

GERMANNA FOUNDATION

HONORING OUR HISTORIC HERITAGE



The Germanna Ancestry of Neil Patrick Harris

Guest on PBS Series *Finding Your Roots*

23 February 2016

Cathi Clore Frost

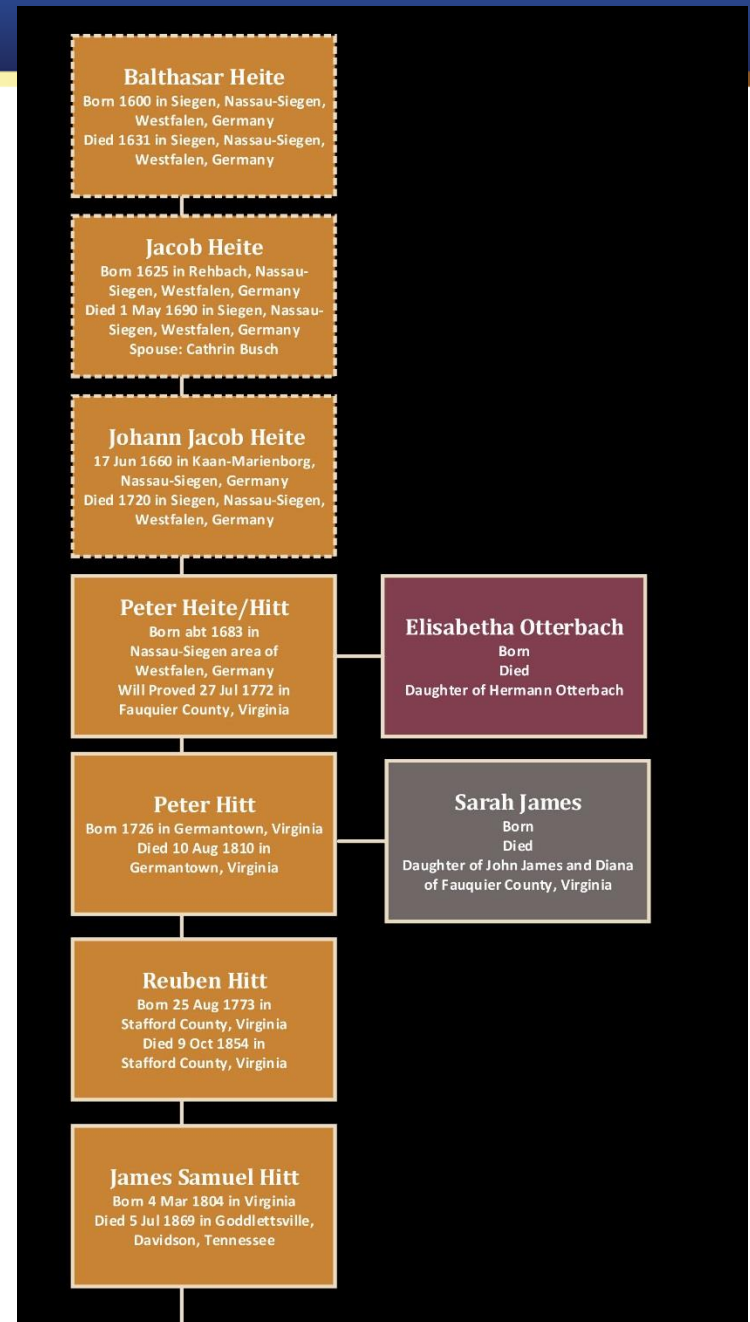
Germanna Foundation Genealogist



The Germanna Foundation was contacted by producers of *Finding Your Roots* in early December 2014

This tree segment for NPH's ancestry was shared with us so that Germanna Foundation genealogists could assist with documentation.

The producers declined to give us the more recent generations ...



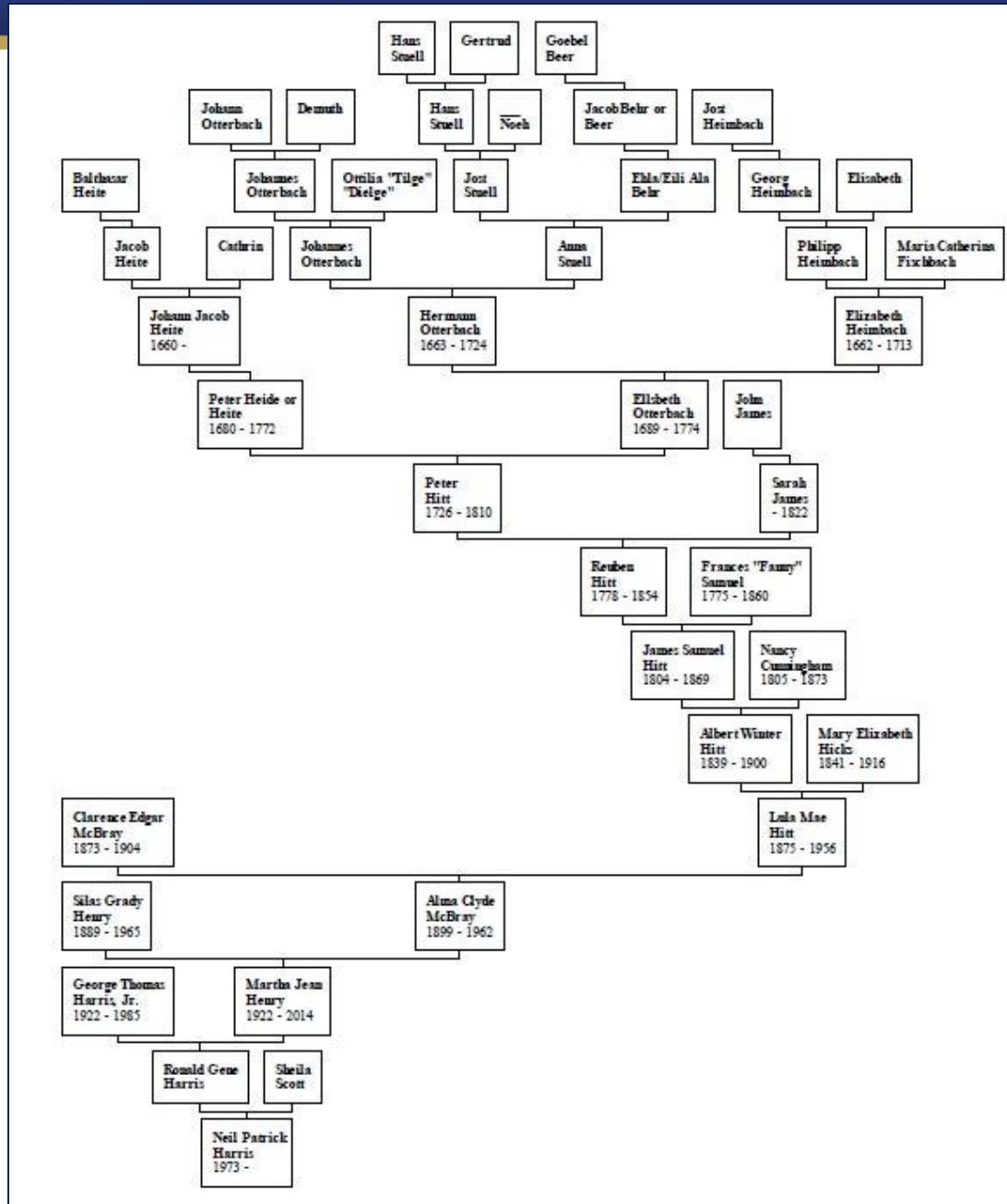


... but a few research hours later we had the complete line.



