

Visit to Grandpa Fienning's Birthplace in Osnabrück, Germany, on April 18, 2006.

Written by Dana Fienning Minaya

My husband Frank and I had the opportunity to visit George Fienning's¹ birthplace (pictured below) while traveling in Germany. This picture reflects the reconstruction of the farmhouse/double cottage located on the exact site of the original house and is a replica of its exterior.



We were interested in finding it because Bob and Rosamond Fienning, my parents, searched out the site in 1974 and made careful records so that George's birthplace could be readily located. A map³ is available on page 9 of this document for those Fienning family members interested in visiting the cottage in the future.

Bob and Rosamond commissioned a local Sherman, Texas, artist to create a watercolor landscape of the cottage before its reconstruction. This watercolor painting illustrates what would have been the left side of the house pictured above:

¹ Born as Gerhardt Heinrich Friederick Fiening.

² Dana with Stephan Krause in front of the renovated dubbel (double) cottage.

³ Produced by the Krause family who reconstructed the cottage.



Fienning ancestors John Henry Fienning and Catherine Louisa Bode Fienning lived in the house, as did their son, George.



The photo back verifies that it was taken in Osnabrück before their departure for the United States.⁴

⁴ I have heard that since immigrants were unlikely to return to their homeland, photos such as these were taken by immigrants before their departure, so that they could be remembered by family left behind.

George, who emigrated with his family to the United States in 1887 at the age of six, is pictured in the center of this photograph taken in Richmond, Indiana. The picture shows Catherine Louisa Bode Fienning⁵ along with George and his two older siblings, Charles and Elizabeth⁶, following the death of John Henry Fienning about 1889.



Stephan Krause is the son of the couple, now deceased, who renovated the cottage, originally built in 1748 by Heinrich and Katharina Vogt. Stephan showed us through the renovated cottage and explained the construction of the house which was begun during his youth and was ultimately completed in 1976.

According to Stephan, the original walls were constructed of “vita” which

⁵ Notes by Ruth Frazelle: Grandmother Katherine Bode Fienning, mother of George, Charles and Lizzie. All of us loved Grandma Fienning, a good Christian woman. She spoke German most of the time but could speak "broken English".

Rosamond Fienning: Edith told Rosamond that Katherine would be recommended by doctors in Richmond to act as a midwife and for care following the birth of a baby.

⁶ Elizabeth later became known as Lizzie Gildenhar.



was wrapped around long vertical slats to create a lattice work for mud walls. I have included a picture from the Cloppenburg Museum which shows what I think Stephan was describing as lattice work of "vita." In examination of pictures of the original house, it appears that there is a lot of exposed brick. Was part of the house built in brick and other parts constructed with vita (vine mesh) and mud? This needs to be researched further.



This picture was taken from what we think of as the side of the cottage. On the left side was the same Bible inscription found on the original house (before reconstruction) and recorded by Bob and Rosamond during their travels.

Psalm 101 Vers 6 und 7:

"Meine Augen sehen nach den Treuen im Lande, dass sie bei mir wohnen und habe gerne Fromme Diener; Fatsche Leute halte ich nicht in meinem Hause, die Lügner gedeihen nicht bei mir."⁷

Stephan said that his father decided to use brick instead of "vita" so that he would not have to continuously paint it white to preserve the surface.

Stephan lives in a neighboring house (see below) originally built in the very late 1800's which he has reconstructed in a traditional fashion using oak beams and holznagels (large wooden oak nails), as taught to him by his father.

⁷ This passage in the Bible for Today is: "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land and they may dwell with me; he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me; He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house; he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.



Stephan Krause's Home

Now, back to the birthplace of George Fienning:
 This painting of the original cottage, commissioned by Stephan's mother and hanging within the house, shows the cottage with several out-buildings. The house was divided down the center and one family lived on each side. Each side of the cottage had a fireplace, but the chimney was shared between the two "back to back" fireplaces.



Stephan told me that the families lived on the second floor for warmth; the animals lived on the ground floor.

The following photographs show the structure of the old house. One even shows some of the interior before reconstruction. Stephan Krause scanned the following pictures (next page) for us to share with the Fienning family.



