murder of that night. The survivors escaped to Metz and Sedan in France. No

words can describe the misery, the poverty of the few, hidden in caves and hollows. They led a miserable life, always hungry and sick, hollowed eyed.

The **epidemics of pest** in the years 1625 and 1635 killed each time a quarter of the population and all 10 years the pock epidemic & the typhoid fever did the rest. Perhaps only 5 % survived anyway the war of 1618 - 1648 . Within three decades the farmland turned into a wilderness. All become overgrown by blackberry bushes, hedges and the forest reconquered the best fields. In 1648: Berzweiler was empty and in Hefersweiler crawled only two people out of deep tunnels. The refugees came back from Meisenheim, Kreuznach, cities protected by strong city walls or fortresses. But the task was to huge for the few people, so the duke of “Pfalz Zweybrücken” sent messengers to other countries with also reformed churches, like Switzerland and the Netherlands. French people were also welcome, who were kicked out by the French king Louis XIV. Step by step singles and families with a lot of members came in, to rebuild and to cultivate the area. People from Lauterecken like Degen (Deg, Deeg, Deegen), Hahn, Knapp, Steinhauer married girls from Hefersweiler and founded lasting dynasties.

The priests died or escaped and the old church books disappeared. Generally in 1700 the villages with Churches like Niederkirchen got new parish registers and so we can look back to 1620. For example: the priest Feuerbach wrote down in the death registers: “1706, March 25<sup>th</sup>, Gerhard Lamers, citizen and assessor in criminal cases, was brought to earth (had a Christian funeral), his age 80 years”. When you calculate, you will find out, that Gerhard Lamers was born in 1626. On one hand it is pity, that we can look back only 12 generations. Although only 12 generations, but these are already for genealogists a tremendous amount of forefathers. Can you imagine what this means? We have 350 years back 2,024 ancestors in one line. Naturally it is impossible to find all of them. And 800 years back, when the family names were invented. If we would have all information about these ancestors, we could see more than a Million in one line. Thanks God, that the very old church books burned and so we have only Thousands in our family trees.

Concerning the dim and distant past the Immigrants from Switzerland are making a praiseworthy exception, because in Switzerland there were centuries with no wars. So it is possible – if you want - to find the

ancestors back to 1500 of Rolli (Morbach) and of the family Forrell (Relsberg), who came in the Palatinate about 1640 – 1660.

To the **parish** of Niederkirchen belonged Morbach, Hefersweiler, Berzweiler, Relsberg, (Seelen, Ingweiler, Rudolphskirchen, Einöllen, Rathskirchen, Reichsthal and sometimes Heiligenmoschel). So the church book of Niederkirchen contains all the villages separated collections of registers of weddings, deaths, births and at the end of the old church book we find the “record of the confirmands” together for all villages . In the nineteen fifties all church books of the Palatinate came to the Central Archive of the “Evangelische Kirche (=church) ” of Speyer, next building to the old cathedral of Speyer. And what happened with the church books?

1. A good idea: all Church books got a new bookbinding after a public invitation to tender. But who won? Naturally the cheapest and in this way, the kind of renovation is. The frayed margins were taped; today after 40 years, the text on the outer edge is hard to read.
2. On page of the church (= foliate) book measures about DIN A 3. The Mormons of Salt Lake City, Utah, financed obviously the book binding and therefore they got the right, to microfilm all church books. The “Evangelische Kirche (church) der Pfalz” in Speyer got one copy . For genealogists (also in the U.S.A.) it could be easy now to find ancestors, when you can read the script of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First you have to buy a copy for a few dollars, but another problem is the expensive appliance. But the office is not allways open, only on certain times. The biggest, a real problem for the beginners would be, how to read the old documents! Each priest wrote in another way. Few scribbled, some used abbreviations, sometimes a few words, or the whole text was nearly illegible.
3. In the archive of Speyer you have to use the microfiches. So the librarians are taking care of the old documents. (On 1 microfiche is one page = foliate). The copy of 1 microfiche costs ½ €. The service with the help of the Archive in Speyer is great!