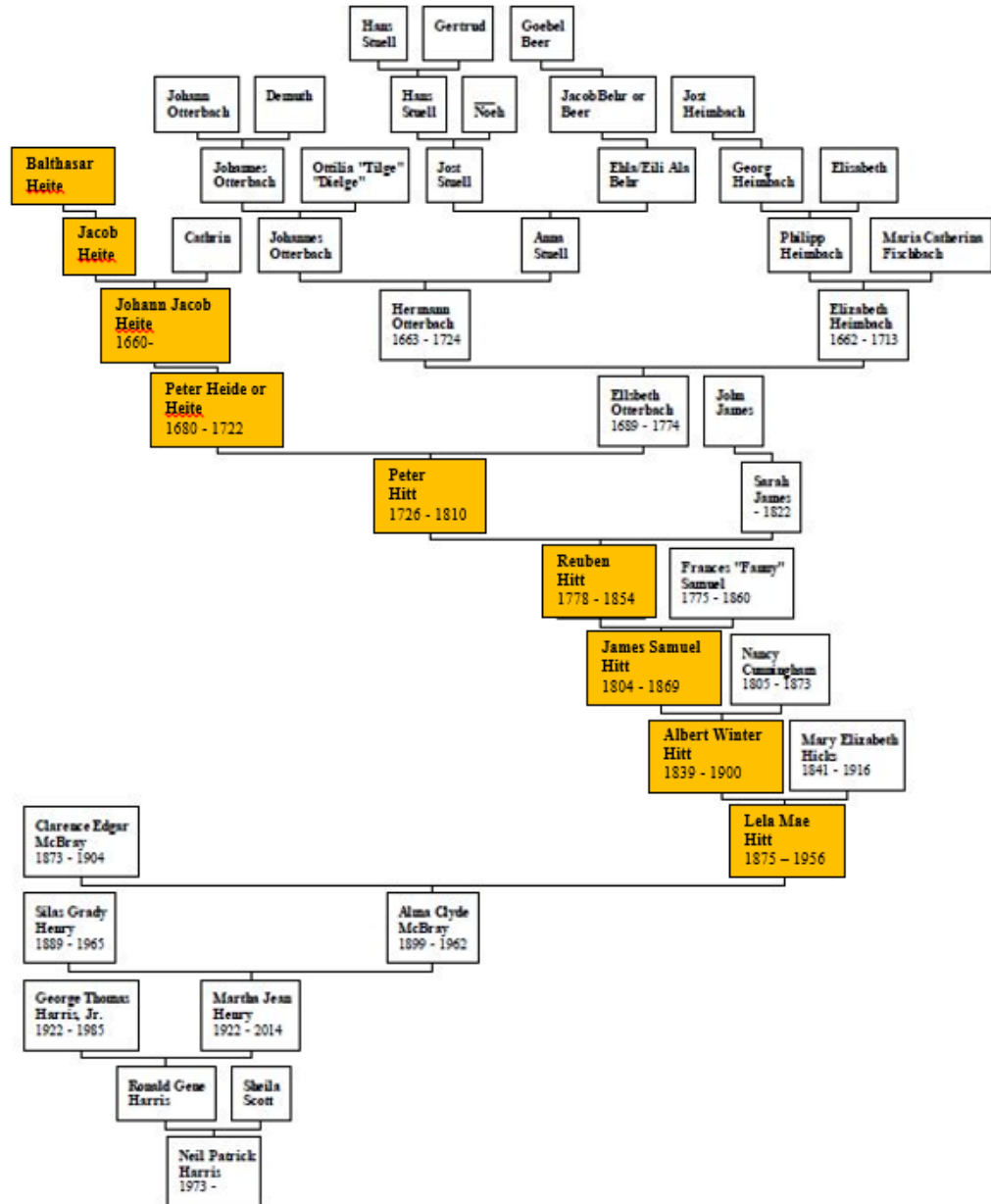


Neil Patrick Harris' Germanna Family Tree



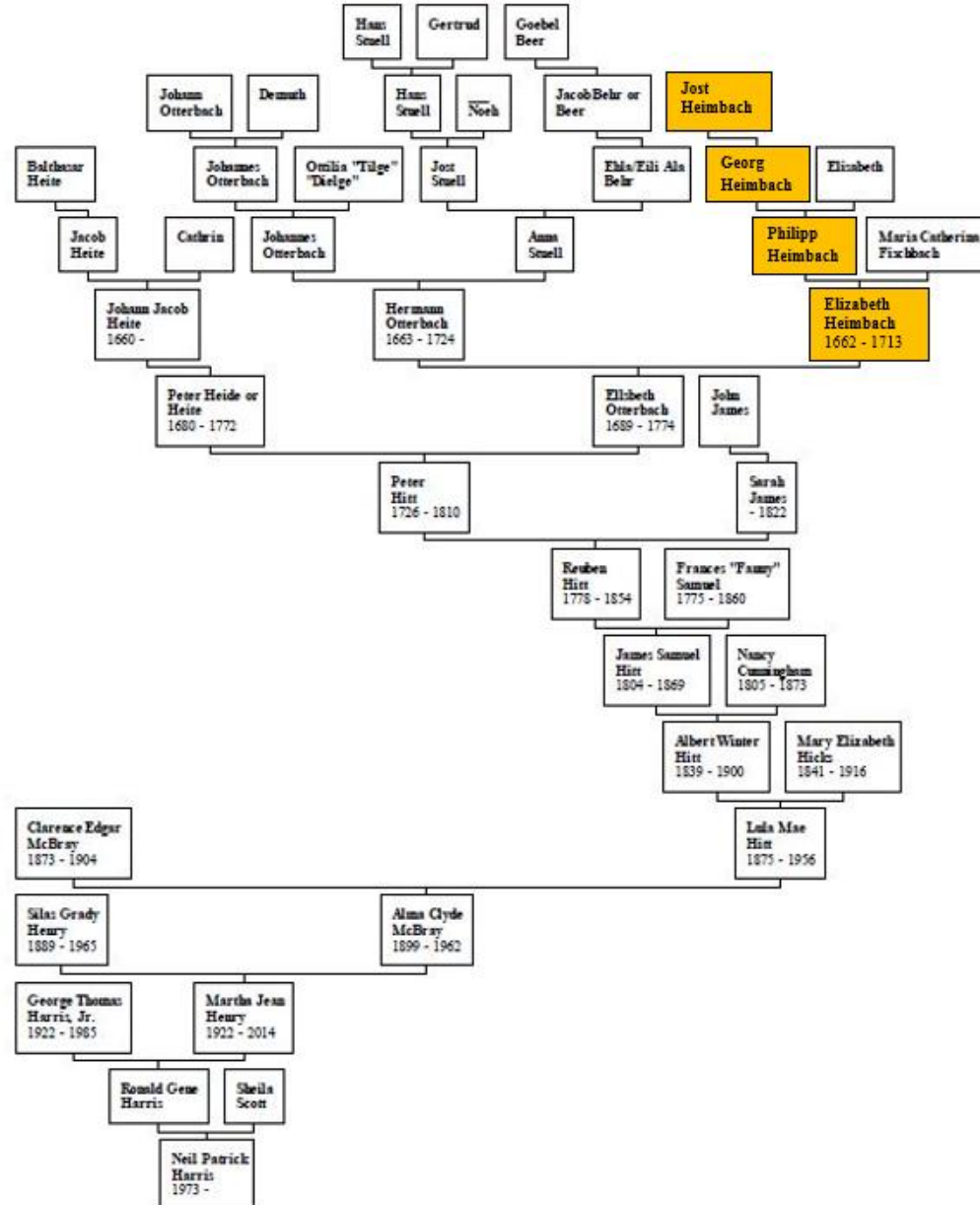


Neil Patrick
Harris is directly
descended from
Hitt



