

Zeisset Family History

History of the ancestors of six Zeisset siblings who
immigrated to Kansas between 1883 and 1893

Researched and written by Loretta M. Hoerman
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Dedication

I would like to dedicate my research and narrative to my grandmother

Barbara (Bettie) Zeisset Hoerman (1875–1970)

fifth surviving child of Jakob Friedrich and Margarethe (Müller) Zeisset.

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Foreword

The first Zeisset family reunion took place in Leonardville, Kansas, in October 1969. One-hundred-five descendants of six orphaned Zeisset siblings who immigrated to Kansas from Germany between 1883 and 1893 gathered for the reunion.

The six immigrants were Louise, Bertha, Lizzie, Jake, Bettie, and Henry, children of Jakob Friedrich Zeisset and Margaretha Müller. Very little was known about the family in Germany, just the parents' names and the place of birth. Only one of the six siblings was still living, Bettie, but she had advanced dementia and died in 1970.

After the 1969 reunion, Henry Zeisset's son, Merton, determined to document the history of the Zeisset family in America. His son, Ray was inspired to learn the history of his Zeisset ancestors in Germany. This led Ray, together with his wife Carolyn, to plan a trip to Germany for themselves and his parents, Merton and Ina, in 1970. This is history as provided by Ray's brother, Paul Zeisset, who helped with funding the trip.

Before going to Germany, Ray consulted a German genealogist, Dr. Hans-Ulrich Freiherr von Ruepprecht (1911–2006) of Stuttgart, who provided a history limited to two generations of Zeissets and Müllers for a fee of \$30. He also provided valuable hand drawn maps.

Bits and pieces of the family's history surfaced, including one of the most interesting stories: Jakob Friedrich Zeisset, father of the six orphans, died in prison in 1884. This revelation piqued my interest, even though I was only 15 years old at the time of the Zeisset second reunion, held at Leonardville in June 1972.

Merton began to compile vital statistics of the Zeisset descendants, with help from Ray and Carolyn, after the first reunion.

A one-page history of the family was written in 1972. By 1980, Merton had written a six-page history of the Zeissets. Then, in 1992, he published a spiral-bound book, "Our First Century in America – The Zeissets Who Came to Kansas from Germany 1884–1893." The narrative had expanded to 10 pages of text, followed by vital statistics for the six Zeisset siblings and their descendants.

I expanded on Merton's 1992 history, having extensively researched the family in Germany, because I was certain there was more to be discovered. My research of the Zeisset family continues to this day.

I began with a review of various German church books. Not all history can be found in church records, so I visited archives in Ludwigsburg, Neuenstein, and Schwäbisch Hall. First, I had to learn to read printed German script and hand-written records.

We could just tell our story of the Zeisset family at Kreuzfeld where the six siblings were born, and leave it at that, but there is so much more to tell. The family had an interesting history before arriving at Kreuzfeld, and that story needs to be told too. The history starts with the first mention of Zeissets in Germany and leads toward Kreuzfeld, where our six Zeisset siblings were born. It ends with their immigration to the United States.

Acknowledgments

In my early research I had assistance from Kurt Jäger of Berlin, and Dr. Elisabeth Kludas of Bochum. I continue to work with Daniel Stihler, an archivist in Schwäbisch Hall. I am grateful to all of them. I am grateful to Paul Zeisset who maintains the Zeisset genealogy webpage and posts my narratives of our family history. I wrote the first narrative in 2000, with amendments in 2006, and 2008. It is now time for a new version of the story, with some of the same text, but with considerable new or corrected material.

I am also grateful to my Zeisset relatives who contribute histories of their families in America. All too often people become interested in their family's history when the ones who can tell it are no longer around. We can be proud that our Zeisset history is documented for generations to come. It is curious that our six Zeisset immigrants either did not know much about their life in Germany or chose not to tell what they knew. They were, after all, children when they immigrated, and most children are not interested in such things. Their story is one of perseverance and success with new lives in a new country.

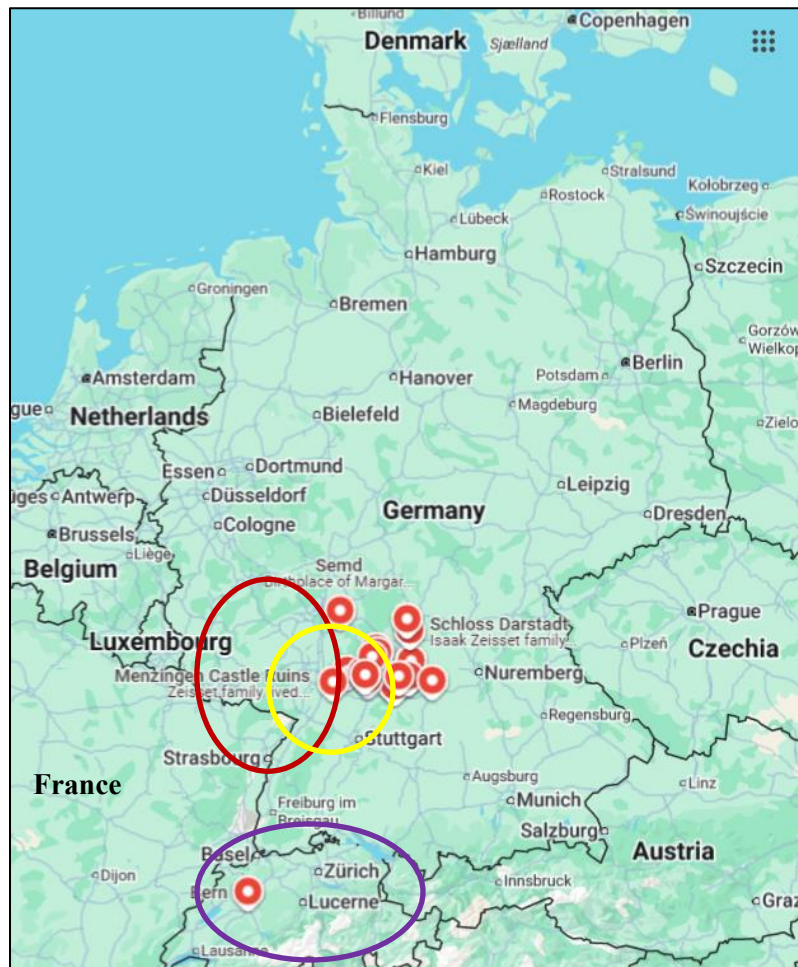
Guide

Maps are included in the following story. There are many generations with repeated names. The Zeissets were particularly fond of Jakob. For clarity Sr. or Jr. may be added, otherwise, I tried to identify people with their year of birth in parentheses.

For those of us who are descendants of the six immigrant Zeisset orphans, these sisters and brothers will be referred to throughout this history as our six Zeisset siblings. The names of direct-line ancestors in the subheadings will include "direct line" to help keep the reader oriented.

There are also three appendices at the end which were generated by Google Gemini which are intended to help the reader keep everything straight.

Here is the first map which will help with the discussion in the first chapter. The purple oval near the bottom shows the country of Switzerland with the city of Bern noted. We believe our Zeisset ancestors came to Germany from Bern. The red oval approximates the area called the Palatinate. The yellow circle approximates the area called the Kraichgau. The cluster of red markers are places of importance in the history of the Zeissets in Germany.



Map of modern Germany and bordering countries, with areas of Zeisset interest as noted.

Source: map from Google maps.