

Searching for Ellers in Germany and Austria 2015



Ever wonder what would it be like to journey to Germany and Austria to search for missing Ellers? That is exactly what Lauren and Dan Liggett (Houston, TX), Ed Eller (Dalton, GA) and Anna Bliss (Mesa, AZ) did in August, arriving at the Frankfurt airport (A) on August 20, 2015 and then driving a rental car to Düsseldorf-Eller (B).

The next day (Friday, Aug 21), the group visited Eller Castle (Schloss Eller) in the morning. It had a crest with similarities to the Eller crest adopted by the EFA. The grounds included outbuildings and paths through the garden and trees. It was very peaceful and exciting at the same time. While the Ellers responsible for the castle probably were not connected to any of the lines involved in the EFA, visiting the Eller Castle was still something special.



They also visited the nearby train station (*Bahnhof*) called Düsseldorf-Eller Süd (Eller South). It was fun watching the trains go by. A few even stopped to pick up passengers.



In the afternoon, the group drove to Bonn (C) in the afternoon to meet with Ellers that had contacted Lauren Eller Liggett before the trip. Anja Eller, originally from Bonn, had contacted Lauren (current president of the EFA) about pictures she had found of Johann Simon Eller (1746-1820) and Clara Reiss Eller (1764-1874) in an article by Klaus Napp-Zinn in the Eller Chronicles (May 1993, p. 86). Anja recognized them because those very same pictures are hanging in her mother's flat in Bonn, Germany and had been in the family for decades (at least). Anja told Lauren that she should visit her sister Caro Eller Pause in Bonn. Anja currently lives in Mexico City, but was visiting her sister in Bonn about the same time, so the U.S. Ellers got to meet both Anja and Caro in Bonn.



The gathering was only for about 4 hours in total, but it seemed like a reunion of sorts. Caro and her husband Aljoscha led us to the back patio where we could spread out and talk. After Ed talked about the EFA, his John Jacob Eller book and Ancestry.com (Ancestry.de in Germany), then the discussion turned toward Caro's family. While the discussion was mostly in English, Lauren picked up the slack by interjecting some German where needed.



Come to find out that, during World War II, all Germans had to prove they were German back at least 4 generations. Caro dug out some pictures of past generations of her Ellers and then produced two spiral bound books (memoirs) of their late father Rudolf Eller and his father Christian Eller that both contained family trees. Between the two books, it went back several generations to the 1700s. Pictures were taken of the family trees (and some of the memoirs and pictures) that led to later research, but the group moved inside for delicious cake (flat pudding on a crust with sliced apples) and coffee just before Anja and Ben arrived. The details found so far were repeated and expanded and everyone was getting excited about the possibilities. And then it was time to leave, all too soon.





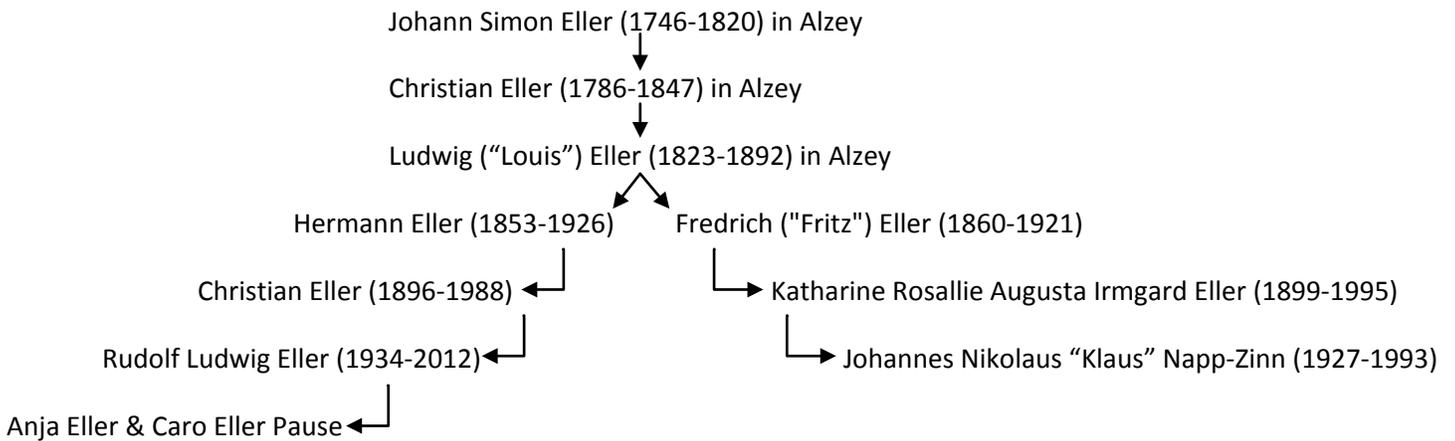
Caro and Anja



Caro, Anna, Lauren, Anja and Ed (geb. Eller)