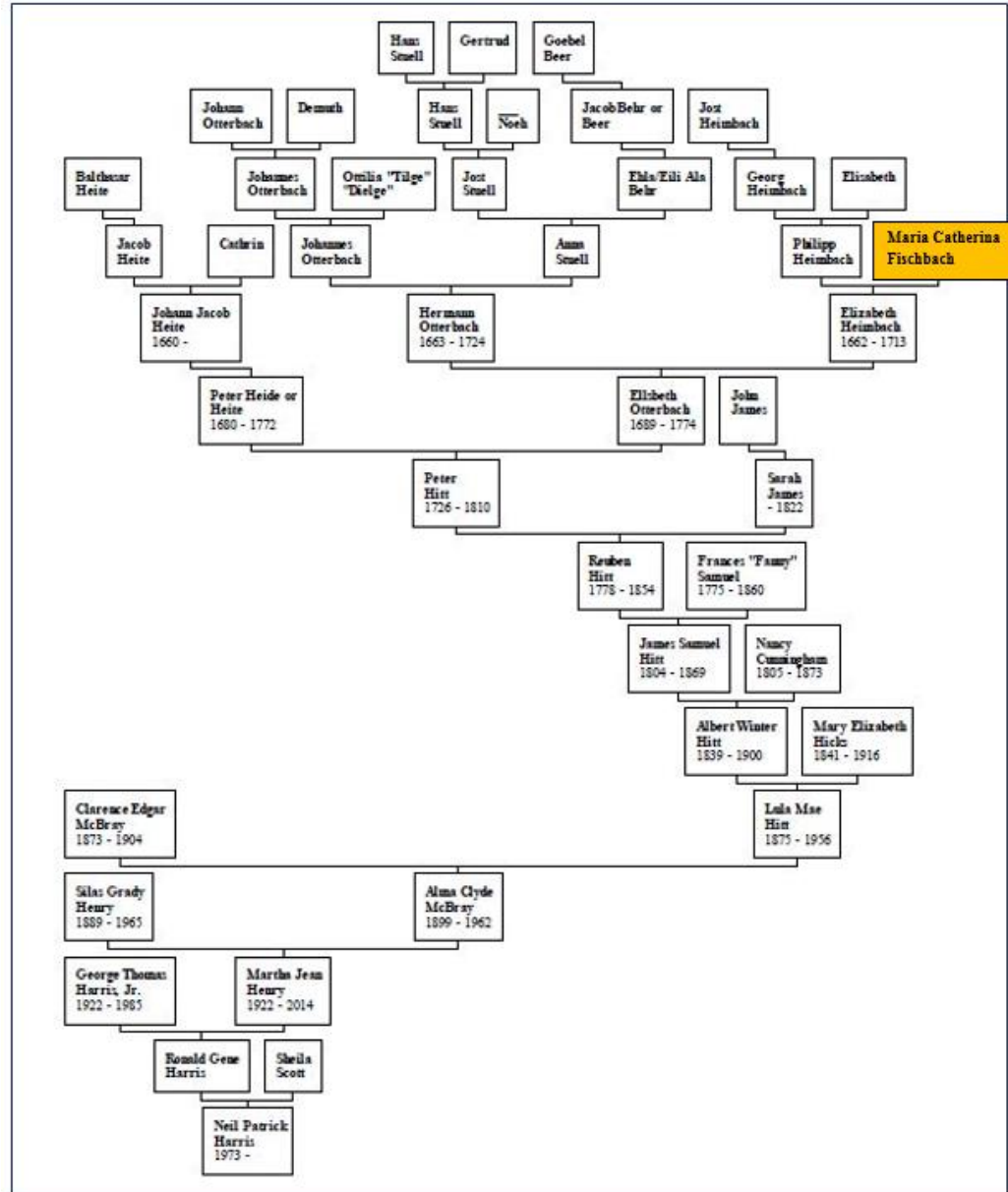


Heimbach





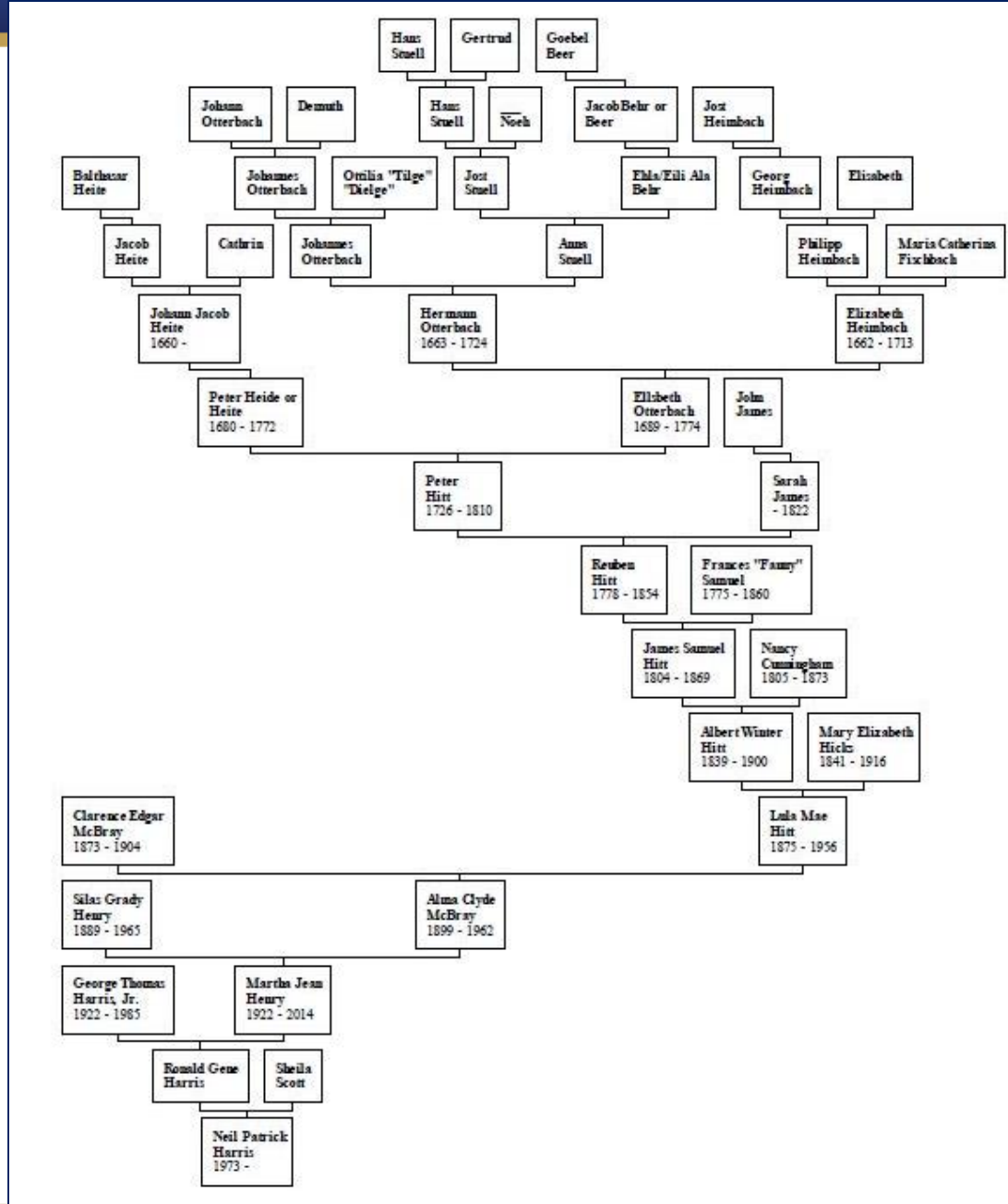
and **Fischbach**
ancestors.





Through these ancestors he is also related collaterally to other Germanna Colony families including:

