

# "The Deems Connection"

April 16, 1995

1st Edition

Since this is Easter Sunday and also my 73rd birthday I thought it was a good time to start this Deems newsletter.

A beginning for a project I have been thinking about since the Deems reunion last August. I have wanted, for a long time, to contact everyone interested in sharing their information on the different branches of the Deems family.

I have many empty spaces on the various branches of the Mark Deems family although I know there were many sons born into the different families. I also have information on the Thomas Deems family of Reading, Pa., The Philip Deems family of Lititz, Pa., Sebastian Deems of Pequea and the Jacob Deems that went to North Carolina.

Several Deems families came to America in the mid 1700's. I feel many were related but have no proof at this time. Over the years I have copied everything I found concerning the Deems family. So I have many facts that may help someone else with their research.

I am asking each person subscribing to this newsletter to read it carefully and inform me of any mistakes I have made on my family records. It is so easy to confuse speculation with real facts but I am trying to revise my files to clear up any mistakes I may have made in the past.

I am planning at least one page of each newsletter for questions and answers from anyone that wants to contribute. I feel this is the only way we can eventually have a Deems history that has been proven with facts to hand down to our descendants.

As long as I can remember there has been someone at the Deems reunion checking out the families attending. Melvern Iames and her family worked on it for years. My first cousin, Elizabeth Finney helped me get started and we were fortunate enough to enjoy a trip to Germany eight years ago. Her daughter, Audra and husband Jerri arranged it for us and helped a great deal with the financial end of the passage.

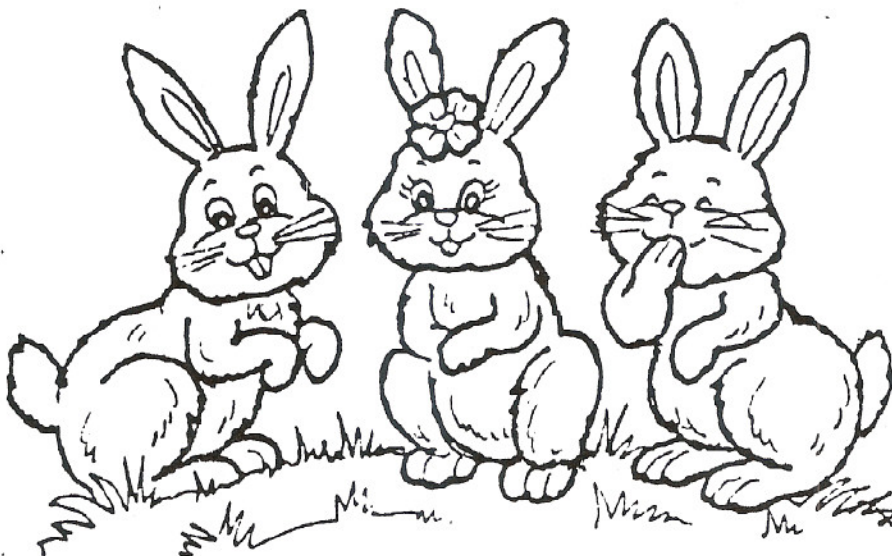
We spent ten days with a bus tour, in Switzerland, Austria and Germany. The tour ended in Frankfurt and for the next five days we traveled around the Frankfurt area doing research. I will always be grateful to Audra and Jerri for giving us such a wonderful gift. One I had never thought would be possible.

Eventually I want to have a book printed. As we work through the newsletters I'm hoping you will contribute information on your particular family as well as any other information you can offer. I want this book to have more than just names and dates. I want to know what our ancestors worked at, where they lived, and all of the little trials and tribulations of daily life.

Maybe this is an impossible task but I have to try and I do hope you will help me.

This particular newsletter, I'm hoping, will help lay a foundation for any research any of you may be doing on your own. Over the years I have learned through trial and error, which has made me more alert in old records etc. Maybe we can help each other in that too.

*Hope you had a happy holiday*





After typing the first page three times I am just going to apologize for any misspelled words or other typing errors or I am going to be sitting here forever. I'm sure I will make many more before this is finished but I hope you will overlook them.

