

Ilsa Dorothea Georges Förtmeier

Ilsa Dorothea Georges was born on December 9, 1802 in Negenborn-Wedemark, Niedersachsen, Germany. On May 6, 1825 she married Dietrich Friedrich Wilhelm Förtmeier, born in Loccum, Rehburg-Loccum, Germany on February 21, 1798. His parents were Johann Friedrich Förtmeier (1775 Loccum) and Catherine Elisabeth Mell (1854 Bohnhorst). Dietrich became a school teacher in Bohnhorst and passed away on May 24, 1861.



Born to Dorothea and Dietrich were eleven children:

Dorothee 1826	Louise M. 1828	Georg 1830	Wilhelm A. 1832
Carl W. 1834	Emma 1837	Friederike 1839	Carl H. 1841
Anne 1843	Louise F. 1844	Carl Louis 1849	

Dorothea watched as one by one her children either died (Louise M. 1854, Anne 1843, and Louise F. 1844) or immigrated to the United States:

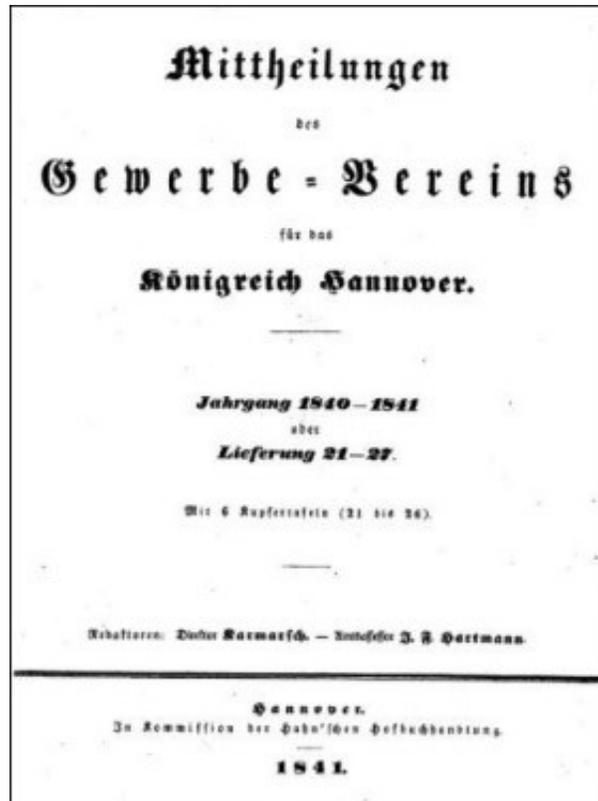
Georg 1846	Wilhelm 1849	Dorothee and Emma 1851
Carl W. 1850		Carl H. and Friederike 1856

Then, after the death of her husband in 1861, Wilhelm Adolph returned to Germany to escort Dorothee, her youngest child Louis Charles, and her grandson Georg Heinrich to America.

What you have read above is pretty much all we knew about our Förtmeier ancestors before they arrived in America to begin new lives. But today, I received new information from my friend Manfred Raker who lives at the Förthof, near Stemmer, Germany. Read the following information and then I will explain what it all means after.

7. Legge zu Uchte.		Betrag der Prämie.
Sophie Bieth in Uchte	2	8
Louise Eichholz baselbst	1	8
Minna Merkel baselbst	1	8
Dorothea Förtmeier in Bohnhorst	—	16
Wilhelmine Köster in Diets	—	16
Sophie Witte in Büllen	—	16

7. Legge zu Uchte = Legge to the village of Uchte



Announcements of the trade association for the Kingdom of Hannover

Even Manfred didn't know what "Legge" meant, so he looked it up in a German source and found the following:

“**Legge** (from Niederdeutsch Lege or (Ab)Lage), also illustrating: Leinen- bzw. Linnenlegge, in Northwest Germany (Westphalia and adjoining areas) is a former common name for centrally equipped line testing and collection points. They were set up to ensure a uniform quality of the canvas produced in the countryside and thus strengthen confidence in the goods offered at the respective trading centre. The canvas, which was brought to the city for sale, had to be presented to the leggge-masters on long tables for the inspection of size and quality and received an ink stamp as proof of inspection after passing the inspection. In many cases (Bielefeld, Osnabrück, Tecklenburg) these warehouses became real commodity exchanges, because the centrally consolidated goods attracted trade. Since the laying system also ruled out competing trade on the territory (monopoly), it had a considerable impact on local prosperity. By assigning the linen production, which usually takes place in rural house production, to urban leggings, the connection rural-city in the respective area was at the same time tightened.

In the 17th century, the importance of the Legges began to decline. Although the territorial authorities tried to (reintroduce) the laying system to lift the domestic economy even in post-Napoleonic times, the decline of domestic linen production in the course of mechanisation and industrialisation of linen production also sealed the decline of the laying system.”

Manfred adds:

“Mrs. Dorothea Förtmeier from Bohnhorst received a subsidy of 1 Thaler and 16 cent in 1840 as premium for the promotion of the house linen weaving. 1840 was the end time of hand weaving. From about 1850, mechanical looms replaced housework. After that, the farmers wove only for their own needs. We found an old loom on our farm (the Förfhof).

Your great-great-grandmother probably didn't earn money for her family by weaving for much longer. *The decline of house-weaving was an important reason for the mass emigration from Germany in the middle of the 19th century.*

Dorothea must have been a remarkable and energetic woman. She had already had 8 children by then, 11 in all, and she probably took care of the small agriculture of the teachers' household and also produced linen!

The women did not become very old in this time with this burden. But at the age of 61 Dorothea still went on the exhausting journey to her children in the USA... Respect !”

Okay, so what does all this mean? Before Mechanization the Linen production was done in the homes of villagers who would periodically bring the linen production to the nearest Linnenlegge to have their linen inspected and then purchased. The Legge that Dorothee went to was in Uchte, a small village about 11 km from Bohnhorst, about a two hour trip by horse and wagon.

So now we know a little more about the life of our Foertmeyer ancestors. Dietrich was a school teacher and Dorothea wove linen to sell at the Legge in nearby Uchte.



