

The origin of Andreas Killian

by: William McCreight – July 2003

This report has been outdated by new research by William McCreight (2009 - 2010)

TO: All interested in Killians

This is a recent email sent to me by William McCreight [RIN 43169] he was born in Newton, NC but has lived in Germany for several years. He and I have carried on some correspondence for a few years. He has made an in depth study, in Germany, of Andreas' possible ancestry. Copied below are his comments concerning his investigation. They should be of interest to all with Killian ancestry.

I, George W. Killian, have a large database of Killian data on the Internet. Instructions for viewing the database may be found at the end of this letter. In the database each person has a unique identifying number - in my genealogy program they are called Record Information Numbers [RINs]. I have added these numbers after a few of the names that William McCreight mentions - they are the same as the ID#s used at the web site.

William McCreight's email address is: william.mccreight@t-online.de

My email address is: killiang@rochester.rr.com

Subject: The origin of Andreas Killian

Dear George,

As you know, I have been trying to confirm your father's speculation that Andreas Killian [RIN 51] was the son of Wolfgang-Philipp Kilian [RIN 937]. Your father Cletus Hugo Killian [RIN 5] based this primarily on the fact that Wolfgang-Philipp died in the same year [1732] Andreas immigrated to America. Your father thought it was possible Andreas took care of his elderly father and was free to immigrate when his father died. This has been widely copied in the Internet, but unfortunately the copiers stated it as a fact and failed to add your father's explanation and reservations, and even his name as the source.

The following is a summary of what I have done so far, the inconclusive results and questions that arose.

Wolfgang-Philipp Kilian's [937] life is fairly well documented because he was a well-known artist, as were many of his relatives for over 300 years, beginning with Hans Kilian, [RIN 1401] who was born in 1516. A few years ago there was an exhibition of Han's work in Neuberg, on the Danube in Bavaria.

The Germans are great record keepers and documents are still available back to the 30 Years War in the mid 1600s, when many records were destroyed. The Catholics and the Protestants repeatedly burned one another's churches, where the records were kept. Since I am retired, and in Germany, it is relatively easy to track down original source material if I have clues of where to look.

According to various published art histories, Wolfgang-Philipp Kilian was born in Augsburg, Bavaria in 1654 and died in Koenigsberg, East Prussia on 13 April 1732. He was the apprentice of his father Philipp. After his apprenticeship he went to Leipzig and Dresden, as a journeyman artist, to broaden his professional experience. He returned to Augsburg in 1676, and in 1677 he married Margareta Reiter. After his wife's death Wolfgang Philipp made his brother Jeremia the custodian of his five children and paid ten Gulden for each child.

On 1 Feb 1694 he married Esther Maria Frommer, daughter of the miniature painter Wilhelm Frommer. On 19 January 1695 the city of Augsburg appointed him Goldsmith. Esther Maria died in 1696 and he married for the third time to Anna Dorothea Warnberger on 14 July 1696. In 1703, at the invitation of the publisher Friederich Rothsoltz, he moved to Nuremberg. He was a prolific artist and his work was mostly portraits. He was dissatisfied with his work in Nuremberg and in 1724 he went to Koenigsberg in East Prussia, where he died on 3 April 1732.

I checked the records in all of the cities where he was known to have lived and worked: Augsburg, Dresden, Leipzig, Nuremberg and Koenigsberg. I found no trace of a son named Andreas Kilian being born within plus/minus 30 years of 1702. As you already know, the Nuremberg archives have records of two daughters who are not mentioned in any of the historical sources. I suppose this is because they were women and not artists and did not interest the art historians. There was a close relative of Wolfgang-Philipp, named Andreas Kilian, born in Augsburg. But he was an artist and he died in Augsburg.

The Koenigsberg archives were a problem because parts of East Prussia were turned over to Russia and Poland at the end of World War II. Since 1945 Koenigsberg has been called Kaliningrad and is in Russia. I contacted the government there and to my dismay learned that they have no archives earlier than 1945. I finally learned that the old archives were taken to Berlin, but found no record of Andreas Kilian. This was an extreme long shot anyway, because Wolfgang-Philipp was 70 years old when he went there. It is possible, but unlikely, that he had a son born there.

