

Where They Came From

These immigrant ancestors came from the **Black Forest** (Schwarzwald) region in the District of **Rastatt** (Landkreis Rastatt) in the present state of **Baden-Württemberg** in southwest Germany. They are in the valley of the **Murg River** (Murgtal)

Obertsrot and **Hilpertsau** (nominal towns for branches 1 and 2, respectively) are adjacent and practically one town. They were incorporated into the city of **Gernsbach**, just to the north, in 1974.

The city of **Gaggenau** (branch 3) is also on the Murg River about 3 miles north.

The information below about these places is excerpted with thanks from the excellent Black Forest Genealogy web site: websters.net/blackforest/rastatt.html

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Obertsrot is 6km. southeast of the city of Baden-Baden. Postal Code: 76593 Gernsbach-Obertsrot.



History: The Reformation in Obertsrot

Obertsrot, originally a Catholic community, turned to Protestantism during the Reformation. The change was made easier for some of the old inhabitants of Obertsrot since they were originally religious refugees from Salzburg, Austria. Having been driven out of Salzburg because of their Protestant faith, they converted once more to Catholicism, in order not to be displaced for a second time. The domains of the Bishop of Speyer and those of the Counts of Eberstein would not accept

Protestant immigrants.

When the Count of Eberstein and the Margrave of Baden, both ruling princes in the region, converted to the new faith and the influence of the Bishop of Speyer waned, the Protestant dogma was readily accepted by the people. The year 1556 saw the official introduction of Protestant doctrine. Count Wilhelm von Eberstein supported it wholly and created a Protestant parish in Gernsbach, complete with Protestant teachers and counselors. Since that time there are two churches: the lower or Protestant and the upper or Catholic Church.

Count Wilhelm had attended the Diet of Worms in 1521. He met Luther and had declared his loyalty to him. His marriage to Elizabeth von Hanau strengthened the Lutheran hold in the county. She was a devout Protestant and suppressed all those subjects who failed to accept the new doctrine. According to the law, all subjects had to be of the same faith as their respective ruler. For the Obertsrot population it meant an end to religious processions and pilgrimages. All vacant ministries were filled by competent preachers and Catholic clergy were rejected as a matter of principle. In Obertsrot the people converted quickly and in large numbers to the new faith. The parish registered five Protestant baptisms in 1579.

Since Weisenbach was the only parish where the Count had the right to appoint the pastor, it recorded the first Protestant minister as well. In 1578 Pastor Koch was installed as pastor and held the post for 46 years. On orders, the citizens of Obertsrot attended divine service in Weisenbach or, when that was canceled, they attended the Protestant church in Selbach. Ministers to the churches in Weisenbach and Selbach had been appointed by the family of Eberstein since antiquity and were, for many years after the religious transformation bastions of Protestantism in the Murgtal.

The year 1624 brought about a change. On March 30, 1624 Count Johann von Eberstein signed the "Ruffach Treaty", named after the town of Ruffach in Elsass, which ended religious freedom in the county. [Note: the 30 Years War, initially a war between Catholics and Protestants, started in 1618 and eventually returned the Southern half of Germany to Catholicism]. Protestant preachers were dismissed and those subjects remaining faithful to its doctrines were expelled, until they recanted under duress. Thus the head of the community of Obertsrot, Jacob Hauser, spent nine years in exile and died faithful to Lutheran doctrine. He was not allowed to be buried in Obertsrot and was eventually buried in the Protestant cemetery in Gernsbach. His successor, as well as his colleague in Hilpertsau, both Protestants, were ordered to recant or to resign. Their reply was that they would rather go into exile than to return to Catholicism. As early as 1625 there were no baptisms from Obertsrot recorded in the Gernsbach register, a clear sign that the people returned to the old Catholic faith.