When I first began researching the family in earnest, a man that had been in the business gave me some very good advice.

He said, always write down your source of information. Whether it is from the family bible, or orally from an older family member. When you find old church and legal records, be sure and do the same.

In my eagerness to proceed, often I'm afraid, there were times I didn't follow that advice, now I wish I had. Most legal and church records are correct but sometimes you will find errors in county histories although they are good for basic beginnings.

The old bible records and grandma's recollections are usually pretty accurate. If Grandma is like I am she probably remembers the past better than the present.

The other advice he gave me has been a great asset several times. He said, "Remember, many of the older records were written by people from different countries and many of our ancestors couldn't write."

Imagine, the first Captain list on the immigrant ship being written by a sailor that couldn't spell, and trying to understand a person that was speaking a foreign language.

Although there were three lists for each ship. Sometimes each list had a different spelling because they were written by three different people. The second list was supposed to be the immigrants signature but if he couldn't write often it was written by someone else and he made his mark. The last list was made when they landed, often in the local court house or near by. Again, a different person and possibly a different nationality.

So remember, the name can be the same, whether it is spelled different ways or not. Besides Deems beginning with a D I have found it with a T. The first spellings in this country were Jon and Adam Teem on a 1752 Tax list in Berks County, Pa. I have also found Thiem, Diem, Diehm, Deam, Deem and even a Jacob Diens in western Pa. on a census with other Deems in the same location. Census takers were not always the best spellers either.

Later, on a tax list in southwestern Pa. I found our old Mark (born 1754) recorded as Marquis Deam. Which certainly indicates a Frenchman was doing the recording that day.

That same old researcher that gave me such good advice, told me to sound out the name no matter how it was spelled. I found this very true. He also suggested at times if old records were retyped and updated that we might find a spelling of Thum and Dum where the typist might have misunderstood the old-fashioned pen writings. Recording two E's as a U.

I have some of those spellings on cards in the back of my card file but have not found a connection as yet. I am still open-minded about the possibility though.

I'm sure many of you have had the same experiences. I would like to hear some of them.

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And now we come to the big question of where the Deems family really came from. For years my father used to say we were English. Since his mother was Emma Elizabeth White I am sure he was half right because she was English but with much speculation and research and our trip to Germany Elizabeth and I do believe, as many others do that the original Deems families came here from Germany.

Years ago I wrote to Swarthmore College when I was seeking more information on the Deems' connected with the Quaker Church. At that time I was told the Diehm name was definitely of German origin.

From the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society book volume XII a large section is devoted to a book written by Otto Langguth, Historian and Genealogist from Kreuzwertheim-am-Main, Bavaria. The book, "Pa. German Pioneers from the County of Wertheim" was translated by Don Yoder, Ph. D. from Muhlenberg College and has much information on the early immigrants to this country from Germany.

Earlier Dr. Yoder had translated The Adolf Gerber Lists which was also of great interest to us.



Much of the information from these books have given us a great insight into the great migration from the European countries in the 1700's .

My curiosity was really peaked when our daughter Wenda received one page of births, marriages etc. from a booklet celebrating the 250th annerversary of a church in Kembach and Dietenhan, Germany. The 250 Jahre Kirche und Pharrei Kembach (as the title page is written) was published in 1983.

The one page was sent to her by a woman in Michiagan that was researching a Jacob Thiem, that eventually settled in N. Carolina. I really wanted the rest of that book. My wish was granted when Elizabeth and I made our trip to Germany.

On Easter Sunday, eight years ago Elizabeth and I went to the railroad station in Frankfurt and boarded a train for the small village of Wertheim. It wasn't a long ride possibly an hour and a half but the excitement was terrific.

When in Heidelberg with our tour I had talked to a guide there and told him we were going to be traveling alone for five days and wondered what we could do to further our research and find the villages we wanted to visit. He suggested going to the local Cab company and telling someone there what we wanted.

Although we didn't have a lot of time until our return train to Frankfurt that is what we did. Since neither of us were adapt at speaking German we were afraid we wouldn't be understood but once we found the Cab company office we met with the owner that could speak broken English.

