

The History of the Dringenberg Family - And the Times in which they lived

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It began 500 years ago ...

PREFACE (0)

The following report on the **Dringenberg** family gives a framework for the branch, which is shown from the late 15th century where they lived in the city of **Grebenstein** (near the city of Kassel in Hessen) to the 21st century, where they are now situated in **Essen**. It is my endeavour to roughly put into the context of our country's history the few dates of family history, being at the commoners (not primarily agrarian) disposal by public archives and documents. Our descendants will perhaps (when they themselves become old) find this interesting. After all it should be said, what has been found out, partly in arduous work, included others' help (see note 5).

This report is to be understood as a dual-purpose draft. On the one hand, this preliminary version of the article should serve to search for further people interested in our name on the Internet. On the other hand, the report is not complete, and will be updated continually. Although there is only a slight chance that you will find out more about our "first generation" (as it is counted now) or even further than this, I may confess:

The original interest in "Journey to the Past" arose because of the immediate vicinity of Grebenstein to the (former) city **DRINGENBERG** (now belonging to Bad Driburg near Paderborn in Westphalia). The desire is to find out a connection between the city of Grebenstein, where the story starts, and the little town called Dringenberg, 30 km away (as the crow flies), where we can guess the story really began.

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I. THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA: REFORMATION - AND THE FIRST TRACE OF THE DRINGENBERG (or Drengenberg I) FAMILY

The transition from the 15th to the 16th Century also marked the transition from the Middle Ages to the period of the early Modern Age. The Renaissance and Humanism prepared Europe for the coming of a new Epoch. Renaissance art (which already could be seen in Italy for some time) reflected the Roman Antiquity. Man was re-discovered in all his dimensions, and with this in mind,

people ventured timidly into emancipating themselves from the strict dominance of the Church. The term “Renaissance” today stands for the ensemble of artistic phenomena of the 15th and 16th century. These times provided a means for art of the Modern Age to continue on to the 20th century. Humanism, as an epoch of science began largely in Italy in the 14th century, and broke with scholastic order. Man became the focus of attention. This has moulded the entire mental and spiritual life of Europe since the 15th Century.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered America. Other explorers followed suite, and this radical new view of the world broke through the intellectual horizon of the Middle Ages. New sea passages and countries revolutionised world trade and prepared the economy and social living for the new era ahead.

In 1517, **Martin Luther** appeared with his 95 Propositions against the abuse of indulgence. This was the expression of a new devoutness, no more reconcilable with the secularised Roman Church. Reformation began and in a short time seized a wide part of Europe.

Our First Generation

One contemporary of Martin Luther (1483 - 1546) was the ancestor of the Family **Dringenberg Grebenstein - Essen**. ² The writer of this article is a direct descendent. However, at the moment, we must label the original ancestor “**Anonymous**”, as his first name is not known – as well as the exact birth- and death-dates of non-noble families before the 30-Year War are also largely lacking. ³ To our knowledge, Anonymous Dringenberg lived from ca 1480 to (at the latest) 1542/43. We know for certain that he produced two children, both of whom are mentioned in historical references: Goergen (Jurgen) was born in 1505 and Henrich (The Older) in 1510, both in GREBENSTEIN.

Grebenstein belonging to Niederhessen, NNW from Kassel, is a small town, with 6.000 inhabitants. It has a medieval town centre and lies in a rural and slightly mountainous region between Kassel and the “Warburger Börde”. Further information can be found on the Internet (see References).

The life of man in the 16th Century differs greatly to our life today. It was characterized by the worship of God and attendance at church. Therefore, it is expected that the immense effectiveness of the **Reformation** could not pass without reaction from Rome. When all worldly and ghostly sanctions against Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and others failed, Rome put up (at the latest in 1572 with Pope Gregor XIII) the Catholic Restoration to the Protestantism. What at first was violent re-catholicisation in some territories, became new strength of the inner structure and dogmatic of the basic Catholic Church (for example, from around 1540 the Jesuit Order and the Council of Trient).

Meanwhile, the secular ruler of the Roman-German Empire is Kaiser Karl V. He dealt so much with his power politics in foreign countries that he did not stop the Princes of Saxony and Hessen reforming the church. The Kaiser fought – for the first time from 1521 to 1526 – against Francois I (France), with whom the Pope had an alliance. It was an uneasy time, in which the Knight - and Peasant Wars in Germany were well underway (1522 - 1525). Karl reconciled with the Pope and tried to force unity at the “Reichstag of Speyer”. However, the reforming princes protested - and from this time on were known as “Protestants” (1529). The situation was precarious - the Kaiser did not acknowledge the Confessio Augustana (the “Augsburg Confession”, Melanchthon) and wanted the new dogmatics to be wiped out.

The Protestant princes band together in the “Schmalkaldischer Bund” and – if the Turks had not been standing in front of the gates of Vienna, the war would have begun. The endeavour to bring

about unification, however, failed, and the “Schmalkaldische” War began in 1546. Only in 1555, the to-ing and fro-ing of this Epoch ended (for the time being) with the “Augsburger Religions- und Landfrieden (-peace)” where each estate of the empire was left to make its own decisions. **4** The common citizen, however, is bound to the vote of his ruler: “Cuius regio, eius religio”!

II. TERRA HASSIA - THE LAND OF HESSEN IN THOSE TIMES (16th century)

As above-mentioned, Hessen as well as Saxony were the leaders of the new mindset of the era (16th Century), and terra Hassia (Hessen) is the land supporting our ancestors over the centuries. In the first few years following Luther's sensational action in Wittenberg (31.10.1517) the new development was still distant to the man on the street (or also to the woman). There were other problems closer to home. In “Luther's Year”, 1517, the city of Grebenstein in Lower Hessen experienced an enormous fire that left most parts of the city covered in ash and rubble. Undaunted, however, the residents immediately began rebuilding the town.

