

Washington, DC

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Mark Kiser  
121 Teays Meadows  
Scott Depot, WV 25560

Dear Mark,

Your photocopies from the history of Möckmühl arrived today and below are my translations of the passages relevant to your ancestors:

p. 84 – this refers to survival and recovery in the wake of the Thirty Years War. There were four taverns and craft establishments in the town in 1648, and on 10 January 1648 K. Kaiser wanted to begin his journeyman years. He obviously had been an apprentice in one of the four establishments and was now a young man ready to begin the next phase in his training toward becoming a master craftsman.

p. 87 – witchcraft trials: (by the way, the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century was a terrible time for this in Germany – thousands of women and some men were tortured and/or executed for witchcraft)

p. 88 – one of them was your ancestor (you should be proud!): In 1655-56 authorities prosecuted five women and one man for witchcraft. Three confessed under torture and were burned to death. The man died during his torture, without confessing. Kilian Kaiser's wife and a woman named Martha Kaisersperger were apparently tortured as well. Frau (Mrs.) Kaiser lay in irons for 26 weeks, during which time she clung to her Bible and prayer book for comfort. At one point she was tortured for three hours uninterrupted, but she never confessed to being a witch.

p. 99 – On crafts and early industry, referring to the year 1734, during which time things were not going well economically for Möckmühl.

p. 100 – Möckmühl only had one establishment where guests could overnight and eat. It was a tavern called "Zum Ochsen" ("At the Ox"), and its owner was Kilian Kaiser. Today it is the three-storey building at Haupt Str. 31, on the corner of Seckachtor Gasse (Seckach Gate Alley). Kaiser only make about 100 florins (or guilders) annually, because they were not on a major highway.

There were three merchandise stores in Möckmühl in 1734, one owned by Jakob Kaiser. Kaiser was assessed for 75 florins for his shop and 30 florins for his work baking special spice cookies known as "Lebkuchen," which are widely consumed in Germany today, especially at Christmastime.

In 1734 Kilian Kaiser was also the community shepherd and looked after 600 sheep with seven different markings at the Neuhof in nearby Reichertshausen. This office had been granted to the family long ago by the Duke of Württemberg and passed down to

Kilian. He had 60 Morgen (roughly acres) of land for the herd, and his annual taxable income for the position was 400 fl, the highest paid office in Möckmühl.

p. 257 – more on the shops and establishments:

p. 258 – In the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century the Kaiser family was well represented among the owners of these establishments. In 1718 Conrad Kaiser was at the highest level of taxpayers, as he paid 23 fl in taxes. He owned the building in which today the Zöller bakery is located. Diagonally across the intersection of Haupt Str and Seckachtorgasse was the “Ox” (see above), which Kilian Kaiser owned in 1720. But this tavern did not flourish, and in 1728 Kilian wanted to give it up. The town government, however, would not allow him to. In 1734 the Ox was the only tavern in Möckmühl. Later the name changed to the “Adler” (Eagle), though the Kaiser family still owned it. In 1792 the grandson of Kilian, Johann Michael Kaiser, owned the Adler, but had to sell it because of debts. (It was advertised in the “Schwäbischen Merkur” – the Swabian Mercury, a newspaper.) The text traces further developments with this family in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Kaisers were oldest family owning taverns in Möckmühl.

p. 260 – the (open air) markets.

The market on Haupt Str began at Kilian Kaiser’s “Ox” and ran to the upper Market Place. The market is described in some detail.

p. 309 – On cash and precious metals.

In 1704 Kilian Kaiser left his heirs nearly 800 coins whose total value was 1,607 fl. His entire property was worth 5,165 fl. (For one fl. One could buy five chickens, two pairs of shoes, or six pounds of butter.) My note: In other words, Kilian Kaiser was a wealthy man.

Mark, I hope this helps. You are lucky that there is so much about your family preserved in the records. This is because they were relatively wealthy and participated in enterprises the government regulated. Also, they were survivors – they did not leave or die out.

Best,

Aaron Fogleman

Mark Kiser's comments:

I think most of you will find these comments very interesting about our family in Möckmühl. Our Kilian Kayser/Kaiser was born in 1626 and died in 1704. Obviously, the Kilian Kaiser owning the tavern in 1734 was not our direct ancestor, but a relative. The note on page 84 in 1648, "K. Kaiser" could be our Kilian, but further research will need to be done to confirm or deny this. The Kilian Kaiser & his wife during the witchcraft trial, very well could be our Kilian as they were alive and married at that time (1655-56). Also interesting is the fact that our Kaiser family was the community shepherds going back sometime and granted by the Duke of Württemberg! The reference on page 309 definitely is our Kilian Kaiser as he did die in 1704 and from the information provided, he was a wealthy man.

I think more can be gleaned from the records in Möckmühl of our family if one knew German. The information is there and in time we will learn more.

Mark