After we explained we wanted to meet Eric Langguth. Because of his part in having the Seelen register printed and that we wanted to make arrangements to come back on Tuesday to go to the different villages we felt we had to get back to the train station, So we would not miss the train back to Frankfurt.

By the time we returned to the station the cab driver was there in his cab coaxing us to get inside. We argued but he assured us he would get us back in time and he was as excited as we were. He had called Eric Langguth, that lived in Wertheim and he wanted to meet us.

So away we went to his home. A typical German home and he in his typical German dress, knickers and all. Why I didn't take his picture I'll never know. We met his son and he sold me two of the books I wanted and the experience was way beyond any expectations I had ever had. I guess I forgot to mention he was Otto Langguths



Eric had a chart on him.

Soon, it was time to leave the Archieves and meet our cab driver again. He was as jolly as ever and gave us a tour that seemed like an old-fashioned Keystone Cops movie. It was great fun.

As soon as he picked us up we went to Kembach. He stopped and picked up Hermann Hemmerich, one of the authors of the Seelen Register, then we proceeded to the church, Hermann had the key and took us in. The feeling of the quiet little church made me want to sit there for the afternoon. It was a very inspirational feeling. I couldn't help but feel a part of it.

As we walked through the old cemetery surrounding it, it was odd to see so many Deems(Diehms) there.

As we got back into the cab. Hermann and the cab driver talked and the driver whipped the cab around and we went back down the hill. When we stopped Hermann jumped out and knocked <sup>on a door</sup> on a well built small home, about the size of a ranch house in this country but we went up steps to enter it. When we were inside he introduced us to Friedrich Diehm and his wife Irma and grandson.

Everyone spoke broken English but we had no problem understanding each other. Friedrich was also one of the authors of the Seelen Register that we had bought from Eric Langguth. They had used the church registers from 1734 to put in the back of the book. Their families were all part of the book.

Friedrich brought out some of his wine to share. Evidently members of the community share their harvest and make their own bottled stock for the town. Elizabeth and I each bought a bottle to bring home as a souvenir.

While we were sitting there enjoying the wine and the lively conversation, Friedrich announced he had been to America. With surprise, I ask when? When he answered I nearly choked because he told us he had been a prisoner of war in Texas during the second world war.

He laughed though and Elizabeth told me later the prisoners were not mistreated in the labor camps. But at the time I was speechless which is quite an accomplishment for me.

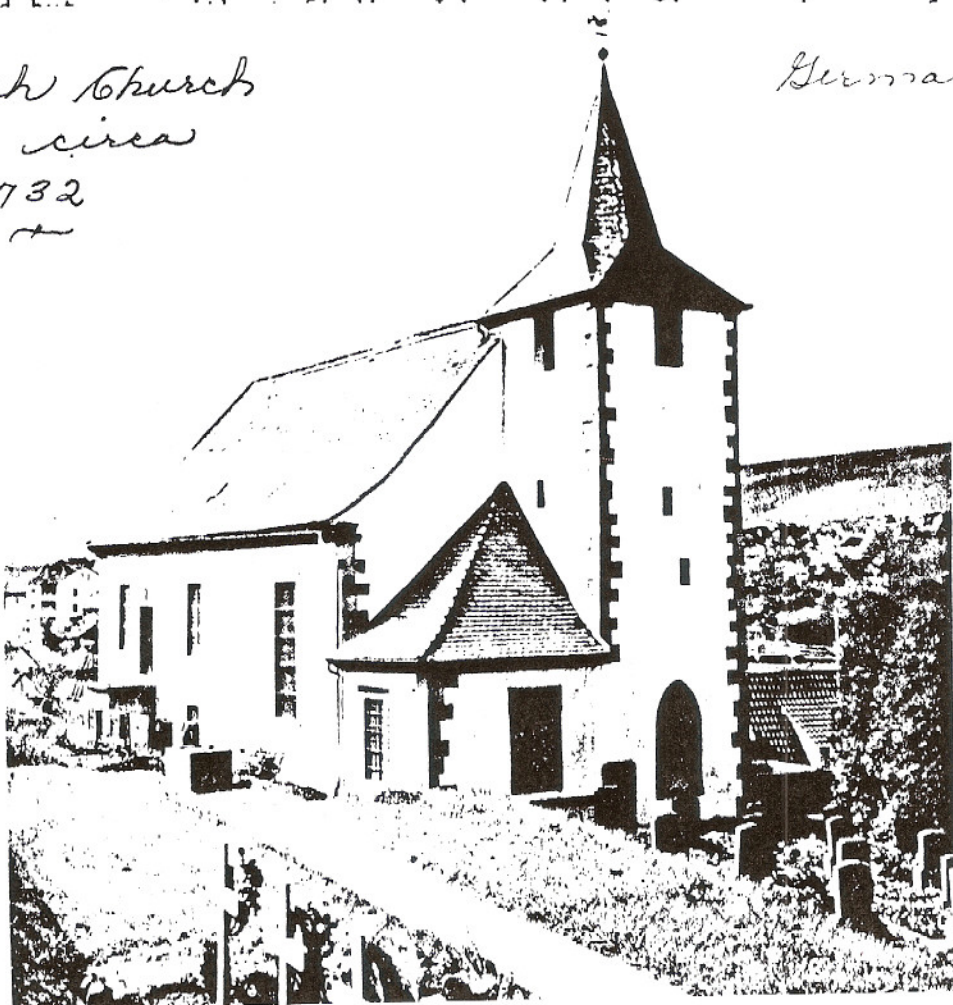
The afternoon went quickly and before long we had to go so we wouldn't miss our train again. I was walking on air as we went back to the cab and to the train station.