**Kemper
Rector
Weaver
Holtzclaw
Koontz
Weaver
Martin**





NPH's Immigrant Ancestors

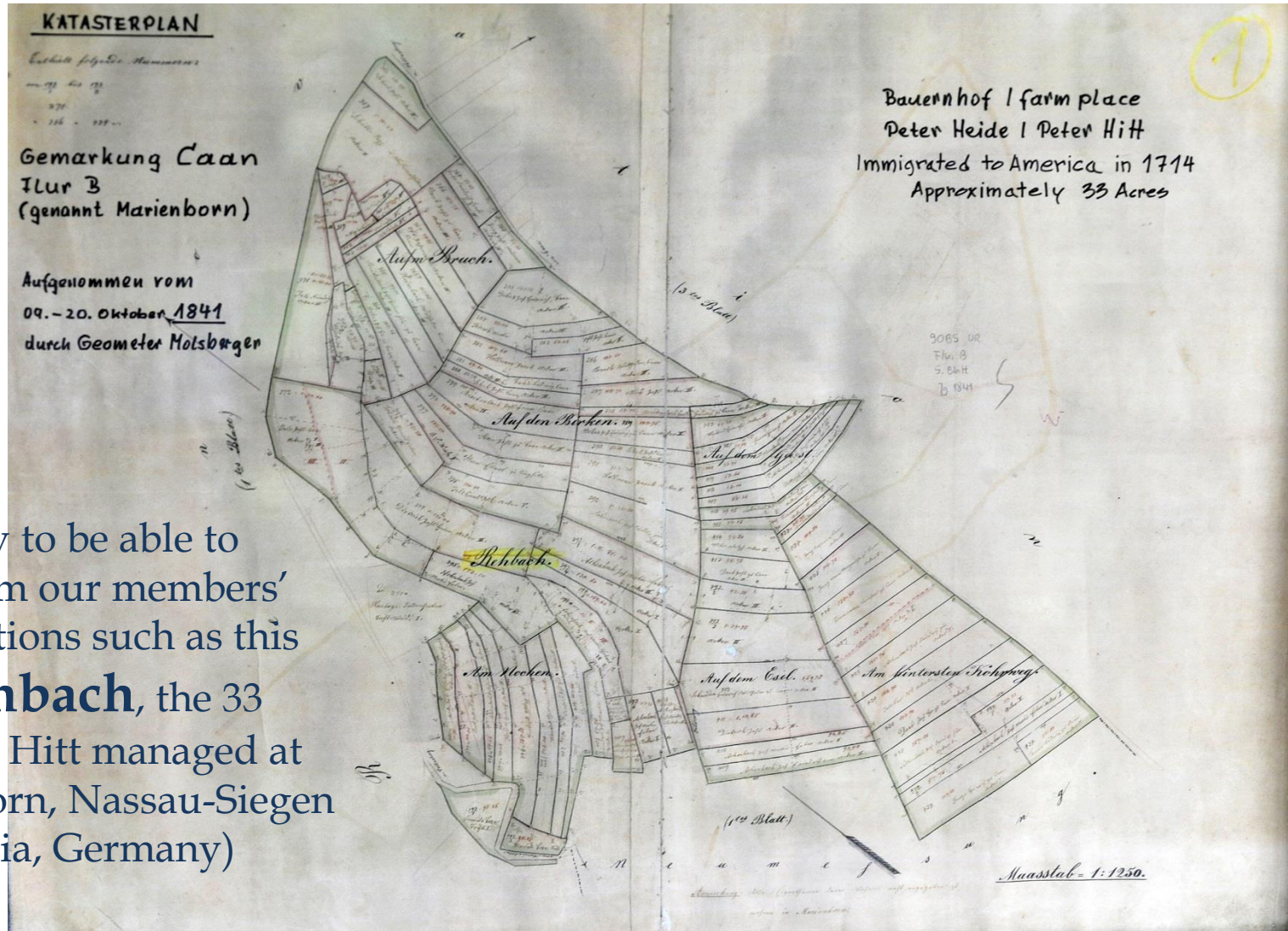
Members of the First (1714) Germanna Colony