Dana with Klaus Kischnick



Klaus Kischnick is a scholar whom Bob and Rosamond met in 1974. He is a researcher who has written many treatises on old farm houses and the Wissengen area.⁸ I told Mr. Kischnick that I was interested in learning what life was like for the persons living in Lower Saxony in the late 1800's. We followed Mr. Kischnick's wise recommendation and traveled to the Cloppenburg Museum⁹, an open-air museum dedicated to

the rural culture of Lower Saxony with original buildings from the sixteenth to the twentieth century. Within the Cloppenburg museum, Mr. Kischnick recommended that we visit the Wehlburg House which would be most representative of George's birthplace. In the Wehlburg house we found "sleeping cubbies or closets" and a piano.¹⁰



⁸ Mr. Kischnick emphasized that in doing any genealogical research we should use the spelling "Fiening," which is short one "n." In fact, the German telephone directory on the internet lists around six "Fiening" names with about five listings in Osnabrück.

⁹ <http://www.museumsdorf.de/>

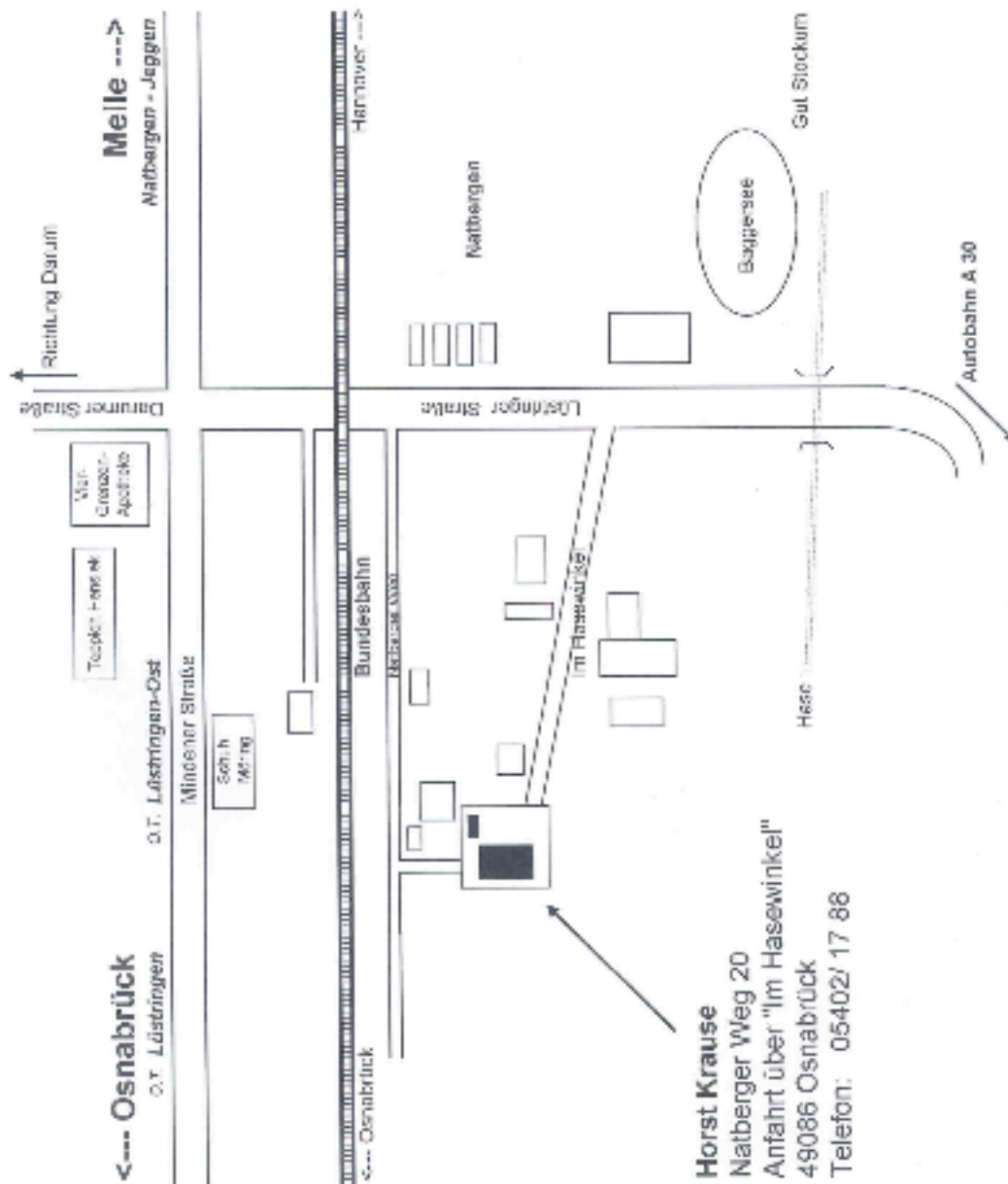
¹⁰ I was immediately reminded of the piano at 1011 South 8th in Richmond, and the importance of music in the George Fienning family.