Of course there were still individuals who gave rise to accusations, for in January of 1625 it was reported by the bailiff at Gernsbach: "The Obertsrot citizen Thomas Krieg, participating in the barge traffic, is hereby ordered to become a Catholic or to quit the trade. A fine of 20 Reichstaler was levied against him. The Catholic reeve Hasenohr had advised to exile the unruly Krieg family."

On June 13, 1625 Pater Matthias arrived in the valley. He was a monk who used friendly persuasion with the people of Obertsrot. He managed to convert Thomas Krieg to the old faith. He pleaded to the court on his behalf to forgive the high fine of 20 Reichstaler. He had suffered enough. He was without income and his family had gone hungry. Wendel Karst of Hilpertsau was treated in the same manner.

The year 1625 brought an end to the religious strife in the village. From that time on until today Obertsrot has remained a Catholic village.

Obertsrot Emigrant Surnames: Götz, Hasenohr, Jankowitsch, Müller, Nees, **Schiel**, Siebert, Stramm, **Strobel**

Note: Obertsrot shared the services of the priest from the neighboring community of Gernsbach. They belonged to Gernsbach parish but used the chapel in Obertsrot. Some records of Obertsrot parish members can be found with the records from Gernsbach. **Hilpertsau** is also part of these records.

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Hilpertsau



Hilpertsau Emigrant Surnames: Bandalion, **Fritz**, **Gerstner**, Hoch, **Kalmbacher**, Krieg, Schill, Sieb, **Strobel**, Weiler, **Wörner**, Wunsch



Obertsrot (foreground), Hilpertsau (background) in the Valley of the Murg

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History of Gaggenau

Gaggenau, originally called "Gackenouwe," was first mentioned in the Rotenfels parish registers in 1243. By 1288, it was an expansion within the dukedom of Rotenfels.

It was first mentioned as Gaggenau when the Margrave was divided for Herman VII of Baden.



St. Laurentius Church, Bad-Rotenfels

The trades soon flourished in Gaggenau. In 1681, an iron hammer was at work there, from which the oldest iron production works of the city originated, the Iron Works Gaggenau. This laid the foundation for the economic and industrial rise of Rindenschwender. Mr. Rindenschwender founded a glass works and gypsum works in 1772. housing for 16 glass blowers and their families was added. The timber framed house with the bell-tower (now a land mark) was called Rindenschwender Glassworks. Another strong basis of the Gaggenau industry was the Benz-Works founded by Michael Flurschein and Theodore Bergmann. In 1894, the first cars were built in the Murg Valley. A company merger between Gaggenau Works and Daimler-Benz was the start of the world wide victory march of the diesel engine.

In the western part of the city lies the former Bad Rotenfels. The mineral bath spa there dates back to the discovery of the Elizabeth Spring in 1839. Gaggenau benefitted from the Baden-Wuerttemberg reforms, since the actual town has fewer than half the total number of inhabitants. The villages of Bad-Rotenfels and Selbach were added in 1970. One year later Freiosheim was added. In 1972, Oberweiser and Moosbronn (previously part of the village of Bernsbach) became part of the city. 1973 saw Sulzbach and finally Horden and Michelbach were added in 1975.

Gaggenau Emigrant Surnames: Adam, Ball, Black, Corneli, **Eckert**, Ehleiter, Eisenmann, Fritsch, Fritz, Fütterer, Götzmann, **Graf**, Hartmann, Henkele, Herm, Heß, Hilzinger, Himmel, Hirth, Hoffer, von Holl, Hornung, **Hurrle**, Jäger, Kleehammer, Klingele, Köhler, Kohlbecker, Kohm, Lang, Little, Maisch, Mark, Mayer, Melcher, Merkel, Müller, Rauenbühler, Rettig, Reutenberger, Scheuermann, Schiffmacher, Schindler, Schmadel, Schmitt, Seeholzer, Seitz, Siebert, Simon, Sprenger, Stösser, Stricker, **Strobel**, Traub, Vogt, Wagner, Wittmann, Zapf