While no obvious connections had been made, previous generations of these Ellers from Bonn had originated in Alzey, Germany (the group's next destination). Alzey is very near Gau-Odernheim, the origin point of the Erie Ellers that DNA had proven is closely connected to the John Jacob Eller line. A DNA test might connect some of the dots, so a DNA kit was left with them to send to their uncle Wilhelm Eller, who lives in Paris, France. Hopefully, he will be receptive to the idea of providing a DNA sample for the Eller Project, sponsored by the Eller Family Association.

Later research of Klaus's ancestry in the Eller Chronicles (May 1993, p. 88) showed Johann Simon Eller to be Caro and Anja's 4th Great Grandfather and Klaus Napp-Zinn's 3rd Great Grandfather, making Caro/Anja and Klaus Napp-Zinn 2nd cousins once removed (their father Rudolf and Klaus were 2nd cousins). Their nearest common ancestor was Klaus's Great Grandfather Ludwig ("Louis") Eller (1823-1892)



After spending the night just down the street from Caro's house, the U.S. Ellers headed down to Alzey, Germany (D, F) to see what they could find. Alzey is pronounced *altsai*. After locating a place to stay, the group went on their first journey to a German cemetery in Alzey (quite large) and walked up and down the rows of gravestones looking for Ellers. The gravesites were extremely well kept as would be common for all the cemeteries visited. Unfortunately, the known Ellers from Alzey were in the 1700s, so only a couple of relatively modern Eller stones were found. The real find in Alzey was Herr Heitz (Mr. Heitz) that Lauren and Ed talked to. He did not know any Ellers, but he did know Herr Braun, who was a local historian with many records of the area. He wrote down the name Rolf Braun (actually Gerd Braun we found out later) and the name of his town (AZ-Heimersheim) and street (Am Holchen), but he did not know the house number or have a phone number with him. This was the first of several total strangers that were very helpful to these four strange Americans looking for Ellers.



Not knowing just how to approach finding Herr Braun, the next day we first went over to Gau-Odernheim to the church there (St. Rufus Lutheran/Catholic Church). We walked the grounds, but did not want to disturb the service going on, so we went driving around town looking for the cemetery since we had not noticed one nearby. We drove up one road away from the town toward a vineyard. Stopping



to take pictures, we met a father and daughter jogging by. We asked them about a cemetery or graveyard in town and that is when we learned that the German word for cemetery is *Friedhof*. They gave us directions to the *Friedhof*. Once we got there and started walking the rows of graves, we noticed the church we had stopped at previous was nearby. We had actually parked at the church just on the other side of the wall from the cemetery.



In the Gau-Odernheim cemetery, we met a local retired teacher and headmaster for primary school (45 years) who spoke some English – Herr Mayer. He and his wife actually invited all of us to their home nearby where they would contact Helmut Schmahl for us, a local historian and specialist in emigrants to America. They offered us orange juice, water and wine as we waited for Herr Schmahl to return the phone call. They were so nice to total strangers.



Herr Schmahl gave us a quick report and said he would email Ed any information he could find on John Jacob Eller, John Melchoir Eller or Christian Eller born in the

first part of the 1700s and emigrating before 1750. He has access to local birth and baptism records and can find other records online (to which he directed in his email). In his quick search, he did not find much near Gau-Odernheim and said that the name Melchoir was not popular in the area at that time frame. He also said that finding people at that time without exact dates and locations of birth was very difficult. He referred to church records that were online that he had checked for Alzey, Gau-Odernheim and nearby Dolgesheim, but information did not seem to match. In the email, he mentioned other nearby towns whose records could be searched, including Wonsheim (prominent in Klaus's family) and Eimsheim (a town that was on our list to visit). He also suggested that we look through the two volume book of the History of Gau-Odernheim (in Herr Mayer's possession), but no Ellers were found there.



Downtown Alzey proved to be a great place for a late lunch. We ate the first of what would be 3 lunches in Alzey at Weinstube Hotel Komer with each of us trying something different. Anna had Saumagen mit Brot, Ed had Winzerteller (steak with "eller" in it), Lauren had Schnitzel Pilze and Zwiebeln and Dan had Korkenzieher Bolonais. And we shared 2 large (.75 liter) bottles of still water (*Wasser*). We found that if we just asked for *Wasser*, we would get carbonated (sparkling) water, so we had to specify still *Wasser*.