But soon afterwards, an icy wind blew through the city, giving a premonition of coming events. In 1523, the reformer Rieseberg was locked up as a heretic. In the neighbouring community of Immenhausen, Rieseberg had preached the first protestant sermon in Hessen and was put away in the maiden tower for five weeks by the landgrave. But things turned quickly. Landgrave Philipp (later called the Magnanimous) knew himself to be engaged with the Reformation. On October 26, 1526, he was Reformed, exactly nine years after Wittenberg. Philipp earned his epithet, not at least by sponsoring charitable means (from the poorhouse to the school) with the disposal of dioceses and cloisters. The first Protestant University was found in Marburg! But the eventful century was without rest. Even the reformers together could not settle on a theological agreement: the “Marburg Religious Speech” of Luther, Zwingli and Melanchthon still did not result in unification. (In 1529, the year when the princes in Speyer “protested”). The “Schmalkaldische” War resulted in years of captivity for Philipp. After his death in 1567, the painfully united Hessen was divided between his four sons.

The second generation of the Dringenbergs leaves us only two representatives (cf note 3), our lineage travels through the elder of them, **Goergen** (George, Jurgen). Born in 1505 in Grebenstein, he married (ca 1530) Gesa (died after 1545). In 1543, Goergen was mentioned in a household census and possessed a “Pieke” (pick, fighting arm). By 1545 he was not mentioned in the war review, so he might have been about 40 years of age. In 1569, he was no longer mentioned, which means he was dead. (Reference: Stadt-Archiv Grebenstein). Our ancestor, in possession of some property was able to dedicate a legacy to the hospital in 1545 “To the poor people in hospital ...”. **5**

His younger brother Henrich (The Older) was also a Grebenstein property owner (born ca 1510, died after 1569). In 1543, he was also mentioned in the household census as a pick-man and again in 1545 at the war review. In 1532 and 1536, he sold part of his land, and in 1569 was known as “The Elder”. When exactly he died still remains unanswered.

Our third generation: Henrich (The Younger) was, in accordance to our references **6** the only descendent of Goergen. We suspect he was born in 1530 and married Greta (NN) in 1555. We assume Greta was born in 1532 and died after 1583. Henrich died around 1600. They all lived in Grebenstein - and our family history continued in this very region in the following generations. In 1569, Henrich became known as “The Younger”. Again, only two children followed: Johann (our ancestor) and Christoph.

At this point, a picture of the size of the city of Grebenstein can be drawn: in 1585, Grebenstein had a population of 1.940 inhabitants in 431 households. The surrounding villages - today districts - were Udenhausen with 42 households, Burguffeln with 20 and Schachten with 6. Marriage ceremo-

nies were obviously extensive within the communities, as the selection was not large. Considering marriages mostly took place in the same community, choice can't have been large. Marriages between relatives were common. Also noteworthy is that in 1572 landgrave Wilhelm IV issued the oldest existing Guild Charter of the Grebenstein linen weavers, a guild that later our ancestors would also belong to.

Fourth Generation: Johann was born in 1555 and married in 1578 (NN, born ca 1560, and died November 16, 1637 - the first exact date!) Johann himself died before 1628. From 1600, Johann was mentioned in the so-called "Salbuch". 7 He still lived in 1609, as his son Johann was called "Junior". 1628 he was already dead. Johann's offsprings were George (once more, the first born continues our lineage), Johann junior and again, a Henrich. The brother of Johann, Christoph died unmarried, and again left an interesting contemporary document - following the example set by his grandfather, he bequeathed the hospital an undisclosed sum on Walpurgis, 1583.

MEMENTO: In the original text, you note the spelling of the name "Drengenberg" with "e" in the heading - ("Grebenstein manner") - while the original quotation itself is "Dringenbergk" and in the genitive form "Dringenberges" (original text on the Internet).

With the fourth generation of Dringenbergs, the turn of the century had arrived. In the meantime, the denominational unrest of the Empire increased. The Catholic Restoration ran at full speed, power and influence of the Jesuits were considerable. The time of "Augsburg Peace" had seemed to be forgotten in one generation only. Since 1576, the denominational tension had intensified, and at the turn of the century the administration of the empire lay paralyzed. In 1608 (the Union) and 1609 (the Catholic League) the Denominational Defence Alliance with its own military organisation were founded. Hessen-Kassel sided with the Union. We were standing on the eve of a decade-long blood bath. Throughout the history of mankind, insane acts have often been committed "in the name of the one true belief".

In this explosive time of world politics, the Grebenstein community was again plagued by misery. The city was ravished in 1597 by an epidemic of the plague. In the graveyard there was no further room, and one had to build outside the city walls. Our direct line of ancestors, however, did not meet their deaths due to this spell of bad luck.

III. THE THIRTY YEAR WAR 1618 - 1648 (17th century)

Territorial church politics drove Germany (among other countries) through warlike argument, devastation, plundering, and unending misery for three decades. After the denominational conflict, the German "Reichsstände" also had a pronounced interest in power and control. Meanwhile, the emperors of Habsburg strove to retain their seat of power, and continued the campaign towards unity. At the end of the blood shed, a new base of order could be seen in Europe, now also involving Spain, Sweden and France, for whom at this point there was a chance to obtain supremacy. The old Empire was lost; influence and independence of the territorial Princes increased at the price of the Empire's inner structures weakening. However, the common man paid the true price. The population in most areas fell by 50 to 70 percent. Some smaller regions remained spared, however whole areas were devastated. Serious poverty challenged the tremendous efforts of the survivors.