The next thing that occurred to me was if Andreas were really born in 1702, he would have been born in the last days when Wolfgang-Philipp was in Augsburg, but Augsburg has no records of him. It is possible he was born when Wolfgang-Philipp was travelling from Augsburg to Nuremberg. It is unlikely he would have taken a wife ready to give birth, but it was a possibility. Therefore, I checked the archives of the churches that existed at the time along the routes between Augsburg and Nuremberg. The results were completely negative.

There are too many Kilians living in Germany now to contact them all, but I had one last possibility. The same names often appear over many generations in families. During the Nazi period, to get married or to obtain government jobs, people had to provide family trees certified by the official "Arian Racial Purity Office." This involved collecting birth, death, baptism, confirmation, etc certificates for many generations. Baptism and confirmation were particularly important because they supposedly proved the subject was not Jewish. This was a misconception of Hitler, because Arian has nothing to do with race. An Arian was a person who spoke the Indo-European language, an ancient prototype predecessor of almost all modern European languages. It also includes non-Caucasian languages from West Asia and North Africa, such as Sanskrit, Persian or Farsi, and Hiite. But Hitler's misconception resulted in masses of certified copies of genealogical records surviving in many German families.

I contacted all of the living Andreas Kilians I could find in Germany and some were kind enough to invite me to visit them and look at their records. Unfortunately I found no useful clues.

I think the inescapable conclusion is that Andreas was not the son of Wolfgang-Philipp Kilian. I am certain records would exist if he were. This is a great disappointment, but I would still like to

know who he was.

The above leads me to the following questions:

q Is there any firm evidence that Andreas was really born in 1702, and where, except the age 30 on the British ship Adventurer's passenger list in 1732?

q Is there any real evidence that the person aboard the Adventurer in 1732 was in fact "our" Andreas Killian?

q Is there any solid evidence that Andreas was a German? He could be an ethnic German from a great many other countries, or he may not have been of German descent at all.

The following is an explanation of why I question these points:

Was Andreauss Killiaen, passenger aboard the Adventurer, really Adreas Killian?

It is widely said on the Internet that Andreas immigrate on 23 September 1732 aboard the Adventurer, sailing from Rotterdam. The Internet even has passenger lists with his name and age 30 in them. The Adventurer was a British ship whose captain was Robert Carson. The complete ship's records are in London, but the original passenger list, when the ship cleared Rotterdam, is in a museum in Holland. Andreas' name is not on it. There is an Andreauss Killiaen age 30. The spelling was apparently changed by whoever made the original entry into the Internet and others simply copied it. Is there any evidence that this is the same person?

It is possible this spelling is a German dialect, or the spelling we know was anglicised in America, or Andreas could not read and the ship's purser spelled it like it sounded to him.

q This looks like a phonetic spelling as it would sound to an Englishman, except for the fact that there was another Andreas on the same passenger list and his name spelled correctly.

q There are many Kilians living in Germany now, and most spell their name "Kilian", although some spell it "Killian". I have not found a single one spelled like the passenger list.

q If he were the son of Wolfgang-Philipp he would not have been uneducated. It was fashionable in the 1600-1700s for educated people to use Latin versions of their name and this was the case with several members of this family.

I have often wondered how so many people of German descent happened to turn up in a little town like Newton in central North Carolina. When I lived there it had less than 4,000 inhabitants, and was no doubt far smaller in 1732. I thought, as often happened, they may have immigrated as a group. I re-checked the Adventurer's passenger list and found many German names, but no names that I remembered in Newton. Most of my maternal relatives and the friends of my maternal grandparents had Germanic names, although sometime anglicised; e.g. Warlich, Cline, Baumgartner, Schrumm, Zimmermann, Loewe, Moretz, Bast, etc.