The next day (Monday), we set out to locate Herr Braun that Herr Heitz, our contact at the Alzey cemetery, had written down the town and street for us. We figured out that AZ-Heimersheim actually meant the town of Heimersheim (just west of Alzey) in the region of Alzey (AZ). And so, Lauren, our designated driver, drove us to Heimersheim in search of the street called Am Hochen. Fortunately, the street was short and we only had to knock on one door to find where Herr Braun lived. When we found his house and rang the bell, Herr Braun and his wife quickly invited us in to their home. We soon found out that his name is actually Gerd Braun and that Herr Heitz had called him to let us know we might be visiting. After introductions, we found out Herr Braun had also been a teacher (Math and Sports) and that he knew Herr Schmahl and actually went to school with Herr Mayer. Communication was interesting since his English was rusty, but between that and Lauren's German, we managed to get the ideas across. He was very helpful.



Herr Braun showed us his spreadsheets of emigration records from which he searched for some of the names we provided, including Johann Jacob Eller and Johann Melchoir Eller. Herr Braun has actually authored a couple of books about emigrants from the area. He also looked through some microfilm picture files he had of local church records for them and for Casper Eller. Of course, these were handwritten and low quality, so the process was slow. While nothing new was found directly, Herr Braun did note that there were a lot of Eller records in the Alzey area if we had the time to explore them all. He mentioned other towns nearby like Hillesheim, Eimsheim and Dolgesheim.



Eimsheim was already on our list of potential locations and the other two were on the way, so the next destination was set.



After lunch in downtown Alzey again, this time at Ristorante Armando (Italian), rain started falling and we almost packed it in for the day. But we thought we should drive to some of the nearby towns anyway in case the rain let up. We went first to Eimsheim (E).

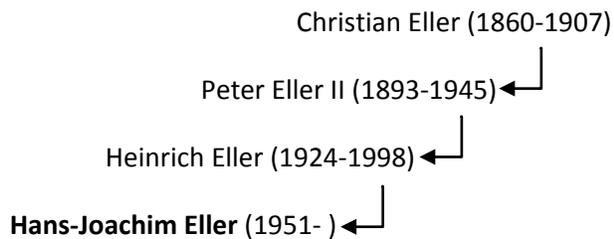
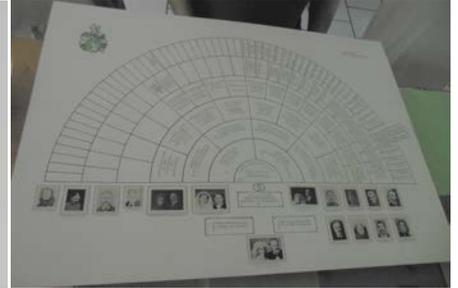


We had trouble finding the cemetery since it was on the edge of town and not near the church, but one of the locals led us to the *Friedhof* once we pronounced it correctly (*freedhof*). The cemetery was fairly small, but we struck the Eller motherlode. We found at least 14 Ellers on gravestones or monuments there. We later went to nearby Dolgesheim and found a few more and also to Hillesheim and found 2 more. All in all, it was an exciting day.



That evening, back at the hotel, Ed discovered the link between the Bonn Ellers and Klaus Napp-Zinn's. Since much of Klaus's ancestors were once in Wonsheim (a few kilometers NW of Alzey), we decided to visit there the next day. Dan found online that the Bürgermeister (mayor) of Eimsheim is Hans-Joachim Eller. He found an email address, phone number and address and a meeting was arranged at his home the next morning.

And so, on Tuesday, we met with the Bürgermeister of Eimsheim. He and his wife Martina were very friendly. He is also a teacher as well as the mayor. He mentioned he has a cousin that lives in Philadelphia. He showed us his family tree going back a few generations. In fact, he showed us their family crest, which was quite different from the one the EFA uses.



When we talked about the Eimsheim cemetery we visited, he mentioned that it was the "new" cemetery. There was an older one that was in disrepair and too dangerous to visit right now because some trees had fallen recently. Too bad.



When we mentioned the Eller DNA Project for the EFA, he agreed to the DNA test, which we administered on the spot. Unfortunately, he had a city meeting to attend, so we had to cut the visit short, but it was good to meet a local Eller. Who knows, he could be a long lost cousin.