At the beginning of the war, Grebenstein had a population comparable to that of 1585 (around 2.000 people). However, during the war (1623 - 1626) around 740 inhabitants died of the plague alone. The city itself was reported to have been a target for Croatian hordes - in 1637, under the command of Colonel Beigott (Bigod), the city was plundered and burned. The town hall, churches and other important public buildings were destroyed, along with 242 other houses. At the end of the war, only 600 of the original 2.000 inhabitants remained.

At the “Treaty of Westphalia” in 1648 in Münster (with France) and Osnabrück (with Sweden) the “Augsburg Religious Treaty” was again instigated. A chance for reformation was again opened. Each territory was reorganized, and the empire was remodelled as Spain and Switzerland no longer sided with the Empire.

The life of the Dringenbergs continued on in Grebenstein during these times, producing over three further generations. Under the pressure of the long running events of the war, if we ignore Johann (the fourth generation), the others fared well during the first ten years of war. Henceforth, our family began to record more births, although we do not have to rely on the “works of nature”, but it is due to the better references (see below, our seventh generation).

The fifth generation was established through **George**. Born in 1578, he first married a short time before the war (around 1605) Anna NN (born ca 1580, death ca 1622). From this union came our ancestor Johannes in ca 1610. Through George, we for the first time got to know about a profession, being handed down from father to son. George was known as the “old Forest Warden”. In 1607, he was mentioned in the First Troup of Musketeers, the main company under Colonel Asmus von Baumbach. War or not, George married a second time in March 1623 - this time a woman whose name is still a mystery. She died on October 2, 1624 in Immenhausen (nearby location of Grebenstein), but first gave her husband a second child on September 15, 1624. In 1628, George was burdened with war debts of 170 Taler (former currency). Around 1630, he married for a third time (Gerdruth NN, death October 6, 1640), and died himself on the September 15, 1652.

Johann junior (born ca 1590) was in 1609 - as was his brother George - also in the First Troop of Musketeers under von Baumbach. From here, however, we lose track of him. It can be presumed that he did not come back from the war.

The third brother Henrich (born ca 1600) married Catharina Staubesandt (a well-known Grebenstein name) on March 4, 1629 and died after 1671. His children were Elisabeth (born 1644) and Christoph (born ca 1645). **8**

The sixth generation: Johannes was born in 1610, and like his father George, was also a Forest Warden. Unlike his father, who lived to be over 70, Johannes only survived until his forties, and died before his father on the May 9, 1652. He was the ancestor who, despite the war, managed quite well. We know this little piece of information (concerning land property) from his numerous progeny. From his six children, five were boys: the first was given the name of Johannes (ca 1633) and the second named Ahrend, from whom our lineage stems, Christoph, Detmar and George (after the grandfather) followed, and in 1649, after the Peace Agreement, Anna came.

The seventh generation: Arend (Arnd, Aarnd, Aarnt) was born *before* 1637 - in this year, information regarding births and deaths began to be more precise in the Grebenstein Church Book **9** and Arend is not listed here.

So we don't know whether all of Arend's descendants are noted, but we know about twelve children, by two wives. The first marriage was on November 28, 1661 to Marie Albrecht. She bore nine children: Catharina, Johannes (after the grandfather), Stephan d.J. (our ancestor), Elisabeth, Margretha, Margarethe, Ditmar, Johann Martin and Anna Elisabeth. Two months after the final birth, she died (10th April, 1679).

The second marriage, to Dorothea NN occurred four years later on February 20, 1683. Dorothea produced another three children, Johann, Conrad and Magdalena - the first early in 1683 and the third three years later. She died after 1714 (paying “Geschoss” in 1714). **10**

Arend was mentioned in the city parliament in 1686, but after this we do not know a lot about him. His death in 1702 is only approximately dated, as Dorothea, at this time is named as a widow, being

the Godmother (28th February, 1702) of her granddaughter Dorothea (from the ninth generation), a daughter of Johannes, the second child by Arend's first wife.

IV. SEEKING A PATH THROUGH THE PERIOD OF ENLIGHTENMENT (18th century)

After the Westphalian Peace Agreement, life should improve. For some part, things calmed themselves with this deed, but the people were not yet prepared for a new, peaceful time, most of all those, who had to rule. A bloom, however, of science, art and philosophy developed in our culture. In his secularised world man released himself from his mental immaturity, 100 years later in 1874 described by Kant as "his own fault". We speak of the **Enlightenment**, the deciding intellectual movement after the Reformation, which remained perceptible until the present 20th century. Leibniz, Voltaire and Rousseau, Kant, Goethe and Schiller, Bach and Mozart (to name a few) lived in this era of the late 17th and the 18th century; they had an effect far out of Europe.

For the people of Grebenstein, this time began full of hope. In 1651, a new public school was erected with four classes for around 100 students. Arend's children (our 8th generation) profited greatly from this beginning. Until the Seven-Year War of the middle 18th century, time passed by rather peacefully - except of natural catastrophes. As for the intellectual movements of the time, we know nothing about the effects on Grebenstein - weekdays continued as per normal. Our eighth and ninth generations meanwhile increased industriously, still remaining at the same place.

Our forefather of the **eighth generation of Dringenberg** is **Stephan** d.J., the third child of Arend. Stephan (Steffan) was born on November 4, 1666. *II* He was confirmed at the age of 14 (1680) and married eight years later, at the age of 22, Dorothea Baumbach (born March 14, 1664, died September 30, 1734).

