

Federle Emigration from Gamshurst

Introduction to the documentation of the Federle emigration from Gamshurst

In this section I would like to make some basic remarks about this documentation.

1. Circle of Persons of This Documentation

The group of people includes people with the Federle name, who were born in Gamshurst, as well as their children, who lived abroad for a longer period of time and died where they settled.

2. Period of Consideration

The period of consideration begins in 1764 with the marriage of Franz Balthasar Federle in Landau in the Palatinate, which was then under French rule, and ends in 1911 with the emigration of Konrad Federle to North America.

3. Number of Emigrants and Their Social Status.

If we add the four nuns who joined the Order of the Sisters of Charity of the Holy Cross in Ingenbohl, Switzerland, between 1899 and 1908, the five Federle who moved to Alsace, which was under German administration, between 1885 and 1912, this results in 72 people with the name Federle and two with the name Lorenz (the mother was a Federle) who emigrated to four different countries (see the following list of emigrants). More than half, 45, are unmarried single travelers. 19 of them women and 26 men. Two other single women have one child each and the remaining six families total 25 people.

4. Country of Emigration

Two people moved to Hungary, four to Switzerland, ten to France, and the majority, 56, to North America.

5. Reasons For Emigration

1. economic and social reasons
2. political reasons
3. religious reasons

While reasons two and three hardly played a role in our case, it was probably primarily economic reasons - if one disregards the dubious notion of "freedom" that may have haunted some minds - that drove people to seek a new perspective in a foreign land.

The often mentioned reason for emigration, "hunger", does not seem to have played a decisive role for our families. Of course, the bad harvests in 1846 and 1847 led to a shortage of food and a resulting increase in prices, but this probably did not have such a strong impact on the largely peasant families. This had more of an impact among artisans and day laborers. Not only did they suffer the full brunt of the price increase, but they also lost their clients.

In my opinion, the rapidly growing population at the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century had a much greater impact. Better medical care lowered the mortality rate and more and more children reached adulthood. Real Estate division - all children receive the

same inheritance - led to a fragmentation of agricultural land, which made it difficult for an heir to support a family for a long time.

Against this background, it is perhaps understandable why so many young men took on the adventure of emigration. There was also enough advertising with the promise: "In America you can buy as much land as you can work for cheap money". Once someone had gained a foothold in America, there were so-called "chain migrations". Relatives followed relatives, friends followed friends, neighbors followed neighbors.

6. Emigration Procedure

All those wishing to emigrate had to submit an informal application to their home municipality requesting permission to leave the country and the issuance of a passport. The next higher administrative level, in Gamshurst this was the district office in Achern, then scheduled a so-called day trip for debt liquidation. This meant that creditors had to register their claims on this day at the latest, otherwise they would go away empty-handed. Men between the ages of 17 and 25 were still checked to see if they were liable to military service.

If the debts were settled and there was no military obligation, the passport was issued.

However, it only entitled the holder to travel to America. Now the passage could be booked with the agents of the shipping companies. Before the construction of the railroad, people went by ship on the Rhine to the port cities of Rotterdam or Antwerp. From there, they sailed across the Atlantic on a ship. After the construction of the railroad in France, people traveled by train from Strasbourg to Le Havre via Paris. Most of the Federle emigrated via Le Havre. After the beginning of the war between France and Germany in 1870, the ports of departure shifted to Hamburg or Bremen.

7. Final Consideration

To all appearances, all Federle who emigrated to America also reached their new home.

Whether all the ideas about life in the new world were fulfilled is doubtful. The proverb "Death to the first generation, hardship to the second, and bread to the third." certainly applies to the Federle as well. When fatal accidents or suicides were added to the mix, as was the case in some of the Federle families, it made the start even more difficult.

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(Translation by Carol Sanman)