The Signature on Andreas Killian's Will

I noticed two strange things about the signature of Andreas Kilian on his will that may give clues to his origin. First he spelled his name one "L" while the North Carolina Killians use two. More interesting is his first name does not end in an "S", but the German letter that looks like the Greek Beta, that the Germans call "SZ" (pronounced "esszet"). I have never seen Andreas spelled in this strange way anywhere else.

The four non-Roman characters in the modern German alphabet were introduced rather late and

other non-Roman characters in very early German have disappeared. I am not sure when the "SZ" appeared. I have seen it in German literature from 1850, but it must have existed much earlier since it is in this will. Some Internet sites say Andreas came from Switzerland, but "SZ" is not used at all in Swiss German. They use an "SS" for this sound. I am not sure if it never existed, or if this is the result of a Swiss language reform. I am not sure if it is used in Austrian, modern or old.

Germany, Switzerland and Austria are the three most populous countries using modern German as their official language, although the commonly spoken Swiss and Austrian German dialects are not understandable to most Germans. I have noticed that when an ethnic group is separated from its homeland, it tries to preserve its cultural identity and the language does not change very much. As a result in the USA, for example, there are German, Swedish, Finnish, Polish etc. groups who regularly speak their language, as it was spoken hundreds of years ago in their homeland. When they visit their homeland they cannot be understood. There are many ethnic German groups over much of eastern and Western Europe and in Africa speaking archaic German dialects.

As a result of these differences, perhaps if one could find an ethnic German group that spelled Andreas in this unusual way in the early 18th century, this would be a clue to his origin. I need to find someone with knowledge of 18th Century German in the many countries with ethnic German populations.

Why would Adreas make a long dangerous overland journey from Koenigsberg to Rotterdam to immigrate?

I find it strange that, if Andreas really was in Koenigsberg as your father speculated, he would make a difficult, and perhaps dangerous, overland trip to Rotterdam, on the North Sea, to board a ship?

The finest harbours in Europe were in the cities of the Hanseatic League. The Hansestadt Riga was "just around the corner" from Koenigsberg. Hansestaedte Danzig and Strahlsund are also nearby. A little farther were the Hansestaedte Luebeck, Visby, Tortu, Novgorod, Tallinin, Bergen, from a total of ca. 100 cities in the league.

If he wanted to avoid a sea journey from the Baltic to the North Sea, via the Kattegat, Hansestadt Hamburg was on the Elbe, which flows into the North Sea, and was far easier to reach from Koenigsberg than Rotterdam. In fact this is where many of the refugees from Koenigsberg fleeing the Russians after World War II came. Hansestadt Bremen, on the Weser, is not far from Hamburg and very near the mouth of the Weser at the North Sea. The last meeting of the Hanseatic parliament was in 1669, sixty-three years before the Adventurer sailed, but most of these harbors are still important today.

If Andreas was indeed in Koenigsberg and wanted to immigrate across the Atlantic, it seems to me there would be much easier and safer ways to do it.

Was Andreas Killian really a German?

Is there any solid evidence that Andreas was a German? The fact that German is on old gravestones in Newton does not really mean anything. You will have noticed that some of these gravestones, including Andreas' son Leonard, have strange spelling and grammar. They could be written by someone semi-literate in German, or it could be a Germanic dialect. German is an official language in:

- q Germany,
- q Austria,
- q Switzerland (with French, Italian and Retro-Romansh),

- q Luxembourg (with French and Luxembourgian),
- q Liechtenstein, Belgium (with Flemish and French, but only 30,000 Germanic inhabitants today) and
- q Namibia (the former German Southwest Africa colony).

Some of these dialects are so unique they are hardly understandable anywhere else. There are also German speaking minorities with their own dialects in:

- q Russia,
- q Poland,
- q Hungary,
- q Czechoslovakia,
- q Northern France (Alsace and Lorraine),
- q Northern Italy (South Tyrol and Lombardy) and
- q Even in the USA (Pennsylvania Dutch is really Deutsch).

There are undoubtedly more in other places where I have not been or heard about.

