A Bottle of Wine, Not a Mug of Beer:

The German Roots of the Steil Family

During a "trip down memory lane" in celebration of the 80th birthday of Kathleen Coleman, St. Anthony's Church was one of the places visited by Kay, her nine children, and Kay's sister-in-law Betty Basler. Kay explained that St. Anthony's Church was the place of worship for her parents and grandparents.

Kay's parents, Catherine Lukaschewski and Frank Steil, were married at St. Anthony's Church in 1920. When Frank's father, George Steil, died in March 1939, services were held at St. Anthony's as were services for his mother, Katherine, when she died later that year.

A large memorial marker in front of the church explains that the parish was established in 1857 due to the growing number of Catholics of German descent on the eastside of Detroit. That modest structure was replaced by a larger structure in 1901.

A search of census records documented that George Steil and his wife, Katherine Ackles, immigrated to the United States from Germany about 1880. George and Katherine married in 1886. Their first child, George Jr., was born in Illinois the following year. The other seven children were born in Detroit.

George Peter Steil was born in Neuerburg, Germany in 1859. Katherine Ackles was born in 1861 the neighboring country of Luxembourg, about 12 miles from Neuerburg. Records show that George's grandfather, Peter Steil, was born in Neuerburg in 1793 and died there in 1858. All of Peter's six children were born there too. Clearly, the Steil family had its roots in Neuerburg.

Present-day Neuerburg is a small municipality in the state of Rhineland-Palatine in Germany. The town, which sits at an elevation of 640 feet, has a population of about 1,800 people. It lies in a protected valley surrounded by lush green hills and meadows.

During the summer months, Neuerburg is known for its "Musical Summer" with open air concerts of brass bands, amateur pop groups, and folklore dancing. Neuerburg has a mix of urban and country lifestyles.

Neuerburg is only one of many small towns in the Rhineland-Palatine region. Rhineland-Palatine is one of 16 states within Germany and it located in the central southwest part of the nation. The Rhine river runs through the state. The name Rhine comes from the Celtic language and means "raging flow."

Over 500 castles are located in Rhineland-Palatine. Some were built to protect settlements while others were homes for nobility.

Towns in the region celebrate many festivals throughout the year, especially during the wine season during September. Although Germany is known throughout the world for its beer drinking festivals, especially during Octoberfest, the Rhineland-Palatine region is famous for its vineyards. Residents here love wine more than beer.



In terms of cultivation and export, Rhineland-Palatine is Germany's leading wine producer. Nearly 70 percent of Germany's wine grapes are produced in this state. The famous Reislings come from Rhineland-Palatine.

Every area has its food specialties and this one is no exception. The Rhineland-Palatine region is known for its Saumagen, a bologna prepared with pork and potatoes, sliced and grilled.

Rhineland-Palatine is home to 4 million residents. About 65 percent of the people are Catholic, 25 percent Protestant, and 7 percent have no religious affiliation.

Many Germans from Rhineland-Palatine emigrated to the United States in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The names of towns such as New Paltz, Palatine Bridge, German Flatts (NY) and Palatine (IL) were created by settlements of German immigrants from this region.

The first major emigration to the United States from the Rhineland-Palatine region occurred in the late seventeenth century due to fighting between the French and British known as the War of the Palatine. Immigrants to the United States during this era included the Pennsylvania Dutch.

Trier, located in Rhineland-Palatine, is Germany's oldest city. In the third century, Trier became the capital of the Western Roman Empire and home to Emperor Constantine.

The oldest archeological remains in Rhineland-Palatine are tools from the Stone Age, ranging from 100,000 to 300,000 years old. The ancient Celtics, who were among the earliest inhabitants to live in this region, were clearly tool makers.

Is it a coincidence that Kathleen Steil's father, Frank, was a tool and die maker by trade?