The couple produced nine children, and again our lineage begins with the first born, namely Bernhard Georg (born June 15, 1690). Following, between 1696 and 1713, are Henrich Philipp (Martin), Johannes, Elisabeth, Marie Elisabeth, Anna Gerdruth, Johann Georg, Anna Catharina and Anna Maria.

In 1708, Stephan built the house in "Obere Strohstrasse", number 6, and after 1710 the one in "Untere Strohstrasse" number 2, which he re-erected after a fire on May 13, 1717.

You can still admire to this day the house at number 6, restored with half timber, and can realise that the time around 1708 is not that distant from the current 21st century. Over the house entrance is the original plaque:

"STEPHANUS DRENGENBERG AND ORTHIA, MY WIFE, HAVE PUT OUR TRUST IN GOD
AND HAVE BUILT THIS HOUSE IN 1708"

The name "Orthia" on this sign confused the writer at first, but it became obvious that it was a customary contraction of the name "Dorothea".

The time of Stephan's death is not guaranteed, but it was most likely before 1731, as his widow paid "residences" (a tax), after further calculation, but dated before 1732.

Bernhard George begins our **ninth generation**. Born on June 15, 1690, he can be considered a man of the 18th century. In 1721, he married Maria Elisabeth NN (born October 1700, died July 10, 1755 at the age of "54years and 9 months"). Together, they had seven children, this time; the youngest continues our lineage.

The children were born between 1721 and 1743: Anna Gerdruth, Henrich, Jacob, Catharina Elisabeth, Elisabeth, Anna Catharina and Johann Henrich (born January 16, 1743). In 1721, Bernhard

George paid a tax of 70 Mark, for land owned by his father and his wife. He was listed in the community in 1731, and died on September 12, 1755, two months after his wife “65 years, 3 months and 2 weeks old”.

We are nearing the middle of the 18th century. Our land of Hessen took a modest position between the significant lands of Hanover, Saxony and Bavaria - and even more to the mighty centres of the time, Prussia and Austria. Friedrich II the Great (Hohenzoller) and Maria Theresia (Habsburg) represented the power blocks and remained in conflict. The “Silesian Wars” in the forties and the “Seven Year War” (1756 - 1763) demanded their tribute to human life and money. It resulted in severe war damage in the entire area around Grebenstein, especially during the positional warfare at the Diemel (river) in 1760/62. Apparently, one was also expected to offer every effort to the Great Royal Hessen Grenade Regiment, which crossed over from Grebenstein to the American War of Independence (1776 - 1783).

In 1773, Grebenstein had a population of 1 495. Next to the 316 occupied houses stood 101 abandoned houses, remnants of the Thirty Year War (presumably from the notorious year of 1637).

Grebenstein was a garrison city, but nevertheless - after a “profession census” in 1753, there were still 70 linen weavers, 37 spinners, 12 dressmakers, 3 tanners, 14 shoemakers and three cobblers, 2 tailors and 2 coopers. Apart from these there were a few butchers, brick layers, chamber maids and other similar occupations (the largest proportion of jobs was to be found in work with clothing manufactures, the importance of which was soon lost). 46 farmhands and 9 shepherds worked in the fields - an interesting set of statistics portraying the period’s working life!

V. THE PERIOD OF INDUSTRIALISATION... (18th and 19th century)

Men, who - similar to our ancestors in Grebenstein - owned land, could be, to some degree, self-sufficient. Yet our family also increased their own fruitfulness, as was customary in the period, and land could not be divided as one saw fit or even increased.

Finding work in a secure profession for each child, especially the boys, was becoming a challenge in the changing society. During the 18th century, our ancestors still found work in the respected trades that had dominated in Grebenstein. As well as this, the Dringenberg daughters quite often married into the same guilds. However, soon the sacrifices associated with the rising industrialism could be seen. Man began to re-orientate himself, pushed - like it or not - from the intimate city walls to the outer lands. At first, he went only to nearby towns, then finally to wider regions. To survive one had to accept ordinary work, let it be on farmlands or in the new coming industrial centres.

Those of you who know Gerhard Hauptmann’s (1862 - 1946) social tragedy “The Weavers” will have some idea of the radical changes of the time, in which the meaning of work by hand diminished, or partly became sense in collaboration with operating machines. In the early phase of the Industrial Revolution, our linen weavers profited from the conditions of the Mercantilism modeled on the Prussian example. Linen weaving, textile and glass manufacturing and other similar occupations continued to be profitable trades up until the end of the 18th and into the 19th century. The salaried working weaver, however, became impoverished. 1844 announced the Weavers Rebellion in Silesia. As well as the installation of the mechanical loom, the spinning machine and the steam engine the general discovery of mineral resources and the extension of transport and communications caused new and often cruel circumstances and drove man across the land in order to earn a living.

We can only speculate on whether the daily life of our forefathers was influenced by greater continental political events, apart from the consequences of the war. At least, we find ourselves around

the time of the **Revolution** - and later at the Restoration. Again, a renewed spiritual and warlike tremor jolted the foundations of Europe. The French Revolution started in 1789 and produced multiple unrests until the Vienna Congress in 1815 - also in the ordinary citizens (not only) in Hessen.