What did the priests write down? We had 5 priests, all are right now well known.

## **The death & birth registers (1699 – 1798)**

The typical note was simple: “On Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> 1706 died Johann Michael Schehr, council man of Heffersweiler in the age of 86 years.” This had been a simple, but a very clear information. But the priests started to glow when something happened against the ten commandments. Then they waked up and described with drastic, blunt phrases, words full of hate and immorality, the decline in moral standards. When a girl got an illegitimate child of his boyfriend, she was called by everybody a whore and the child was called a child of a whore. For the girl’s family it was a crying shame and the grandfather tried to let die the child within the first 24 hours. After this disgrace, the girl’s father was looking for a son in law living at least four hours away. Example is the poor Anna Christina *Ecker* (\* 1693), who was married 18 months after her fall to Dannenfels (oo 20.8.1715). And even when she died in the age of 33 y. the priest wrote down “she was a none chaste person”. For us, the readers of the old church book it is very easy to find the exceptional stories, because the priest marked all accidents, all violations & crimes with the big letters “**NB**” (nota bene). Although the church book was not public, but the general public knew all. In those times there was no newspaper in the North of the Palatinate, but everybody knew after a few hours all interesting stories. The rumors were faster then the printed papers. Also bound to secrecy, everybody told what he found out.

- In former times, the houses were built in fall, because in summer everybody worked in the fields. The whole family, friends, neighbors helped to built a shack for John Kieffabers son Peter. The only specialist was the 35 years old carpenter Henry Schwartz from Nußbach, who got money for his job. On Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> 1715, in the late afternoon, the roof was finished. Concerning the old German tradition, the roofing party started promptly with a lot of schnapps in John Kieffaber’s small house. The people drunk hard liquor and the mood start cooking. Obviously offended the carpenter the drunken helper Adam Lamers, 24 years old. He told him to be good-for-nothing, a useless person. Lamers had a long knife in his right hand and stabbed into Henry Schwartz belly. After three days Henry died and two surgeons opened his body. They found out, that the knife stabbed trough the liver and the guts. 56 years later, the culprit got a brain stroke. He died on March 20<sup>th</sup> 1772, after laying in a coma for about a half year. The parish register is saying nothing about the punishment for the killing.

\* It happened on Nov. 11<sup>th</sup> 1729. The 64 years old widower Peter Moreau visited his 54 years old girl friend, Anna Elisabetha Ecker. For one year she was widow. They had fun together and Peter drunk few

home-made fruit liquors. I think, he was in a very good mood, when he left. So he did not exercise great caution. He did not see the deadly risks of the icy, steep stairs. Peter slid, no he flew down. And there was no railing, where he could grabbed his hands. Seriously injured he laid at the foot of the stairs. Anna Elisabetha called for help and neighbors came. But none had a medical training, the next M.D. lived in Kaiserslautern and so, Peter Moreau died at noon.

\* The farmer Johannes *Frenger* impregnated his pretty female servant Anna Catharine *Fuchs* in 1747. Frenger, a young man, full of fire, did not marry Anna Catharine. And he made the disastrous mistake to hire another an attractive girl as servant the next month. Mary Elisabetha *Schreiner* was her name. Johannes had not had his wild feelings under control. And so it was inevitable that would happened. Mary Elisabetha Schreiner had a baby in 1748. Frenger did public penance in the naturally overcrowded church of Niederkirchen, But the duke Christian IV., without mercy, deported the crying sinner, Johannes Frenger lost all. The priest remarked, he went to “bohlen” (= Poland).

- the 24 months old boy Johann Carl *Bacher* fell on Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> 1774 into the well close to the linden tree. After few hours of searching, they found him dead. He drowned.

- the 21 years old Johann Heinrich *Armbrust*, farmhand in Imsbach, was picking cherries on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1779. He fell from the cherry tree, broke his right leg two times and died of the Anthrax virus on the next day.

- I remarked, that often times the date of living age at the moment of death were not correct. When possible, I noticed the date of birth. Either the people were older, ore younger then the indicated age in the death book.

