



Researching my Gruetzner family heritage has always been filled with obstacles and surprises. I didn't really know much about my great-grandfather and knew nothing of his father until I happened upon a copy of *German Immigrant Ancestors*, a book of family trees published by the German-Texan Heritage Society. In this book I found information on my great-grandparents and at least the names of my 2xgreat-grandparents. This new information, and a subscription to *Ancestry.com*, assisted me in fleshing out some details of the family, but for many years, I could not find anything about where the family originated or who the ancestors in Germany were. I had eventually uncovered Johann's residence at the time of immigration as being in Großdehsa, Saxony from the Hamburg-direct list of ship's manifests. Nothing beyond that was forthcoming for a long time. In the foreword of the book *Goldenes Schatzkästchen*, posted on the Wendish Research Exchange, I later found a listing of a Peter Grützner of Großdehsa. This was the first mention of a Gruetzner in Großdehsa, other than Johann, that I had located. It was unknown what the relationship might be, if any. After hiring a German genealogist to do research in the Parish records of the church in Kitlitz, Saxony, it was learned that Peter Gruetzner was Johann's father! The family were longtime residents of Großdehsa and had earlier gone by their Wendish name of Hedusch but gradually changed over to the Germanized form, Gruetzner, as shown in the baptismal records. Here we found that my ancestor, Johann, had three brothers and two sisters. Unfortunately, the German researcher did not trace the lines from those siblings, so nothing more was known about them.

I later was informed by Robert Wucatsch of the Wendish Heritage Society-Australia of an article in the Bautzen newspaper that mentioned the name Gruetzner. (He was also the first person to tell me that

Hedusch was the Wendish version of Gruetzner, which he learned while researching in Germany on the Proft family.) This began an in-depth review of newspapers from Bautzen found online in the Saxon State and University Library in Dresden, where the name Gruetzner was frequently found. On the front page of the 18 July 1857 edition, was found a list of people that had not shown up for military service in the Löbau District from the class of 1836/56. One of those listed was Karl August Gruetzner. My 3x great-uncle Karl August Grützner, born 28 April 1836 in the Löbau district (Großdehsa) seemed to match! Why had he not reported for duty?

Searches on the websites *Family Search* and *Ancestry* revealed the steamship *Falcon* left Hamburg on 31 August 1855 for New York via Hull and Liverpool with an August Grützner of Löbau, age 20, on board. His occupation was given as "Tischler" (carpenter). Also found - the *Emma Lincoln* arrived at New Orleans on 13 November 1855 (from Hamburg?) with an August Grützner age 24, on board, with a final destination of Galveston. His occupation was listed as "joiner". It is unknown why the switchover occurred, but our August did go to New Orleans. I found no other ship's manifests listing an arrival of August Gruetzner in New York in 1855, so I believe he shipped out of Hamburg on the *Falcon* as an add-on passenger (he is listed on a separate page with only one other person) and then traded ships in England to join the *Emma Lincoln* to go to Galveston.

In the latter half of 2016, I discovered there were some Gruetzners buried in the Harmonia Lodge cemetery at San Antonio, courtesy of a *Find-A-Grave* memorial page. A trip there in November revealed two graves, that of August Grützner and Emma Gruetzner. No dates of birth or death are given on either stone. The census of Bexar County in 1870 and 1880 revealed the family of August consisting of wife, Anna, and daughters Aleda, Emma, Anna, and Marie. A son Herman was born after the 1880 census. There is no census record of August or Emma after the 1880 census.

I then had occasion to speak with Steve Mabie of the San Antonio Genealogical Society and he offered to check the records in the society's possession. He later sent me some indexed records, including Bexar County marriage records, the Bexar County Intent to



Naturalize index, a San Antonio City Directory listing, and a newspaper record about an event at the Knights and Ladies of Honor Lodge in San Antonio which mentioned the name Anna Gruetzner. I thus had a marriage date for August and Anna, but there was no information on August's death. A search of the Old San Antonio City Cemetery records revealed an index card indicating that an Emma Gruetzner was buried in 1891 when she was 12 years old. If this Anna was August's daughter, the age was about correct, but the year was wrong if she was 12. If the year were correct, she would have been 21. Was this actually August's daughter? Contact with the Sons of Hermann Lodge headquarters/archive provided no information whatsoever for either person.

Searches of online digitized newspapers finally revealed information about August's death. His suicide is reported in the 13 & 14 April 1895 editions of the *San Antonio Daily Light* Newspaper. From the articles, I learned the following: August hanged himself in his workshop on 13 April 1895; he was a native of Saxony; he came to the US about 30 years earlier; he was a member of the Sons of Hermann; and he left a wife and four children. About 10 years prior, a daughter was frightened to death by a barking dog. This article and several other versions gave us the married names of some of the daughters and confirmed Emma had died earlier than 1891.

From the death records index of the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, courtesy of David Carlson, Bexar County Archivist, we obtained official dates of death for August and Emma. She died on 4 March 1881. Also obtained from the Bexar County Archives, the marriage of August Gruetzner and Anna Schubach was performed 26 July 1865 by Christian Carl Mayer who was the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church of San Antonio. No other family records were found in the St. John's archive.

From the District Clerk's Office copy of his Intent to Naturalize, we learned that August was born in Loebau, and arrived in New Orleans on or about 23 November 1856. (He actually arrived 13 November 1855.) No record of him ever actually completing the Naturalization process has been located. His Intent was filed 21 June 1871. No probate record was found relating to August's death.

I have not yet been able to research the Catholic Diocese records of Bexar County to determine if any children born to August and Anna were baptized into the Catholic faith. The records were unavailable at the time most of this research was being done. Anna had originally been from a Catholic family at the time of her family's immigration to Texas in the 1840's. Since no Lutheran records have been located, and since Anna and son Herman are buried in a Catholic cemetery, it is possible the family was at least nominally Catholic at some point. More newspaper searches eventually provided more proof of August's membership in the Sons of Hermann, which was formed in Texas in 1860 with the founding of Harmonia Lodge Number One. August was buried "under the auspices" of the Harmonia Lodge and not as a church member.

Additional newspaper articles, along with memorials located on *Find-A-Grave.com*, have fleshed out the family records. From them we determined: August's wife remarried twice following his death, but no children resulted from either marriage; Daughter Aleda married Jacob Ehrhardt and had one daughter; daughter Anna (possible middle name Helen) married Herman Paul Kroeber and had five sons and three daughters; daughter Marie married a total of three times, having two sons and three daughters with her first husband and none with the following two husbands; and son Herman married one time and had one son. From that son's marriage resulted two sons and one daughter. At least one of those sons has carried forth the Gruetzner name in the San Antonio area. Using the resources of *TruthFinder.com*, I was finally able to contact one of the descendants, thus finally finding this lost branch of our family tree!

One final note regarding August Gruetzner and the Harmonia Lodge Number One of the Sons of Hermann: Following an article published in the German-Texan Heritage Society's *Journal*, I contacted Angelina Kretzschmar, who is recording the history of the Harmonia Lodge Cemetery. Her search of prior publications regarding the lodge revealed that not only was August a member of the lodge, he had been elected as President four times! Thus, you never know just what you may find if you keep looking down that genealogical rabbit hole!

*Richard Gruetzner*