Peter Heite/Hitt

Born abt 1683 in
Nassau-Siegen area of
Westfalen, Germany
Will Proved 27 Jul 1772 in
Fauquier County, Virginia

Elisabetha Otterbach

Born
Died
Daughter of Hermann Otterbach

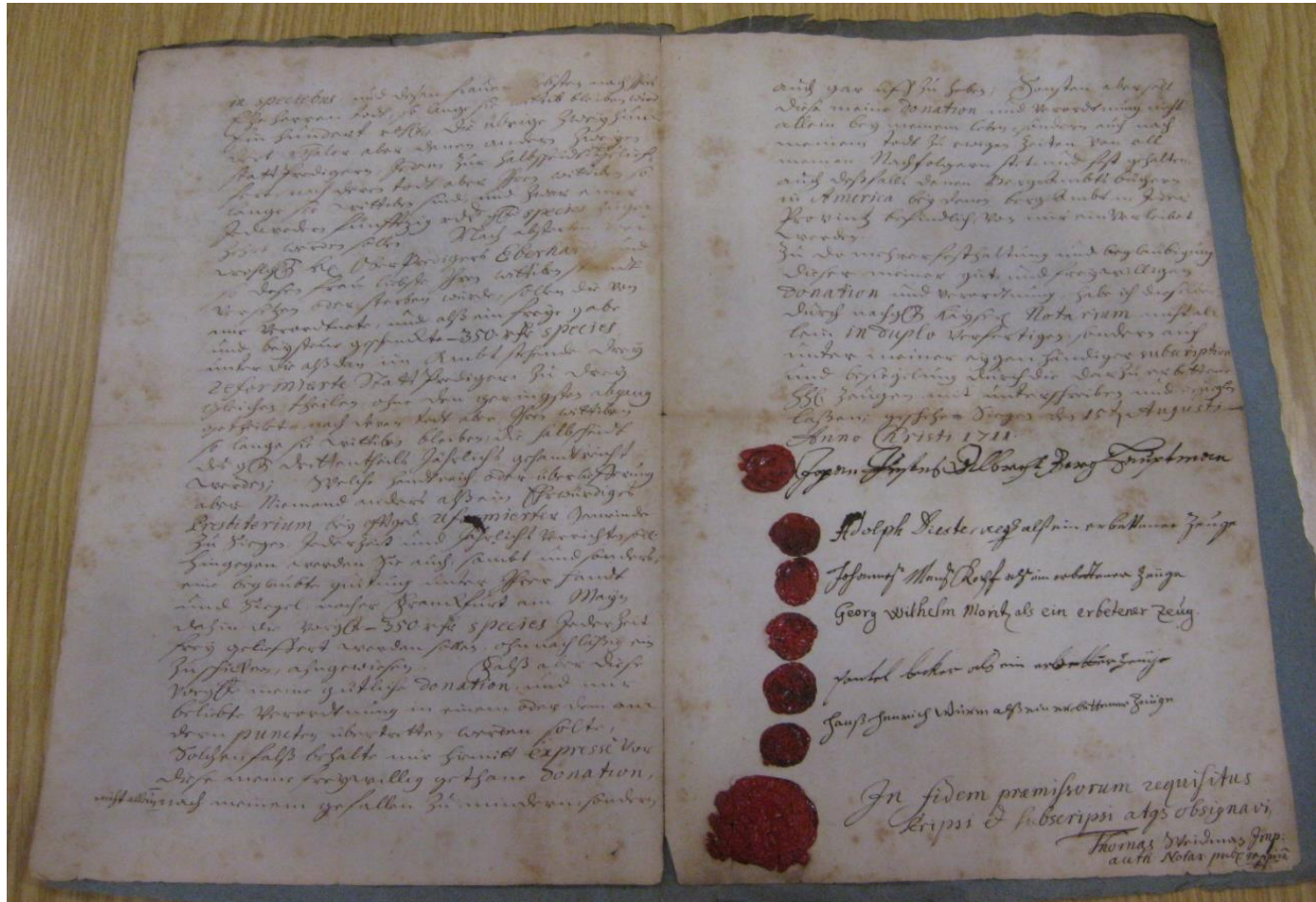


We were happy to be able to share items from our members' personal collections such as this **Map of Rehbach**, the 33 acre farm Peter Hitt managed at Kaan-Marienborn, Nassau-Siegen (now Westphalia, Germany)

Image from the Siegen Archives courtesy of Horst Schneider via Russell Hitt



Original records we had photographed on Germanda Foundation trips to Germany such as the Recruiting Agreement made between Johann Justus Albrecht and the Siegen church ministers.





Copies of records from the
Siegen Church Archives such as the
Baptismal Record of Ellsbeth Otterbach
courtesy of our friend Archivist Gerhard Moisel.

Das am ...
Feria II. Pentecostes.
Wippach *Johann's Otterbach* und *Ellsbeth* *offenbart:*
Johann *Werkner* *sohler* *Ellsbeth* *die* *Werkner:*
Das *kind* *Ellsbeth.*

St. Nikolai Kirche (St. Nicholas Church) in Siegen was the main parish church and was where all surrounding villagers married and took their children to be baptized.



Vintage photographs from our own personal collections such as this photo of the Kappellenschule (left) and Otterbach house (right), Trupbach about 1950-1960.



*Courtesy of
Dr. Katharine Brown*



Historical drawings we found online such as this
circa 1713 view of Trupbach.



Courtesy of <http://otterbachs.blogspot.com/>



The rights of
John Spilman, which was never paid to the said John Spilman
or the Present Defend. Mary Gent, which said last mentioned
left the P. Defend. sold her rights of to Jacob Rector and father
These Deponents saith not
Taken the 19th Day of October
before us

Jillman wolver
Jermanmünd fyg bay
Peter Hitt

Wm. Blackwell
J. Marshall

Copies of records from our personal collections such as the
**27 September 1759 Peter Hitt testimony in suit of
Jacob Spilman vs. Mary Gent**
Fauquier County, Virginia Chancery Court Records, Library of Virginia
Courtesy of Barbara Price



Proof of Importation for Eight First Colony Families including Peter Hitt and wife Elizabeth

Spotsylvania County, Virginia
Will Book A: 74

Courtesy of Barbara Price

Handwritten text from a legal document, likely a court order or certificate, detailing the importation of families to Spotsylvania County, Virginia. The text is written in cursive and includes names of individuals and their families, along with dates and signatures.

Hammon fitch back in order to prove his right to take up land according to the Royal charter made date that he came into this colony to dwell in the year 1724: and that he brought with him Katherina his wife and that this is the first time of proving their said importation whereupon certificate is ordered to be granted them of Rights to take up one hundred acres of Land

and John Huffman the same order for himself and Katherina his wife

Present Jn: Taliaferro Gent.