Recommendations for those willing to conduct future “Fiening” family research either in the United States or in Germany include:

- 1) Contacting the six “Fiening”s in the on-line German telephone directory, five of whom are in the Osnabrück directory.
- 2) Genealogical research using the “Fiening” name.
- 3) Searching the Wissingen church records, now located in Schleddehausen, Germany, as described in the letter (which follows page after next) written to Robert Tubesing by Rosamond Fienning on February 6, 1978.

Following is the map showing the location of the cottage. If you want to visit, Frank and I suggest that you rent a car with a navigation system, as we did.



02.05.2008

Legaplan Haus Natberger Weg 20 (Registriert)

Excerpts from letters written by Rosamond Fienning:

1820 West Scott
Sherman, TX 75090
February 6, 1978

Dear Robert (Robert Tubesing):

In the summer of '74 Bob and I took a 6 -weeks vacation in Europe.... It is our understanding that the Tiemans lived in a double cottage with the Fiennings. Bob had remembered his father (George) talking about his home in Germany. George came to U.S. at the age of 6. He talked about Wissingen (pronounced Vissingen) and Osnabrück a lot. So on our arrival in Germany we went to Wissingen. It was a weekend and a holiday, so we were unable to accomplish much. But did visit the Lutheran pastor. He directed us to some old-timers, but we got no information. We went on to Hamburg and Berlin and came back at the end of the next week, thinking it would be easier to investigate and see records. We visited the pastor again and were told they were having a beer and bratwurst fest on the school lawn that night celebrating the 750th anniversary of the village of Wissingen. This was just one of the activities commemorating the anniversary. So we went to the fest. Wissingen is in beautiful farming country, not a tourist area, so people were very interested in what we were doing.

We were very fortunate to meet at the party, Klaus Kischnick who was working on his doctorate on the history of the village. Come to find out-he had all of the old records in his home. The party was on a Saturday night and we and Klaus were among the last to leave. He said to give him until Sunday noon to look through his records and he would get with us on Sunday afternoon. He found for us where a Fienning (Fiening) had owned property. Bob feels it must have been an uncle of George. Klaus, later in a letter, said that he had heard that the old land registers were transferred from the county court to the state archives in Osnabrück.

We were told that the old church records from Wissingen were probably in the church at Schleddehausen (all three of the towns I have mentioned are very close together.) We went there but found the church locked up and could not find out where to find the pastor. So that, we feel, would have been the best place to look further if we had more time. Bob remembered his dad talking about his father working for the farmer Sudhoff--big land owners. This was a big thrill: We asked around and people said, "Oh, yes, the Sudhoffs are big land holders and the property has been in that family for years. So we went to the beautiful big farm. The lady we talked to was a Sudhoff and was interested in what we were doing. They lived in a some modernized rooms upstairs, but most of the