Andreas could have come from any of these places and thought to be a German by Americans. If he were from a German ethnic group in another country, he probably even thought of himself as German. The Russian Volga Germans think of themselves as German, even though they have been there hundreds of years, and virtually no one born in Germany can understand a word they say.

Was Andreas Killian even an ethnic German?

Although there are still a great many Kilians now living in Germany, as your father rightly noted, the name is not necessarily German and is probably Celtic. Before Christ the Celts ruled most of Eastern Europe into parts of Russia and Greece and all of Western Europe from Spain and the middle of Italy north to the Rhine. They were eventually subjugated by the Romans and later by the various Germanic tribes during the great migration. Most Celts have been totally absorbed into other cultures. The only distinctly Celtic groups today are in:

- q Ireland,
- q Scotland,
- q Wales,
- q North-western France,
- q Western Spain and
- q Greece.

Kilians are still found today in many countries and it is not an unusual name.

Augsburg, where the artist Kilians lived, is rich in Celtic archaeological sites and it is possible they were Celts who were integrated centuries earlier into the Germanic culture.

The booklet written by J. Yates Killian, in 1935

Since I have come to a dead end on this line of investigation, unless I can unearth more clues, I am now having another look at the booklet written by J. Yates Killian [RIN 4660 born 1874; died 1953], in 1935. He signed his name as Historian of the Killian Organization.

Later in the booklet he documents some, but far from all, of his statements, by land grants, deeds, wills and other official documents. In the beginning he makes rather sweeping statements without saying where he obtained the information.

I have grown very sceptical of reports with no documentation of their sources, because I have found much undocumented information to be totally untrue and often no more than wishful thinking. Speculation is fine if it points to possible lines of investigation, but it should be identified as such with arguments for and against, as your father did. If this author is still living, perhaps some of his relatives can clarify his lines of reasoning about the following and provide his sources.

Did Andreas Killian come from the Rheinland-Palatinate?

The author of this booklet says Andreas Killian came from the Rheinland-Palatinate. This name refers to a historical period when these lands south of the Rhine belonged to the Count of Palatine, a princely title of the Holy Roman Empire. This is now the state of Rheinland-Pfalz, bordered by France, Luxembourg, and Belgium on its external frontiers.

The author makes no mention of where he found this information, or why he believes it is accurate. He mentions the Andreas Killian who arrived in Philadelphia aboard the Adventurer in 1732, and says Andreas Killian's signature on an Oath of Allegiance to the Colonial Governor matches the signature on Andreas Killian's will from 1785. Based on this, he says there is no doubt the man who arrived aboard the adventurer in 1732 was the "pioneer Andreas Killian".

I have only seen the signature on the will, and will try to obtain a copy of the oath. Andreas was presumably 83 years old when he signed the will, 53 years after he signed the oath. Also he said in his will that he was of "unsound body". Although I am of reasonably sound body and my hand is still not shaky, my signature now bears no resemblance to my signature of 53 years ago. In any case the author does not say how he knows for a fact the person who signed the oath was in fact the passenger from the Adventurer.

Was Andreas Killian the Andreauss Killaen aboard the Adventurer?

I would believe the above was good circumstantial evidence except for the following: The author says Andreas was married and had three children before he came to Philadelphia. He says, with no source of information given, that:

- q Margaret was born in ca. 1721 and was 11 years old when she came to America.
- q Leonard was born in 1723 and was 9 years old when he came to America.
- q John was born in 1725-6 and was 7 years old when he came to America.

No name is given for his wife, but I read somewhere else her name may have been Mary. Andreas could of course have been a widower before he immigrated.

None of these people are on the Adventurer passenger list. The only Killian mentioned is Andreauss Killiaen.

Rather than listing families or passengers travelling together, as one would expect, there were four lists with no family connections stated:

- q A list of 57 adult males
- q A list of 43 Adult females
- q A list of 27 girls
- q A list of 19 boys

It is clear from the last names that many of these were families and sometime rather large families. It must have been a very crowded ship considering the size of ships in those days. Because of the above organization of the passengers, it is doubtful that some passengers were not listed simply because they were women or children.