While a quick look at ancestry.de did not find anyone in his tree, a history of Eimsheim that Hans-Joachim Eller put together as part of his mayoral duties revealed several Ellers as mayor of Eimsheim over the years. Amongst them were Paul Eller (1680-1707), his son Christian Eller (1707-?), Johann Friedrich Eller (1753-?) and more recently Georg Eller II (1946-1964). Later, we found that the May 1988 edition of the Eller Chronicles (p. 5) mentioned several Ellers in Eimsheim and Dolgesheim, some of whom were mayors. This was in an article entitled Descendants of Jakob Eller (1590-1640) (Germany), compiled by Georg Eller and translated by Louise Eller. There certainly was a lot of information in those early Chronicles.

Next, we went to Wonsheim where we found the *Friedhof* and 2 more Ellers (Konrad-1947 and Peter-1914).

Once again, we had a late lunch in Alzey, this time at Alte Post.

1664 - 1680	Christian Kohlmann
1680 - 1707	Paul Eller
1707 - ?	Christian Eller
	--- --- (noch nicht ermittelt)
1753 - ?	Johann Friedrich Eller
	--- --- (noch nicht ermittelt)
1807 - 1813	--- Stauf
1814 - 1818	--- Lösch
1818 - 1838	--- Eiltz
1838 - 1843	--- Loesch
1843 - 1874	--- Zimmermann
1874 - 1888	--- Biegler
1888 - 1904	--- Zimmermann
1904 - 1919	Jakob Zimmermann
1920	Friedrich Geil
1920 - 1934	Karl Zimmermann
1934 - 1945	Dr. Dr. Felix Krebs
1945 - 1946	Jakob Morg (kommissarisch)
1946 - 1964	Georg Eller II.
1964 - 1984	Rudolf Koch
1984 - 1992	Herbert Knittel
1992 - 2002	Paul Baumann
2002 - heute	Hans-Joachim Eller

The next day (Wednesday, August 26), we ate breakfast, checked out and drove to Nenzing, Austria (G) to meet Siegfried Eller and his family that Lauren had corresponded with before the trip. After about 6 hours of traveling the autobahn, we arrived at the Gasthaus Rossle Egger. We ate dinner at the hotel restaurant and later in the evening Siegfried and his wife Martha stopped by for a brief introductory visit.



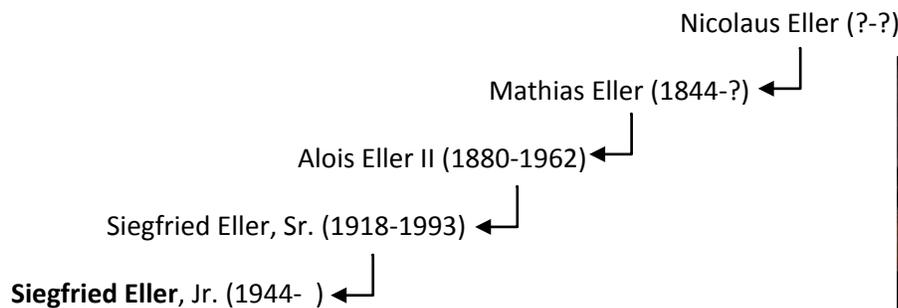
On Thursday, we met with Siegfried and Martha and drove east toward Bludenz and then up into the mountains. We took a cable car up to Lünensee, a natural Alpine lake high in the mountains. What a wonderful site to behold. Mountain hiker trails are everywhere. We actually ate lunch up there. Eating wiener schnitzel outdoors in the mountains at 1970m is quite the experience.



After lunch, we traveled back through Bludenz, where we stopped at the Lädlele Chocolate Factory store (Milka). Then we drove on through Ludensch to Thüringen and the home of Siegfried and Martha Eller. They gave us a tour and Martha showed us how she makes apple strudel (quite the process). As the discussion moved to their Eller family history, Siegfried brought out several documents from the 1940s that were copies of their family's requirement to prove four generations of their German heritage (even in Austria). The sad purpose behind this requirement was very sobering indeed.



Siegfried's family appears to have originated in the Tirol region of Austria, at least as far back as he has information.



While we could not see any connection to the known Eller lines involved in the EFA, we went ahead and asked Siegfried to contribute to the Eller DNA Project. Who knows what new results that might produce?



Later, we went to the *Friedhof* in Ludensch where Siefried's parents were buried and then on to the old church where Siefried and Martha were married. We went back to the house for dinner on their patio. Afterwards, Siegfried's brother Kurt and sister Brigitte stopped by to chat as well. What a day.



Well, all journeys must come to an end. On Friday, we headed back toward Frankfurt to fly home on Saturday.