

6 Abstract

This study tells the story of how the family name SCHLEMMER, which presumably emerged in the 14th century in Zweibrücken, referring to the Zweibrücken baker and butcher family, spread in Palatinate, the Westrich, and the Saarland. The documentation begins with the blacksmith Hans SCHLEMMER, the first documented member of this family, who was mentioned as Zweibrücken Mayor in 1540 and juryman of the court in 1546. He died in 1564, the year in which the Reformed church started its official records in the ducal town of Zweibrücken.

The 2nd and 3rd generations of the SCHLEMMER family then worked as bakers, although most family members between the Thirty Years' War and the end of the 18th century earned their living as butchers. In the 18th century, other professions among the SCHLEMMER sons were blacksmith, carpenter, or cook at the ducal courts of Zweibrücken and Saarbrücken. Later, when the SCHLEMMER family moved to Althornbach and the surrounding area, most of them worked as farmers. As documents show, they at first lived in prosperity, made possible by the farmer Hans Jacob's inheritance of more than 3,000 gulden. But by the middle of the 19th century, as inheritances had been consecutively subdivided within their large families, and in the aftermath of decades of poor harvests, many family members decided to emigrate from the Palatinate to the United States, primarily to Troutville and Altoona in Pennsylvania or to Poland in Indiana.

In general, most German family names were created in the period between the 14th and the 16th centuries. The name SCHLEMMER shows similarity to the Middle High German noun *slemmer* meaning 'spendthrift or glutton' (*Prasser*) or to the Middle High German noun *slamp* meaning 'feast, gorge, gormandize.' In Germany and North America the name SCHLEMMER was recorded in the forms of Schlemmer/Slemmer and Schlimmer/Slimmer.

The authors have conducted an extensive research in the Zweibrücken Archives and the State Archives in Speyer and Saarbrücken in order to learn as much as possible about the German history of the name and the family SCHLEMMER. The research is based primarily on the found notarial files of the 18th and 19th centuries. The authors have analyzed those important, but widely unknown sources. As not only members of the family SCHLEMMER are mentioned in those files, but also buyers, auctioneers, or witnesses with other family names, this study is a rich source for other family name researchers, who are encouraged to continue their investigations. In addition, this study contributes to the local history, as it presents historical events that took place in the town and surroundings of Zweibrücken and in the neighboring Saarland region.