Later, I sent Friedrich my extra paper francs and ask if he would check a couple of other village church records but when he replied he said he did not find our Johan but some records were unavailable.

It was another perfect day, way beyond my expectations. As I told Elizabeth when we were planning the trip just to be in that area and walk on those streets I would have been satisfied but...

*Kembach Church  
built circa  
1732*

*Germany*





been satisfied even without finding his birthplace. I feel sure in one of those little village church records there is a baptism for him.

In the preface to the American edition of Otto Langguths, Pa. German Pioneers from the County of Wertheim", it is written as follows:

If in the old days one boarded a river boat at Mainz and sailed up the Main, he eventually got to the picturesque and historic city of Wertheim, now in Baden, but formerly the capital of the little principality of Lowenstein-Wertheim. On the wooded hill behind the city stands the ruins of the castle of the Counts of Wertheim.

Here the waters of the Tauber join the Main, after winding through the lovely Taubergrund, past the storybook villages of Rothenburg and Tauberbischofsheim.

Elizabeth and I visited Rothenburg on a side trip out of Frankfurt. It is a walled city. The walls still have the walkways on the top where the soldiers walked surveying the country side below long, long ago. As we walked down the cobblestoned street inside the city, the tour guide pointed to a side street and told us that is where he lived. He casually said his family had lived in the same house for a thousand years.

Can you imagine such a place? It was wonderful. A large well in the center of one section of a square had a chair on a long pole hanging over it. He told us that is where gossipie women and other offenders used to be dunked when they needed to be reminded of their bad conduct.

Also in that preface it is stated that in the 1700's at least 250 heads of families came to the English colonies in North America, principally to Pennsylvania.

In the late 1740's it became necessary for anyone wanting to leave the country to get permission, called a manumission from the government. The Langguth list is taken from the official state archives of Wertheim, and represents the petitions for manumission by prospective emigrants.

When these men and women decided to come to America, many of them came as a group, not only their families and relatives but friends, neighbors and anyone thinking they might better themselves in America.