The time of **Napoleon**: By the "Reichsdeputationshauptschluss" the landgrave of Hessen-Kassel advanced to an electoral prince (Kurfürst). He did not join the Rhine-alliance of Napoleon. So the French troops soon marched in, meaning the Kurfürst had to flee. On November 1, 1806, Kassel and surroundings were occupied. Grebenstein fell into the dubious situation of holding a central position as a "Canton" in the crown land of Westphalia - with a "Maire" at the top - and had to accommodate the imperial French Escapade Regiment.

In this passing national organization, **Kassel** was the capital city, in which Napoleon's brother Jérôme reigned. Although this phase caused many to offer a mocking history of the time, you may imagine, that our ordinary citizens had to arm themselves with foreign habits and other measures - all the while in a foreign language. *12*

The young men of Grebenstein were also required to take part in the Russian campaign of Napoleon in 1812 - only two of our 23 soldiers returned. One year later, at last, the whole charade came to an end. In the War of Liberation against Napoleon in 1813/14, with the culmination of the "Battle of the Nations" at Leipzig in October 1813, hundreds of thousands of men clashed, including 95 Grebenstein men. It is not well known how many lost their lives there. Napoleon, however, fled back over the Rhine.

In these eventful eras, we can again report on three more generations of the Dringenberg family, and with them reach - in the whole sense of the outline of social change - the end of our time in Grebenstein (our lineage and also others left). However, the mobilization of the tenth and eleventh generations of Dringenberg/Drengenbergs is, geographically, only a small one.

Our tenth generation is based on the name **Johann Henrich**, the youngest offspring of Bernhard Georg. He was born on January 16, in 1743, was a linen weaver "Master" and so was a typical example of his time. He married in 1770 at the age of 27, Anna Margarethe Emde (born June 24, 1742, died 1808). Johann Henrich died on December 8, 1793 at the age of only 49. Here ends our depiction of the 18th century. His widow outlived him by 15 years, and died at the age of 65.

During this marriage, three children were produced between 1771 and 1778: Henricus, with whom our lineage continues, Johann Christoph and Martha Elisabeth - a remarkably small number when you consider the recordings of this time being far more reliable. All the same, at that time you were not forced to register your child with the parish priest. And it did occur, that people withheld details from the entries - for example the name of the father. So, we are happy that our lineage, in this regard, offers complete dates, although the truth of the entries cannot be clarified.

Henricus is our **eleventh generation**. He was born on April 5, 1771 and took up the profession of his father, a linen weaver. The chronicles show him also as a citizen of the city. With Henricus we reach a reference that at this point was tested through German post seals in the family Bible (known as the "Proof of Ancestry" at the time of the "Deutsches Reich" 1941). Again, he is entered as linen weaver.

Henricus married for the first time in 1797, at the age of 26, Margarethe Elisabeth Roose (born 1772, died February 1, 1815). What the family Bible doesn't show, we can find in the Church book. After Henricus was widowed at the age of 44 (his wife was one year younger), he married again in the same year Catharina Elisabeth Bergmann (July 2, 1781, confirmed 1795, died 1829). This union remained without children, Catharina was already 34 at the time of the marriage. At her burial 14 years later, only 47 years old, the "great bell tolled". It is reported that Henricus paid a "Geschoss" of 11 "alb" in 1806. His death was recorded in an entry dated October 22, 1842.

From the union with Margarethe, six children were born between 1798 and 1808. Again, it is the first born that is our forefather, Johannes. Then followed Johann Christoph, Anna Barbara, Anna Gertrud, Henricus (1805, named after the father) and Anna Margarethe.

Henricus, the 11th generation, was the last of our ancestors to call Grebenstein his native place and live there his whole life. For the remaining family, or rather relatives we are not sure to trace this exactly. Still, the presumption remains that quite a few Dringenbergs (Drengenbergs) died elsewhere, as their deaths were not recorded in the annals there, without a warlike background being supposed. After the tenth generation, a local mobilization to the village of Udenhausen (today a part of Grebenstein) occurred - and today, in the 21st century, Drengenbergs still live there. Other branches of the family migrated - as per our twelfth generation - in the 1860's to Schachten (today, also a district), with a "Dispens", which was valid for one year (Heinrich Dringenberg/Drengenberg). Another track (Johannes D.), also in this year, went to Bremen, with a "three-year dispens". And in 1870, finally, a line went to Dortmund, also with a three-year dispensation (George Friedrich D.). The common father of these three travellers was Johann George, who was born in Udenhausen and with whom we are related in the seventh generation. They were likewise descendents of Arend, stemming from his second son Johannes. Our genealogical records concerned with the area around Grebenstein (Udenhausen) end with the fourteenth generation in the 1920's.

Historically, we find ourselves at first in the epoch of the **Restoration** (1815 to 1848). The Roman-German Empire - divided in many small and large land sovereignties - was more or less ready for reform after the Vienna Convention, and one speaks of enlightened absolutism. Rebellion against this government state hung in the air: in 1817, the "Wartburg-Fest" of the German students, who honoured the Reformation and the Battle of the Nations, in 1832, the "Hambacher Fest" of the South-German liberalism.

And so the movement of the **Revolution** in France of 1848 seized Germany in similar but moderate ways and not in the uprising proletarian masses, but was driven forward more or less by the citizenship. Nevertheless, 1848 was the beginning of a new time - with the "Frankfurt National Assembly" in the Church of St Paul.