- In 1745, all priests of the Palatinate generally noted most of the death reasons. So we have good resources for different scientific researches. All ten years, the people died of Typhus, pest, pocks. A lot of people suffered under whooping cough and died very young. The biggest problem was the low hygienic level. restrooms were to close to the wells, people took drinking water out of the contaminated Odenbach creek. There was no toilette paper and people used their left hand for cleaning. The washer was not yet inventend and the people suffered from an infestation of bugs & flees. It was itching and the people scratched a deathly illness in their bodies. After their death

cloths were removed to be used by other people, spreading the disease even further.

## **The old wedding register (1700 – 1798)**

Of all church books, the wedding book was the most harmless. The priest wrote down in cool words the date of wedding, name of the bride and groom, their parents, and the village of origin. But when one of both was widower/widow, the priest noted it. But the church book gives no answer, about the first marriage. So you have to look into the death register, when the first partner died. Also it is often possible to find the first marriage. I improved the old church wedding register in completing the birthdays & the days of death. I hope, the improvements, the higher precision, makes it easier to find your path through the complicate family relations.

My scientific research started with the parish register of Niederkirchen, 1698 - 1798. This is extensive literature which contains information on several villages. Every village has its own subdivisions in birth-, wedding and death registers. I started with the marriages and picked out their children from the register of baptism. Exactly the same procedure was followed with the chronological death index. By comparing the files very carefully (up to 10 times), I could assign thousands of people to their families.

In 1793, the French Revolution Army conquered the German area west of the Rhine River. At the very beginning the Palatinate was treated as any conquered country typically would be. But in 1798 the French Government changed its attitude. In the treaty of Lunéville, it legally enforced that the Palatinate became a part of France. With the highest hill (2.000 feet high) in mind, the district got the name “district of mount thunder”. Due to the French administration during the short timeframe from 1798 through 1814, all areas of life were positively effected. This was the start of modern times. Until 1798, the nobles lived off the hard work of poor people. The nobles were well off and indifferent towards the downright monstrous poverty of ordinary people. They walked around in velvet & silk and did not care for the problems of people who lived in simple sheds. Forced by war, they escaped in Fall 1793 eastwards of the Rhine and never returned. The French Government realized the slogans, the aims of liberty, equality, freedom for all people.

First, the French government built up an efficient administration system. Hefersweiler was the center of an administration district

with six villages (around 1.200 citizens). The population elected Johannes Bacher as mayor. He did this job for 16 years. Also, he had an employee, first a German, then a French one, who did the paper work. The French administration rules were strict and standardized, valid in the whole Republic of France. The old building of 1696 was simultaneously used as school house, the teacher's apartment and registry office.

The remaining French documents are in five volumes, bound in light brown leather. Each one is for two years. They cover the timeframe from September 1800 through the end of 1811. I was very surprised and extremely excited to find them in the archives of the small city of Rockenhausen, hidden in the dark basement. For genealogists like me, the old French documents are a true place of file treasures.

In October 1813, Napoleon lost the bloody & decisive battle of Leipzig. On New Year's Eve 1814, the very famous Prussian General Bluecher crossed the Rhine River and by January 10, 1814, all French soldiers had left the area, but the exemplary French administration stayed. The Bavarian kingdom kept the French system and ideas and thus, the Palatinate became the symbol for progress and democracy in Germany.

I forged links between the often poor & incomplete registration in the parish registers to the excellent references in the files of the official documents. An example: Johannes Schultheiß was born on July 6, 1780, a fact stated (in German) by Priest Johann Erasmus Vollmar. His son and his successor had to close the parish registers in August/September 1798 and hand the documentation over to the new municipality of Niederkirchen. Before Johannes Schultheiß was allowed to marry his bride Maria Catharina Lahmers on August 26, 1811, the city official had to verify the particulars. In case the marriage partners came from another county far away or even from another state, it may have taken up to a year, before both got married in the registry office. Appropriate to the check, the wedding documents (naturally in French) are extremely correct and therefore essential to the genealogical research. The wedding document may have up to two pages, meanwhile the priests aforementioned wrote at most three lines into the parish register. I felt lucky whenever I was able to find the connecting piece between the different types of documents. Then, it gets easy for you to make your own branched, individual family tree.