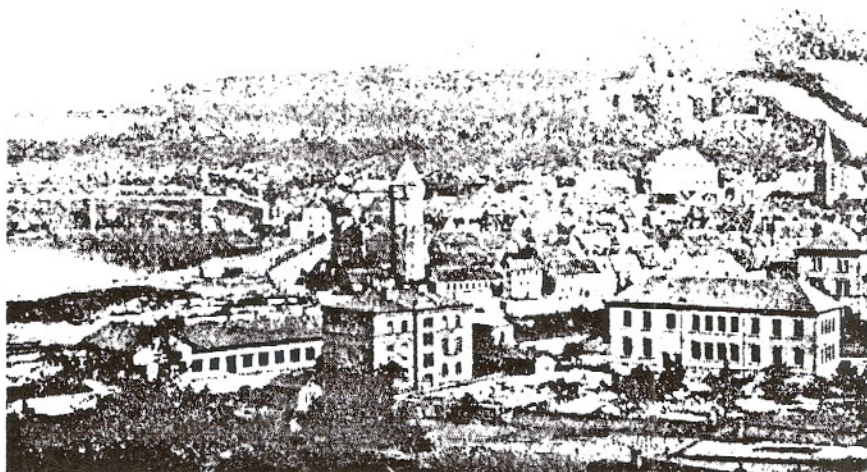
This is what is important when we study the ship lists of our ancestors. Many times they stayed together once they landed in this country, and if you can pinpoint the village some passengers were from you can almost be certain the others were not living too far away.

During the early 1700's, I have read, that there were at least one hundred and ten small villages and hamlets in the valleys of the Main and Tauber rivers. I know from studying old maps that many of the little towns were close together and many had Diehms families as residents. On the Gerber lists as well as Otto Langguths lists they lived in Wenkheim, Dietenhan, Bettingen, Schollbrunn, Kembach, Wertheim, Altfeld, Bestenhead, Dertingen, Krenzwertheim and Uphar to name a few.

Somewhere or near by our Johan was born, I'm sure, all we need to do is find out where.

But, as I have said before, we all know, we still need proof to be able to say we know this is all true. So, until we can prove in writing by church records or otherwise we must still state this is speculation and only a theory.

Can you help me prove this? Do you know of any information that will tell us for sure just where our Johan was born and baptised. Please give me your opinion on this matter..



WERTHEIM ON THE MAIN. ON THE HILLSIDE, THE ANCIENT CASTLE AND MODERN



After reading over the first five pages, I'm offering my apologies again.

The spelling, the mistakes etc. are inexcusable but I don't feel I have time to retype this since I do want to get it in the mail. I hope to do better next time.

For a long time, whenever I went to a library, I tried to study the first volume of Strassburger and Hinke Pa. German Pioneers, the passenger ship lists. Since the book did not have an index of any kind, I soon ~~found~~<sup>found</sup> it was impossible to accomplish much in the limited hours I could spend away from home. So last summer, I finally bought the book and have read it all one page at a time. It is a great reference to go back too.

Comparing it with the manumissions listed in Yoder and Lannguths books I have sorted out alot of the Deems families listed, I think.

There is a Johan Adam Diehm from Kembach that is listed in Langguths book that Eric told us was wrong. He told us that his father Otto had made a mistake when he was tranlating the manumission. As mayor of Kembach Johan Adam Diehm signed the permission records and instead of him coming to America the permission slip was for an Adam Oberdorf. ( March 26, 1753) - Ship, Neptune.

He said the Johan Adam Diehm that built the church was this mayor of Kembach. After we came home from Germany , it was hard to pass on this particular information for many of us had already thought we had located that particular family in this country.

Again, mistakes are made and if possible I hope we can sort them out. In the next newsletter I will go into my theory of the ship our Johan came on. Comparing passenger lists etc. I'm hoping someday we can prove it.

Please, if you have any information to give us any insight to his arrival, let me know. I want this to be a team effort so we will all benefit.

At times we have even wondered if Johan came as a child with his parents early in the 1700's but have no information to back up this theory.

Throughout old records we have found the name Diemer and Thiemer listed. Taking into consideration of the in added sometimes to a womans name we often wondered if the er was added to Diehm for some reason.

Have you ever come across any explanation for the er ending on the Diehm name? Was this an entirely different family?

I am beginning to feel I better close this newsletter now before I confuse you as well as my self.

Write me and offer some questions for the last page of the next newsletter. I feel sure I have offered enough in this edition to keep us all busy for a while.

I want your imput, comments, and questions. That's the only way we will accomplish anything.

Sincerely

Ingrid Deems Smith