Joseph Cuntz the same order for himself and Katherina his wife and his son John, Annalis and Katherina his daughters

John fitch back the same order for himself and Agnis his wife

Jacob Rickart the same order for himself and Elizabeth his wife & his son John

Milchoft Brum back the same order for himself and his wife Elizabeth

Dilman Weaver the same order for himself and Anna Weaver his mother

Likewin Peter Hitt the same order for himself and Elizabeth his wife

On motion of William Pulsell Esq. &c.

Certificates for all signed May 9. 30. 1729.

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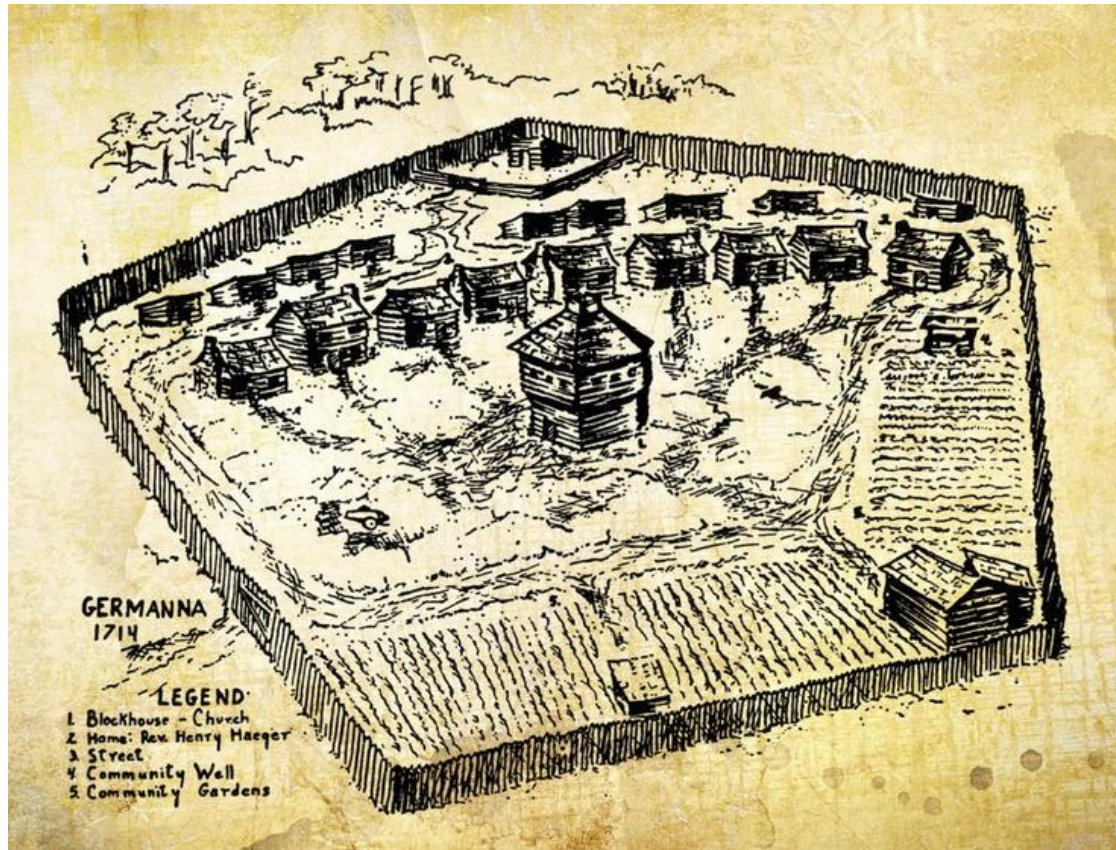
Certificates for all signed May 9. 30. 1729.

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Drawing of Fort Germanna

based on the description recorded in the diary of John Fontaine.