During this stormy time, in which the political and social life of Germany and Europe changed, mobility increased. Apart from the internal colonisation with the founding of 900 villages, as happened to hundreds of thousands of citizens in the Prussian state area, there were other measures of the sovereign to cause discontentment. For example, soldiers were just given to other sovereigns as merchandise. A wave of migration began. America was the main destination, as thousands upon thousands moved there each year, especially in the 30's and 40's of the 19th century as the movement increased. *13*

Again, the population of Grebenstein in the 19th century declined. While after the Seven Year War around 1.500 remained, population grew up to 2.000 with the military members, reaching a peak of 2.605 in 1849. By 1910, there were 2.210 left. During this movement, the migration of our branch of the Dringenberg family from Grebenstein took place. Evidently they found the terrible Years of Famine (Bad Harvest) from 1846 - 1848 difficult (see Johannes, following).

A HALFWAY POINT IN THE FAMILY HISTORY

For only one generation the family history was still to be shown in **Bad Sooden-Allendorf** (current name) on the Werra, and stayed here to bond with the Hessian soil. One can call it a halfway point because apparently no further descendants remained in Allendorf, and after recent investigation, our name does not appear here further.

Our twelfth generation was still born in Grebenstein: **Johannes** came into the world on June 1, 1978, and was the first true child of the 19th century. Johannes was immediately christened on the 8th of the month; his godfather was Johannes Roose, from the family of his mother Margarethe. In the Grebenstein Chronicles, you can find him listed as a citizen and linen weaver, so he must have remained in the area until manhood.

We cannot say exactly, when Johann was drawn to Allendorf on the Werra. But he married here, on July 6, 1845, comparatively late (47 years old). His occupation is listed as linen weaver, and his wife Martha Katharina Märten of Allendorf was only 30 years of age at the wedding, 17 years younger than her husband.

We do not know if they had other children, only that our lineage is continued by the birth of Johannes (after the father), eight years into the marriage in 1853. Martha died three years later at the age of 41 (15th September, 1856, Allendorf). **14**

At least 20 years after his wedding in Allendorf, Johannes Senior died there on September 9, 1865, and his son migrated further towards the far distant "Ruhr District".

VI. - AND THE WAY INTO THE 20th CENTURY (19th/20th century)

United characteristic of the beginning epoch is a stronger **Prussia**, that you especially associate with the name Otto von Bismarck, who became Minister President in 1862. In the fight for supremacy in Europe, clashes with Austria and France took place, and also German Lands were separated. In 1866, the conflict came to a head, and after the battle of Königgrätz in the "German War between Brothers" the larger part of Hessen became Prussian ground, as the Prussian province Hessen-Nassau. And indeed, the area of the kingdom of Prussia and its allies stretched itself "from the Maas to the Memel" (rivers), covering the whole of the German North, West and East - with the exception of a little part of Saxony - and reached nearly to the Main, near Frankfurt.

Soon afterwards the German-French War of 1870/71 followed, ending with a new German Empire (the second). Who doesn't know the picture of the proclamation of King Wilhelm I of Prussia as the new German Kaiser in the Mirror-Hall of Versailles! Remember: the Kaiser was, to date, a Habsburg, seated in Vienna. He was a hindrance to the original formation of a German National State after 1848. The result of German striving for unity **15**, instead of a "larger German Solution", was a "small German Solution", which essentially, in its core, was Prussian. Bismarck was the Empire Chancellor from 1871 - 1890. Apart from his foreign and inner politics his social politics should make history. In the 80's that followed, the laying of the foundations of a German national insurance began, followed by the Worker's Protection Act (forbidding child labour) in 1890, and by the Civil Code in 1900. All this was not sufficient for the self-confident citizenship and also for the worker's union. The problems of the industrial society developed too severely, and the spirit of the "subject" taking over from the way of the "citizen" turned out to be very critical. For decades, the existing social order, little by little, was subsided by the conditions of the industrial society, a labour force was produced: the "proletariat". At the end of the 19th century, the social democracy was formed as was the German Trade Union, later the Communism. The "social question" was a constant, central problem (not only) in Germany.

The second German Kaiser Wilhelm II (1888 - 1918) failed pitifully in his foreign politics. The conflicts between the great powers grew. The First World War (1914 - 1918) was an unprecedented example of mass extinction of people, but also of material goods. Around 20 million died, of whom 1.8 million were Germans and a similar count in Russia. France and Austria-Hungary also suffered great losses (Ploetz: 1252). The end of the "Second Reich" was sealed.

Our 13th generation was **Johannes Reinhard August Martin**, who was born in Allendorf on June 26, 1853, and baptized on July 17. His occupation is given as a linen weaver (Weissbinder), as with his father Johannes. On February 8 (20 at church) 1876, he married at 23, also in Allendorf,

Charlotte Sann, born July 31, 1845, still having been well remembered by witnesses of the time in Essen in the 20th century. **16** Our heir, also Johann Reinhard after his father, was born in Hessen in 1880, in Sooden (which at the time was administrated by Witzenhausen).

Father Johannes Reinhard migrated in his middle age, we don't know exactly when, further west towards Prussia. Mother Charlotte, son Johannes Reinhard and the elder brother Reinhard Christian (born January 21, 1874) accompanied him. We don't know when their other children were born, how many there were or if they were born in Hessen. However, there must have been seven in total. **17** They drew closer to the distant **Westphalia** - and shortly to its west border, to **Bochum-Weitmar**. You can accept, that the opportunity of work in the Ruhr District was the reason for the move. The father was - until the age of 30 - a factory worker and must have become foreman, following the "Familienbuch"; there are no more witnesses of the time to be consulted.

Johannes Reinhard could not profit much from his new position. He died a few years later on July 27, 1886 at the age of 33. His wife Charlotte outlived him by 47 years and had a lasting influence on the family. She continued on until the age of 87 when, on February 17, 1933, she finally closed her eyes, just in time before a new, dark era began to emerge in Germany.

