
Die Deutsche Gefe

The German Corner: # 22

Cranberry Prairie

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SIMULTANEUM

Genealogical research often gives us a surprise, to which we respond, "I never knew that before!" As we come to deeper research, genealogy helps us to realize that sweeping statements are near impossible to make, as with each locale there are different circumstances. In northwest Germany we do find many surprises, such as **Simultaneum Successivum** and **Simultaneum Mixtum**.

Simultaneum was a political compromise. In Oldenburg and elsewhere in northwest Germany, each farm had a landlord, and within a parish there would be any number of different landlords. In the parishes of Damme, Neuenkirchen, and Goldenstedt, we find that some landlords were affiliated to one ruler and others to another. The inhabitants of each farm were considered the subjects of the landlord's ruler. But, under whose jurisdiction would the whole parish come? In reality it was shared, and this arrangement was called the **Zwei-Herrigkeit**. In Goldenstedt the Zwei-Herrigkeit was between the Bishop of Münster and the Count of Diepholz (in 1585 it became the Duke of Braunschweig-Lüneburg). In Neuenkirchen and Damme the arrangement was between the Bishop of Münster and the Bishop of Osnabrück. With the passing of lands into secular hands in 1803, the arrangement in all three parishes was between the Grandduke of Oldenburg and the King of Hannover. Zwei-Herrigkeit was ended in 1817 by the **Congress of Vienna**, and all three places came unconditionally to Oldenburg.

The **Peace of Westphalia**, which ended the Thirty Years War, stated in Article 13 which concerned the Diocese of Osnabrück, that whatever confession a parish had been as of 1 January 1624, that confession the parish had to remain or to return to by 28 July 1650. To determine such, it was asked, of what confession was the pastor at that time. For Neuenkirchen and several other parishes, the pastor's confession could not be ascertained. An agreement was reached on 6 July 1649 that both confessions would co-exist in such parishes and each with their own church. In Neuenkirchen and as well as in nearby Gehrde and Badbergen, the resolution came with a twist. It was impossible to give the church to either confession without great harm, and neither could either afford to build their own church. The practice of **Simultaneum Successivum** was initiated, whereby both the Catholics and the Evangelicals shared the same church – the **Simultankirche**. Within the church each confession had their areas of domain and each had their own altar. Services were conducted at different times according to a pre-arranged plan. This practice ended in Neuenkirchen in 1891!

In Gehrde, both confessions shared the same baptismal font, the top of which was double doored. The Evangelicals had one side and the Catholic had the other, and for baptism the half-lid on the appropriate side was lifted. In 1670, two heavily Evangelical Bauerschafts were taken from Badbergen and placed with Dinklage. These Evangelicals then attended Mass in Dinklage and were baptized, married, and buried by the Catholic priest, with due notification made in the sacramental registers.

When it came to Goldenstedt, the situation there was more complicated, the pastor's confession was undetermined, and with several decades of conflict, the church had been destroyed. An agreement with yet another twist was reached in 1651 by the Duke of Braunschweig and the Bishop of Münster. The result was the unique **Simultaneum Mixtum**. There was to be one church, with a Catholic pastor, who would celebrate one Mass on Sunday. To this Mass both confessions would attend, and each would participate according a carefully delineated program. The priest celebrated Mass in Latin, during which an Evangelical choir under the direction of the Evangelical Küster would sing the corresponding parts of the Evangelical service in German. Catholics only received Holy Communion, and it was after Mass that the priest would preach in German to the entire congregation. A very elaborate protocol was emplaced determining the burial practices for each of the Goldenstedt Bauerschafts. The practice of Simultaneum Mixtum ended in 1850 when the Evangelicals built their own church. In all places, conflicts did arise, but over all, the practice of Simultaneum assured peace for the local communities.