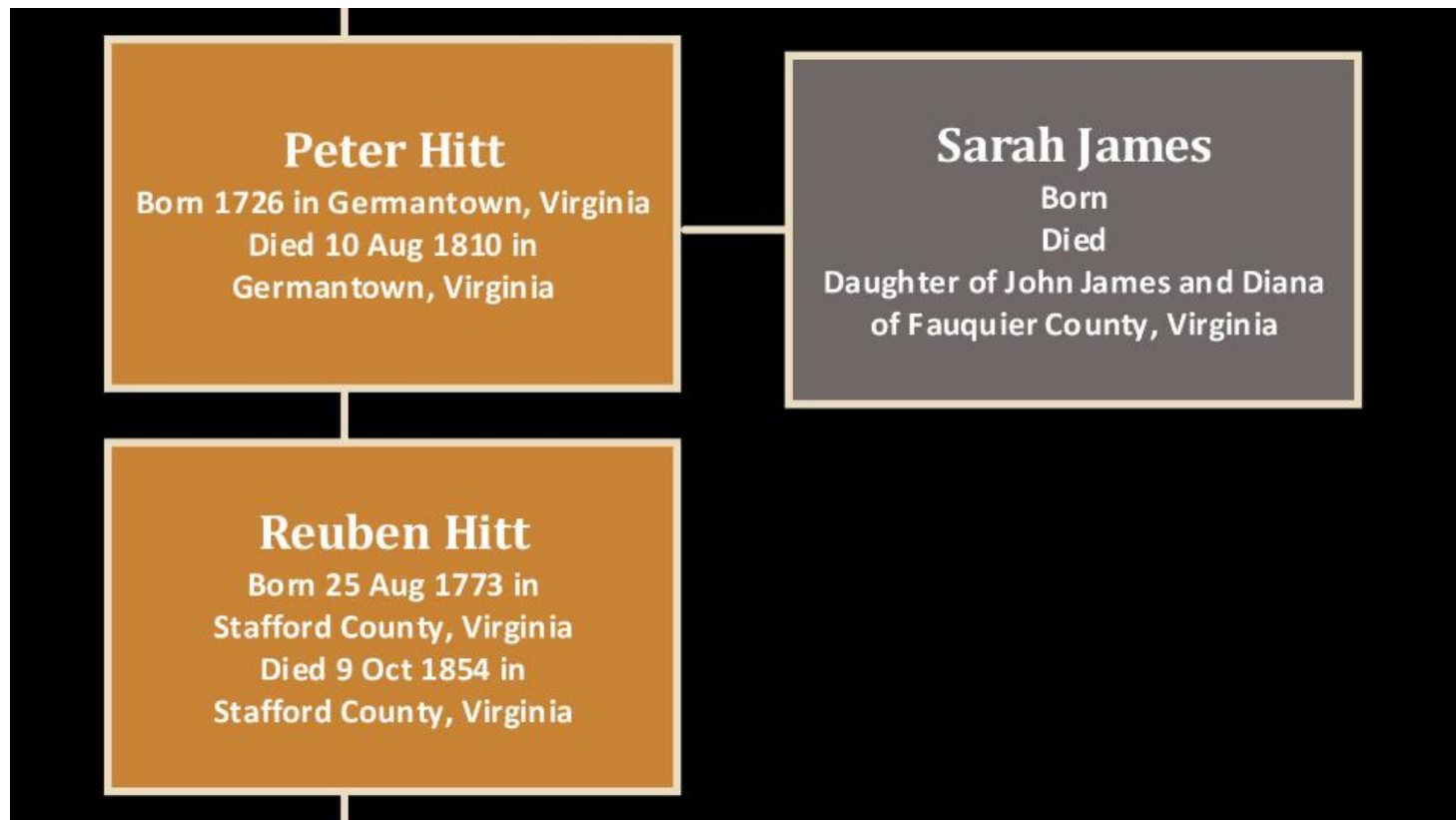


21 November 1715

"... we walked about the town which is palisaded with stakes stuck in the ground, and laid close the one to the other, of substance to bear out a musket shot. There is but nine families and they have nine houses built all in a line, and before every house about 20 feet from the house they have small sheds built for their hogs and hens, so that the hog stys and houses make a street. This place that is paled in is a pentagon, very regularly laid out, and in the very centre there is a blockhouse made with five sides which answers to the five sides of pales or great inclosure. There is loop holes through it, from which you may see all the inside of the inclosure. This was intended for a retreat for the people in case they were not able to defend the pallisadoes if attached by the Indians."



Moving on to the second and third generations in Virginia ...





We were able to provide copies of records available only from the **Germanna Foundation** archives such as the **Family Register of Peter Hitt and Sarah James**



Which contained information such as this
Marriage Record of Peter Hitt & Sarah James

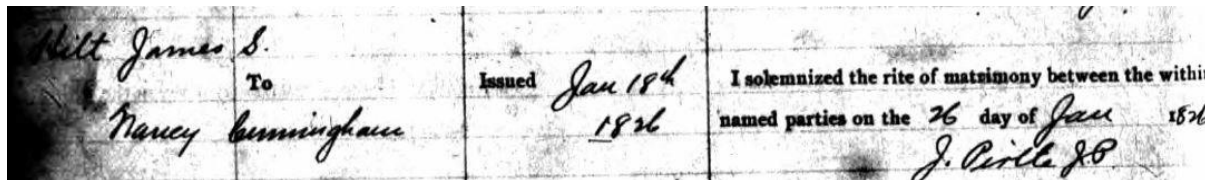
Peter Hitt & Sarah James
Was Married the 27th.
Day of April 1759



As well as **records readily available online** through subscription sites such as *FamilySearch* (free) and *Ancestry.com* (fee based)

578	Rhuben Hill	72	M	Farmer	2000	"	7
	Francis	200	75	F	"	"	8
	Polly	200	40	F	"	"	9
							10

"United States Census, 1850," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M881-GY6> : accessed 10 December 2014), Rhuben Hill, Fauquier county, part of, Fauquier, Virginia, United States; citing family 578, NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.).



Davidson County, Tennessee Marriage Record for 1826: 308, "Tennessee State Marriages, 1780-2002," *Ancestry.com*, <http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1169>: accessed 10 December 2014.

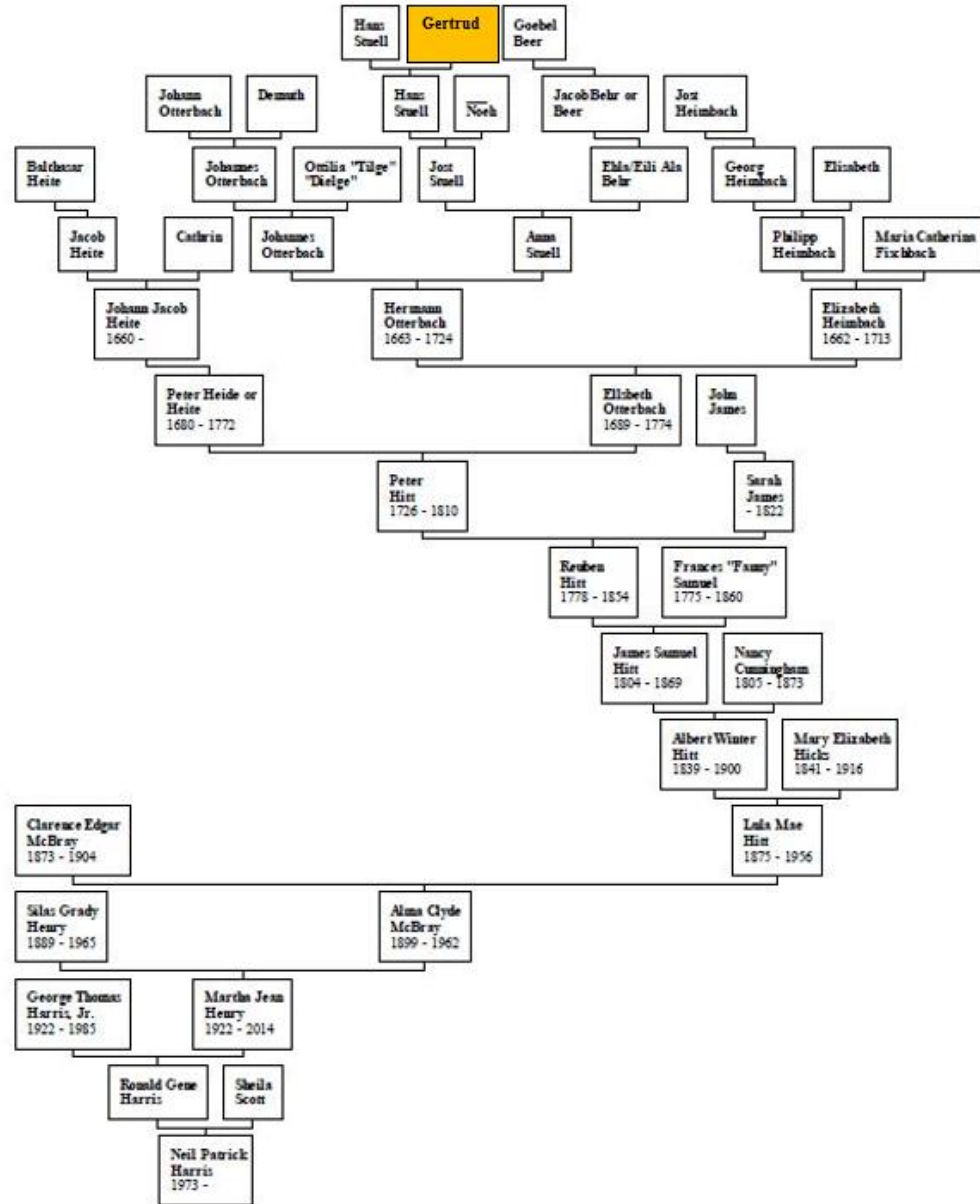


While we think all of Neil Patrick Harris' Geramna ancestors are interesting, producers focused in on one particular German ancestor that NPH found most intriguing to be featured in the broadcast ...