**Advise:** You should start with the information you already have about your own grandparents or grand grandparents. Perhaps, their places of origin are known to you. Any ship records available to you will be quite useful. In the state of “Rheinland-Pfalz”, the “Verbandsgemeinde” (Wolfstein, Otterberg, Rockenhausen) will assist you with finding your forefathers. For the 18<sup>th</sup> century, you will need to contact the “Evangelische Kirche der Pfalz” in Speyer. Or in the U.S.A., phone the next Church of Mormons, close to your home. You will find them easily through “Switchboard.com”. You can order for few dollars a copy of all German parish registers. Two problems may be encountered. Only few people are still able to read the ancient handwritings and on the other hand, you need a special appliance for reading film and fiche materials!

I discovered that all families of Hefers- and Berzweiler are related to each other over several family lines. So, your family tree will be more of a rose bush than a tree! Especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, I frequently intermarriages between cousins & grand cousins. Also life expectancy at that time was low. If the wife died left children, then normally her younger sister got acquainted to and married the widower and had with him yet more children. When the housewife was widowed, she had to marry again soon so that her kids did not starve. Death brought a deep sorrow with it, but life had to go on and the survivor found consolation with the new partner.

I successfully resolved all obstacles. But 20 years ago, a strict Data Protection Act was passed in Germany. This represents a hard cliff to obtain information for the time after 1876. Like Frankenstein may have done, at night I went out to the cemeteries with a flashlight and read tombstones, obituaries !

Genealogy is also like mathematics. Going twelve generations back, and you end up around 1650. A mathematics exercise: How many of your lineal ascendants lived in those time? The answer: These are  $2^{11}$ , or 2,048 persons. This assumes strict linear descent and not any intermarriages of relatives: The number of ascendants in the example of Hefersweiler as mentioned above is considerably less!

I created the three volumes of these texts in two years and spent more than 2,000 hours of work during my leisure time. There were no holidays, no vacation, no TV, no party, nothing!! I drove around and met a lot of people. I read thousand of documents and many old books. I did this job as a true volunteer and did not got any pay for it, but only satisfaction and contentedness !

## The registry office after 1817

The new registers are a dream for us, super valuable sources for the genealogists. The Bavarian administration improved all. Caused by the new laws & administration rules the civil servants had to fill out extensive forms for weddings, births & deaths.

The wedding document ( 1 up to 2 pages) contained a perfect description of the groom and bride: their age, born in and the date of birth. Fathers & mothers name, their age & profession. When they were already dead, the civil servant wrote down also the names of all 4 grandparents with the date of their deaths. When the groom was in the army, the employee noted the Unit (“5<sup>th</sup> royal regiment of the Duke of Hess in Germersheim”) with the date of discharge. In each form 4 male marriage witnesses were named with age, profession, degree of relationship, place of residence and so on. So we had always a control of other files. All parents (4 people), the witnesses (4), bride & groom (2) and the mayor had to sign up the wedding document. When anybody of the ten persons was illiterate, the employee documented it (“the mother of the bride is unable to write”).

Since 1980 we have in Germany a Data Protection Act, which us obstruct in researching. That the reason that we are not allowed to publish family info about the present time.

## Agriculture + professions

Hefersweiler is situated in the valley of the Odenbach creek. 6 miles upriver, in Schallodenbach the hills are not so hilly, not very steep. But in Hefersweiler there are steep slopes and for the agriculture unsuitable. The bottom of the valley has only a width of 150 – 200 yards. The ground is boggy and in the swamp grows only sour grass. Hard conditions for a unprofitable agriculture.