Our fourteenth generation was again **Johann Reinhard**, and was born in Hessen on March 31, 1880. He was the grandfather of the writer. You may remark, that he was called Reinhard, as was his father. And for decades you will find one principal forename (amongst others) being underlined in official records and family Bibles also in the upcoming Bundesrepublik (FRG). We know that in the family circle, he was called Reinhold, perhaps a decision made as his son was also called Reinhard.

A memory of this Grandfather (in the 21st century) no longer exists, as he also died too young. Only the stories told in the family remain alive. He worked as a fitter, and was remarkable for his energetic work and his considerable strength. The family speaks of his responsible, leading work in the mine, mounting and fitting. However, he also worked "practically", i.e. with his hands.

Johann Reinhard went the small distance from Weitmar to **Kupferdreh** (today a district of **Essen**) and found himself in the **Rhineland**. He married on March 21, 1922 the 16 year younger Helene Nolzen (born August 4, 1896). The grandmother of our writer came from Wuppertal - situated in the nearby "Bergisches Land", born into a solid background (her father was a "Master" of agriculture), where they lived godfearing, attaching importance to cleanliness and good food. From which her grandson profited greatly! After a stillbirth on November 9, 1922, she produced a son Reinhard in 1924.

Living in Kupferdreh was found to be very "small-town". At first, surroundings were more or less rural with good-neighbourhood structures, with small-town people, but with a satisfying income.

On March 4, 1948, the last Dringenberg to be born outside Essen, "Reinhold", died in Kupferdreh. The painful end was a tenacious struggle against his robust nature, after his only son lived to return from the war and with his daughter-in-law and a grandchild /the writer) the last two and a half years always by his side.

Grandma Helene lived until April 11, 1958, and died at the age of 61 during a stay at a health resort in Stromberg (Hunsrück).

(Further references regarding the existence of the 14th generation of the Dringenberg in the Ruhr District can be seen in note 17).

VII. FROM THE AGE OF SERVICE SOCIETY TO (POST-)MODERN TIMES (from the 20th to the 21st century)

On paper, the jump from the first to the **Second World War** (1939 -1945) is quick. The effects of the war continued after its end, however the will to survive after 1918 remained intact. For us, the symbolism of the “savage 20’s” remained, the “Golden Twenties” (or “Roaring Twenties” for music), Germany lived again, namely in Berlin. However, in 1930 the world economic crisis dampened the feeling of being alive, and in 1933, the Hitler’s “struggle for power” began, signalling the start of the darkest phase of all, a “Third Reich”, an empire which one would like to shamefully overlook, but which we can not forget. At the end of this worldwide catastrophe, results and sacrificial counts were to be noticed, which put those of the World War 1 deep in the shade. They reached incredible dimensions, so that you lose the imagination of their reality: 55 million dead (Ploetz: 1419), to which one can scarcely pass comment, only by headlines like persecution of Jews, missing people and exiles, or the hint to the first atom-bomb.

It was a wonder that - with foreign aid and our strength - after 1945, things began to look brighter. The **Federal Republic of Germany** was the new order, in which West Germany strove towards “modern” times. After having founded the constitution on May 23, 1949, the arduous and conservative fifties followed, then the prosperous sixties. By the seventies, the limits of growth and development was felt. The social order with new, critical conditions for the individual and state, the emancipation of women and a new found self-confidence began with a new future for all citizens. With the decline of the East-West enemy blockade, the unconceivable hope of German Reunification occurred on October 3, 1990.

When one speaks of the “limits of growth”, the change from the industrial society to the service society is meant. In the conventional sense, production diminished. Services, knowledge and information are the “new products”. “Communication” is a reduced part of everyday life (different from former times in Grebenstein). Life is more and more “virtually”. After a lifetime (that today’s statistics show between 70 and 80 years-long), the people of the early 21st century remain with unanswered questions, due to the rapidly changing world in which they live, which even cannot be given an exact formula. For the moment we help ourselves with weak phrases as e.g. Globalisation.

Our 15th generation begins with the father of the writer, **Reinhard**, born in (Essen-) Kupferdreh on March 20, 1924, in the middle of the famous twenties. He symbolised the bridge to an era of new professions beside that of production. Perhaps, due to the family background of his mother he found an apprenticeship as a cook and waiter. But before this training could be used, he went to war. He himself was too rebellious to be a soldier. With a great amount of luck, he managed to make it home after the Russian battle (in Stalingrad) - wounded but alive! By chance, during rehabilitation in the sick bay in Ulm, he met Hedwig Baumgärtner (born September 11, 1925), who was later to become his wife. The two married on April 6, 1945 in Ulm-Wiblingen. While the Second World War found was finally coming to an end, the young couple decided to move to Essen, which was very difficult at that time. (Today, in Germany, you cannot imagine a pregnant woman travelling on an open coal-truck). Soon after, their son Rainer was born.

After the war, the art of surviving was often harder than during the last few war years. They grasped at straws to find work. Privately, they smuggled or exchanged goods in order to overcome hunger. For some time, father Reinhard sought out jobs and activities in accordance with his studies before the war. And after diverse halfway points, he trusted in the economic miracle and made the leap into independence: car business and garage work. The best years followed, and the family acquired a newly built (1960’s) flat. They moved from Kupferdreh to Essen (east) and from here on the family can still be found in Essen today. **18**

During the recession Reinhard had an old war injury to overcome. Unable to manage his business, he died on November 9, 1967 at the age of only 43. His wife Hedwig had continued to work for a long time and was able to hold herself and her son above water allowing him to study - truly a new era! Hedwig also died at a young age on October 7, 1983, only 58 years old.