Gertrud "the witch"





According to B. C. Holtzclaw, *Germanna Record #5: Ancestry and Descendants of the Nassau-Siegen Immigrants to Virginia* (Memorial Foundation of the Germanna Colonies in Virginia, 1964), 485:

Gertrude, wife of Hans Steul of Klafeld, was burned as a witch in 1590 after being accused of bewitching her neighbors' livestock.





Holtzclaw cited the following secondary source:

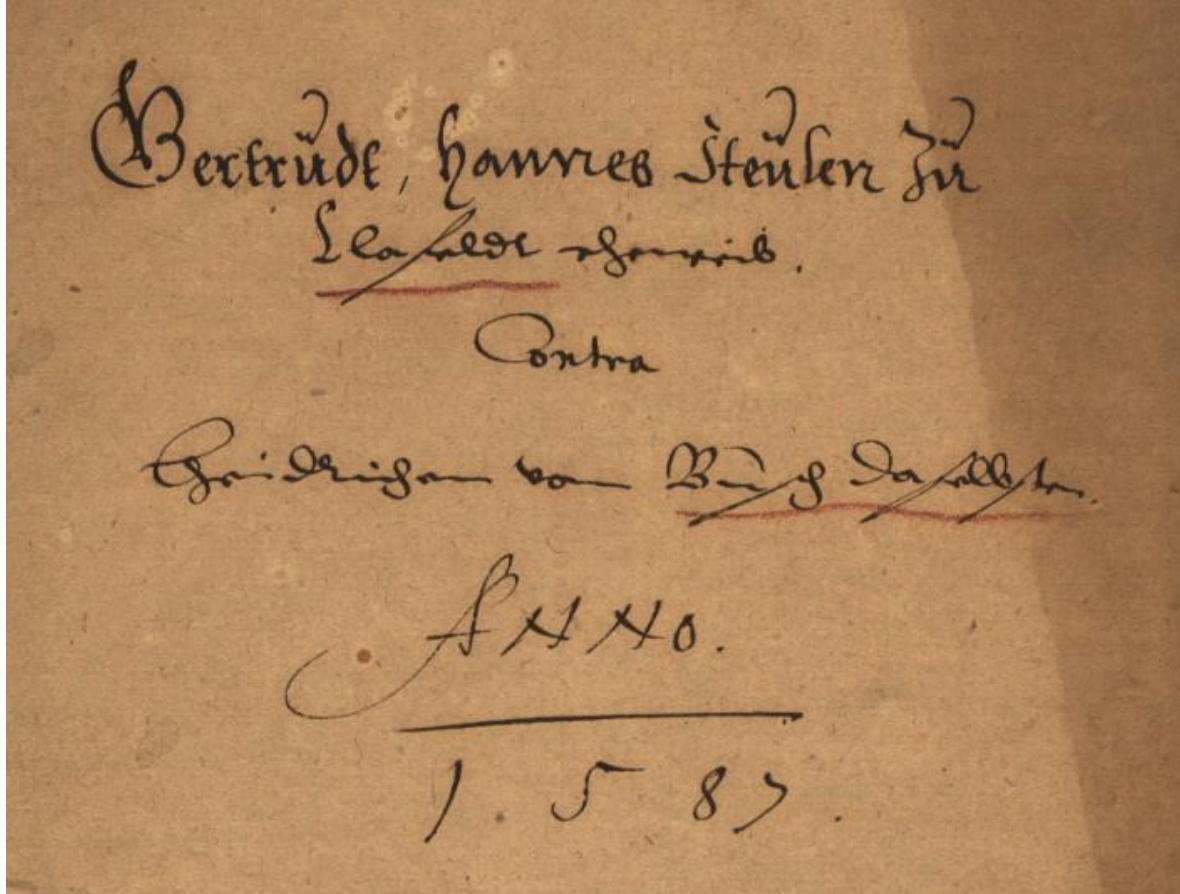
Hermann Böttger and Gustav Busch, *Geschichte der Gemeinde Klafeld-Geisweid* (Siegen, Germany: ohne Verlag, 1955), 97.

Einige Frauen und Mädchen, darunter auch die „Schulmeistersche“, d. h. die Frau des Lehrers, werden beschuldigt, daß sie mit dem Teufel getanzt hätten. Heinrich von (Langen)Holdinghausen hat in Klafeld Vieh gesegnet, nachdem in Obersetzen 17 Schafe von einem Wolf erwürgt worden waren. Nach einer anderen Nachricht wurde 1653 ein „peinliches“ Gericht in Hilchenbach gehalten und dort u. a. eine Geisweider Witwe wegen Hexerei zum Feuertode verurteilt¹¹⁾. Schon 1590 war Gertrud, die Frau des Hans Steul in Klafeld, die aus Alchen stammte, als Hexe verbrannt worden. Sie soll die Schweine und Kühe ihrer Nachbarn verzaubert haben, daß sie eingingen. Die Rinder hätten Schaum vor den Hälsen gehabt, einer Kuh seien die Zehen losgegangen und die Schweine hätten wie ein Blasebalg „gefocht“. Aus diesen Anzeichen kann man auf Maul- und Klauenseuche schließen, an der Gertrud Steul doch wohl unschuldig war^{11a)}.

Image courtesy of Werner Hoffmann Gassner



Finding Your Roots producers contacted the Siegen Archives as well as the Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv in Wiesbaden to obtain copies of the primary source, original court documents of Gertrud's trial.




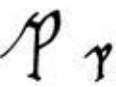



Germanna Foundation friend Elke Hall provided translation work.



One of the difficulties translating these early documents is that they were not written in the old German Gothic Script but in an highly embellished style known as *Secretary Hand*.



Some special characters:  (long s)  (yogh)  (pounds sterling)
 (thorn, capital and lowercase)  (ampersands)

Example: *What is your last name?*

Example of Secretary Hand provided by Elke Hall



The court proceedings took almost two years and covered 188 pages of records.

Elke translated that the charge against Gerrude was that she was “supposed to have bewitched/killed young pigs and cows,” and noted that before Gertrud came to Klafeld there were rumors about her in Alchen, a village in Oberholzklaw Parish to the north, against which she did not bother to defend herself. Elke surmises, from the described symptoms, that the farm animals were actually suffering from hoof and mouth disease.

None of the court records prove that Gertrud was burned at the stake. In a document dated 20 January 1591 the word “selig” is after her name. This could indicate she was deceased but can also be translated as “blessed.” Which use is intended is not clear.



**Welcome to Germanna,
a family of families,**



cousin Neil Patrick Harris!