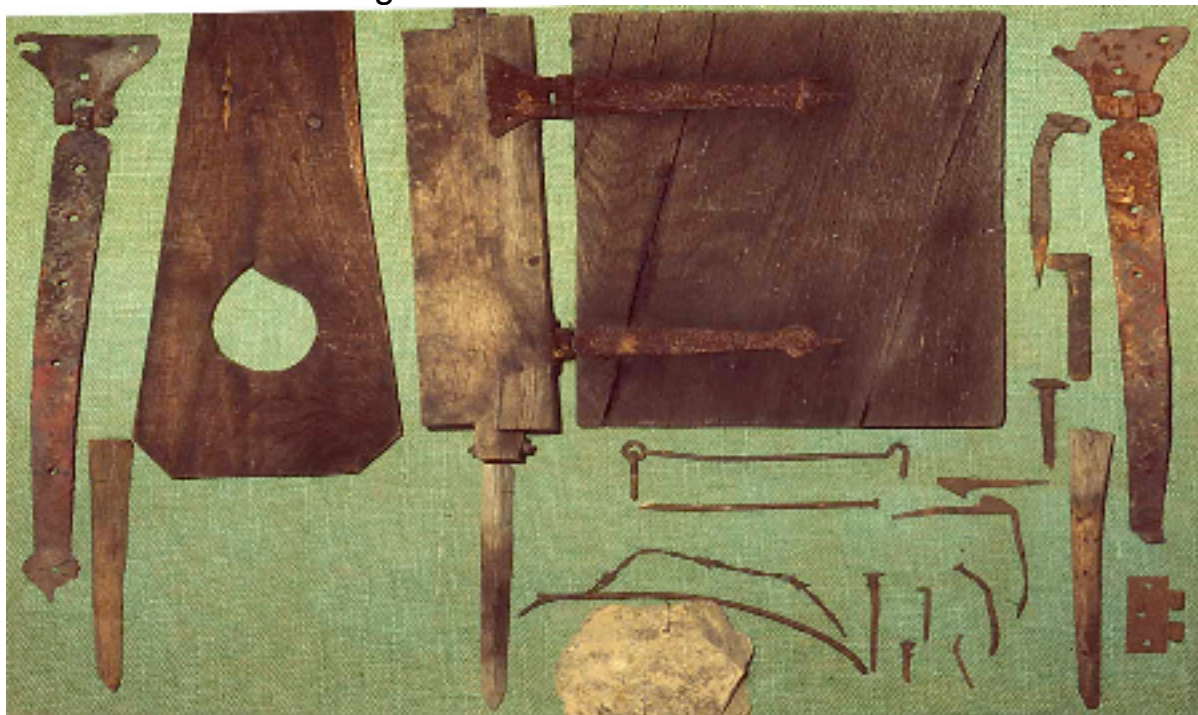
house was furnished in antiques. Big massive pieces of furniture--like 600 years old!!

She said there had been only one double cottage (cotten) in the whole area and gave us directions as to how to find it. It had not been lived in for a long time and was in a bad state of repair. We have many good slides of it....You could see the animal part along one side. The bulk of the lower part was a big room, one on each end. Then living quarters along the other side. We think the upstairs was a hay loft.¹¹

The construction contractor had a temporary building there and it was in a state of being rebuilt. In fact, it was bricked up on one end and part of a side. One end of the building was 100 years old, the other 200 years old. We picked up some souvenirs from the trash pile: one of the loft doors, old hinges, oaken pegs, square nails, etc. We felt very fortunate to get there and be able to see it in its original state....

We were very interested in the name Tieman since we knew that they lived in half of the double house and had come to America. They were the ones who convinced Bob's (Robert's) grandparents that they should come over...

Sincerely,
Rosamond Fienning
Mrs. Robert L. Fienning



Display of pieces collected by Robert and Rosamond when the cottage was being reconstructed.

¹¹ This differs from Stephan Krause's conception of the cottage with living quarters upstairs.

Thursday, 6-27-74

Dear Ed, Oley, and Families

We wanted to be sure to report on our travels in time for it to be read at the reunion. We have been so busy and we may have waited too long for the letter to make it in time. We are in Saarbrücken today.

.....Then we came back to Wissingen on last Friday evening. Were invited to a festival on a school lawn--bratwurst and beer. They are celebrating 750 anniversary of Wissingen this year. Many people by this time had heard about us. We saw again all the people we had seen previously.

Several old people recalled the "Fienning" name. The luckiest thing- a historian (Klaus Kischnick) found the record of a house built by your grandfather....

We saw records of Gerhardt Heinrich Fienning, but about the age of your grandfather. Was there an uncle by this name?...

Love,
Rosamond