300 to 200 years ago, the agriculture was the heart, simultaneously the body of the economy. The life, the appearance of the society, of the agriculture was a total different one then today. Center was the meat- and milk production. The cows were smaller then the cattle’s nowadays. Everybody had more time for himself and the pets. The cows were fully grown in the age of 6 – 8 years, meanwhile also the successful cows are already slaughtered in the age of nearly 6 years. In those time the low milk production was between 175 – 420 gallons a

year, less than a quarter - a fifth of today. The additional big worth to the farmers was the power, to pull the plough, the harrow, the hay cart. In those times the value of a cow was higher than a horse.

The male calf were castrated at the age of 2 years and the ox grew till 10 y. In the age of 12 – 14 years, the ox was the very strongest, but also very skilled. The municipality of Hefersweiler kept only one breeding bull, which was the property of all.

In the morning, after milking, the farmers opened the small cowsheds and the horned animals walked to the meeting point, close to the small bridge, where the cowherd like Daniel Morauer waited. Over there was a small briefing between the 3 – 4 herdsman (shepherd, herdsman for pigs), they coordinated where to go today. The cowboy went ahead and the cattle followed him. He brought them to the pastures or in the late summer into the small forests on the steep hill sides, where the oaks and beech trees were. The pets enjoyed over there the fat fruits (acorns & beechnuts).

In the late afternoon the cowherd brought back the smart cows/ox to the meeting point and they returned home to their farm. The farmer milked his best friends (cows) and enjoyed the fresh milk. The farmer's wife used to make fresh butter and cheese. It was a good income, when the farmer could sell milk to the neighbors.

To put animals out to graze was the result of the insufficient, antiquated field management. In average a farmer had had 18 acres, few had more, the most less! On a third he planted wheat, turnips, spelt. 6 acres had been pasture and on another he started to cultivate potatoes, carrots or something else. Next year there was a rotation. He turned the grass-land to fields to plant linen, the field with former wheat got pasture and on the third he planted other things like cabbage. Whatever the farmer did, the harvest didn't bring in enough to live on for the increasing young families. The result, the yield was at the most only 50 % of the possibilities in those times. Additionally the taxes and the rent had been too high. So many singles, whole families emigrated during centuries to the U.S.A., Prussia, Russia, Austria and other countries, promising a good, glorious future as a free man/woman!

The red sandy soil in that area was & is infertile and brought only a yield between 30 at the most 50 %, compared to fields in fertile areas. After world war II, first the farmers hesitated, then they started with the use of fertilizer (1950), herbicide (1955) and fungicide in 1960.

Before, the harvest was a lottery and not a product of systematic farming management. Many essential factors determine the farmers success, but either the reasons were unknown or not explored. Step by step the financial situation improved. Today the farmers are causing an agriculture overproduction. Reasons are the technological development, super mechanization, new cultivation, new breeds and seeds. This surplus is causing dropping prices for agricultural products worldwide. When the farmers reap a bumper harvest, also the prices are drooping. On the other hand, since years the prices for the farm equipment, harvesters, tractors, repair costs are increasing.

## Emigration

The emigration was no sign for the thirst of adventure. The people didn't not need a kick or a thrill. The most lived in extreme, grinding poverty. All suffered quite a lot from epidemics of cholera, typhoid, pocks. Infections childhood diseases killed 2 of 5 kids, only 3 children got older then 5 years and married. The life was a hard toil, tribulation and deprivation. And additional the administration squeezed out the population, even in times of crop failure. Although the living conditions not looked to good, the demography shows for Hefersweiler (1700 – 1798) an increase of population of about 200 people (450 deaths & 650 births). Some found a small job as linen weaver, but they also had been caught in poverty. So a bunch of reasons caused the emigration. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were 4 main suspicious areas at different time.

**1709**: After two wars (1689 – 1709) in the Palatinate, a quarter of the population escaped in spring 1709. First Hundreds, then thousands, then 50.000 went away down the Rhine river to Rotterdam. By English sailing ships, about 1.000 came via Southampton directly to Virginia. In very old documents it is described, that about 40.000 Palatinates eked out a miserable existence for long months, without tents in front of the city walls of the small city of London. They lived without any protection against wind, rain -like cattle - on a pasture. They had an absolute miserable, a lousy, wretched life. The small sailing ships had only a small capacity and so it took a long time, till all families had found a new country. Also the transport management brought big financial problems, especially the British government refused to finance the transport. On the other hand, the ship-owners could not transport free of charge the poor refugees. The deal was: The American colonies governors found farmers, workshops, business-men who prepaid the transfer and as service in return the immigrants had

to work and to live for three years under the conditions of slaves. Hard conditions, but it could be much worse.