The history of our **sixteenth generation**, as per the seventeenth, could perhaps be written at a later point in time. We are at the end of the report on our family of Grebenstein, however, a few facts can be added. The sixteenth generation begins with the writer himself, **Rainer**, born on August 31, 1945 in Essen-Kupferdreh. His professional details can be read at another place. He is also working in service - as an academic professor and "knowledge-producer". **19**

In January 1970, he was blessed by the fate of good luck by meeting **Gerlinde G. Gräf**, whom he married on October 14, 1971 and with whom, has meanwhile celebrated thirty years of marriage. From this union came the last representatives of our family, the **seventeenth** generation. **Daniela** was born on October 15, 1974, and on December 30, 1976, their son **Raimund** was born. It seems that both children will start their careers in the advanced service society. It will be with the upcoming media that their generation will go forth to continue with the Dringenberg Family History.

FOOTNOTES

(0) The original report on the DRINGENBERG FAMILY in Germany was written in October 2001 - using the 475 years anniversary of Protestantism in Hessen (October 26, 1526) as an opportunity to bring together all findings of my family research up to that date. The English version has initially be done by **Kit Haydock**, Brisbane, Australia, accompanied by my wife **Gerlinde** and after final revision by **Susan Jost-Hünwinkel**, Essen, it was loaded up on the Internet in early February, 2003.

To contact me/us or for more information please use:

- 1. my website for family research: <http://www.dringenberg-history.de>
- 2. our private website of the Dringenberg family, Essen: <http://www.dringenberg-home.de/>
- 3. my office website Dr. Rainer Dringenberg, Bochum:
<http://www.efh-bochum.de/Homepages/dringenberg/dringenberg.html>
- and the indicated mail addresses in there.

(1) The family name was written in Grebenstein with both an "i" and an "e". The original spelling before the 17th century shows no definite style, some sources indicating our spelling (Dringenberg) and others (preferable in Grebenstein itself) written with an "e".

(2) "Grebenstein-Essen" means that one specific continuous line is proved only following male descendants from Anonymous (No. 1) in Grebenstein to Raimund (No. 17) in Essen.

(3) Before they began to register citizens in Prussia in 1874/75, there were no general systematic records about men except in church books. Other historical sources may be available in case that e.g. someone was mentioned in military archives, paying special taxes or buying/selling land.

(4) Only the "Helvetian Confession" (Zwingli, Calvin) is excluded and became emancipated in 1648 at the end of the 30-yr-war.

(5) **As to those sources:**

Special thanks to Dr. **Achim Hähnert**, Grebenstein, for researching archives especially before the 30-yr-war and to Mrs. **A. Käckel**, Grebenstein, for some extracts from Grebenstein church books - as well as to the city administration of Grebenstein, esp. to Mr. **Krause**.

(6) Complete listing of Dringenberg/Drengenberg family in Grebenstein by A. Hähnert (15th to 20th century: see website (No. 1 above), button "Quellen", first link: page "dringenberg_15_20.html".

(7) In former times in Hessen a kind of public records, done in irregular intervals.

- (8) The ongoing report does not regard other branches but our direct line from Grebenstein to Essen. For more information please see the document indicated in note (6).
- (9) Church Books in Grebenstein exist beginning in 1637, the older ones being destroyed by the Croatian hordes (during the 30-yr-war) mentioned above. In our days a certain Mrs. Brendel worked out typescript extracts from the original handwritings, following the order of family names. So research for special families and relatives became much easier.
- (10) A Geschoss is a tax; those details can be found in a Geschoss-Register.
- (11) This exact (complete) birth date being the oldest one proved by an original source, I made a copy of the concerned part of the original handwriting.
- (12) Beside some products in literature and film an amusing story is to be read on the Grebenstein website (A. Hähnert) under “-/Koenig_jerome.htm”.
- (13) In the 50's it is nearly 60.000 (average) per year, in the 60's more than 80.000. (Ploetz, Auszug aus der Geschichte, (28) Würzburg 1976: 1001, 1017)
- (14) In this case we found out, that the official note in our family book shows a wrong detail, which could be proved by evidence.
- (15) This was no German speciality but is to be seen in the general context of building nation-states in Europe in that time.
- (16) This was especially “uncle Alfred” (my father's cousin). Alfred was born on February 22, 1905 in Bochum and was nearly 28 years old when Grandma Charlotte died. Alfred himself died on November 11, 1995 at the age of 90 in Essen.
- (17) As to personal statements of Alfred (note 16; son of Christian ->), the last Dringenberg born in Hessen, Johannes Reinhard, later in Bochum (13th generation), had seven children (listing may be not really complete):
- 1. Christian: children Alfred (no descendants) and Else (one daughter),
 - 2. Heinrich had one daughter,
 - 3. Johann: daughter Marga in Bochum-Linden,
 - 4. Else (married name Frey),
 - 5. Ottilie (see note 17a),
 - 6. Johann Reinhard (my grandfather),
 - 7. Ernst: one son, Karl-Heinz, who moved from Bochum to Menden (Sauerland).
- (17a) Ottilie, called Tilla, was the most beloved aunt in our line, married Timy in Amsterdam, Holland, and had two daughters, Else and Erna, both having died meanwhile. At the present time there are no other contacts to members of the Dringenberg family (concerning branches mentioned in note 17).
- (18) The official website of the city of Essen is: <http://www.essen.de>
- (19) Cf. “Who is who?” or “Kürschner, Deutsches Gelehrten-Lexikon” or my university website (see note 0).