Since **1727** the old English ship records are still existing and they are published. I think, some US Americans will find their ancestors over there.

**1750/ 1763:** the Prussian king, Friedrich II., won a long war (1756 – 1763) against the immense superiority of Russian, Austrian and French troops. Prussia needed a lot of people to built up an infrastructure in the conquered countries. The immigrants got a super initial aid: free farmland, animals, seeds, money. For ten Thousands irresistible conditions for a better life. And additional, for 10 years no taxes & freedom of worship.

**1785:** The kingdom of Austria & Hungarian won wars against the Ottoman Turkey. The Turks were driven out and the government needed settlers. They sent out messengers first only into catholic countries, but not enough people came. After two unsuccessful trials in 30 years, the very catholic Austrian king opened the areas in Galicia and in Batschka/Banat (today in North Yugoslavia) for the Lutherans. I estimated that, about 30 people from Hefersweiler/ Berzweiler went to Austria; they became the same supports & conditions as the Prussians guaranteed.

**1815 – 1900:** the families had now between 10 – 19 children. Medical and hygienic step forwards reduced drastic the infant mortality and the population in Hefersweiler and Germany exploded. The three booming textile factories in Kaiserslautern, Otterberg, Otterbach needed a lot of workers. The sewing industry of Pfaff and the bike production of Kayser had been very successful and many people moved to K-town. But the population pressure was to strong and so many, also from Hefersweiler/ Berzweiler emigrated to the U.S.A.

## people, who lived or emmigrated

Armbrust	Armbruster			
Bacher				
Braun				

Daberko	Daberkow			
Degen	Deegen	Deg, Deeg		
Dörr				
Eisenlöffel	Eißenlöffel			
Gauer				
Haasmann	Haaßmann	Hasemann		
Hahn	Han			
Hanenberger	Hahnenberger			
Klein				
Lahmers	Lamers	Lahmerß		
Langwasser				
Neubrecht	Newbride			
Schalmo				
Scheer	Scher	Scheerer	Schehr	Schehrer
Sheer	Shear			
Schwarz	Schwartz			
Steinhauer	Steinhawger			
Welker	Welcker			
Willrich	Willerich	Wilrich	Willrick	
Zimmer				
Zimmermann				

If you have the same name, then your roots will be perhaps in the Palatinate and you are related to us. If you are interested, contact us. You will find our address in the German part. You can get the three volumes at the cost price plus freight. But the edition is limited.

## School

In the 18<sup>th</sup>. century, the duchy of Pfalz Zweybrücken had an authoritarian system, but the administration wished, that all kids up to 12 years should go to school. What they learned is unknown. Two times I saw in the parish register, that a former herdsmen of pigs got teacher. We will not deny their experience of life, but I think their academic abilities were generally insignificant. So it was no wonder, that a high percentage of the people in the first decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were illiterates. Its documented in the wedding documents of the 19<sup>th</sup> century of Hefersweiler. Before the best men, the marriage witness signed up the official document, the mayor note, who were unable to write. For example “the mother of the groom is unable to write”. In 1793 French troops conquered the whole area, west of the Rhine river. So the country from Basel, Switzerland, up to the Dutch border got French territory. Our county got the name “département

**Mont Tonnère". We, as a part of the French Republic, participated in the progress of the French Revolution. All villages and counties got a Civilian administration. New, they acted in accordance with universal valid laws. Important for us the genealogists, the registry office. It was in Wolfstein (For the parish of Niederkirchen). In 1816, after the congress of Vienna the Palatinate got a part of the kingdom of Bavaria, And in our area the Bavarian administration continued the French one. First the civil marriage and after that the ecclesiastical wedding.**