I do not know what the ship's officers considered an adult, but the youngest adult was 20, and the oldest child was 14.

None of the boys onboard were named John (or the German forms: Jan, Johann, Johannes) or Leonard (or the Germanic forms: Leonhardt, Leonhard). Seven of the girls were named Margarete or Margaret, but all with other last names that were the same as adults on board and obviously members of other families.

According to the author, John's and Leonard's names first appear 17 years later, hundreds of miles away, in the 1749 colonial records of Anson County North Carolina, when they and their father were each granted 1,000 acres.

Is there any evidence John and Leonard were in Philadelphia 17 years earlier?

Would three children ages 7 to 9 make a dangerous sea voyage alone?

All sea voyages in those days were at risk from storms, pirates, privateers and even naval vessels of unfriendly foreign powers. Is it conceivable that three children of ages 7, 9 and 11 would have made a dangerous sea voyage alone? If they did, I have not found them on any passenger lists. I find it much more likely they travelled with their father and this raises a doubt that the Andreaus Killian aboard the Adventurer was the Andrea Killian in North Carolina, unless there is some evidence I have not seen.

The Rheinland-Pfalz is a rather big place, but I am now trying to find a record of an Andreas Killian from there.

Who was John Killian in 1537?

The author quotes "the late Reverend Shuford", but does not say in what publication, who said the Killians can be "traced back" to John Killian in 1537, a Licentiate from Euford College in Germany, who supported the Martin Luther Reformation and attracted enmity from Martin Luther's enemies. It is not clear if the author means he lectured on the university staff, or if he was a student who received a Licent from this university.

"Traced back" means to me a step-by-step connection without any gaps, but he provides no documentary references and no connections at all to any other Killian. In fact he said the next time the name appeared was 400 years later in Rupp's list of 30,000 Immigrants.

There is no place in Germany called Euford. I think he meant the only village, town or city in Germany with a similar name: The East German city of Erfurt in Thuringen on the Gera River. This is the site of one of the oldest, and once best attended, universities in Germany. This assumption is supported by the fact that Martin Luther received a BA there in 1502, and an MA in 1505.

Erfurt was originally called Erpfsfurt, because the original name of the Gera was the Erpf. An abbey was founded at the Erpf river ford (Furt) in 724 and in 742 Boniface founded a Bishopric at Erpfsfurt. The university was founded in 1392. The "pfs" was later dropped and the name became Erfurt.

I will check the records of Erfurt University and find out if this person existed and if anything is known about his family. If he existed, he would have been at least a contemporary of Hans Killian, of Augsburg, who was born in 1516.

John Killian in 1537 was not the first Killian in History

The author said the John Killian, in 1532, is the first time the name Killian appeared in History. He was certainly not the first Killian recorded in history. The artist Hans Kilian [RIN 1409] was born in 1516, but the most famous of the Kilians, Saint Kilian, was born almost 900 years earlier, in 640 in Mullagh, County Cavan, Ireland. He, and his companions the saints Colman and Totnan, were beheaded in 689 in Wuerzburg, Franconia, now in Germany, by Duke Gozbert of Wuerzburg. He is buried in the cathedral there. They went there to convert the "heathen", although the Franks were already Christians of a different type for ca. 200 years before Saint Kilian appeared in Franconia. In those days Christian groups regarded all other Christian groups as heretics and had rather violent "debates" about such trivial points as: The shape of the tonsure, the true date of Easter and how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. All of the Germanic tribes were originally Arian Christian, except the Burgunder and Franks who were Catholic. King Clovis I, of the Salian Franks, was converted by his Catholic Burgunder wife, Saint Clotilda, after a successful battle, and there was a mass baptism of his troops. Saint Gregory, Bishop of Tours, describes this in his "Historium Francorum", written before 594 AD. The Bretons, Irish and Welsh were Christian when all Germanic people were pagans and they believed they defended the faith against the conquering pagan Anglo-Saxons for hundreds of years. They resented the upstart over-bearing Germanic Catholics telling them what true Christianity was.

Conclusion

I must reluctantly conclude that Andreas Killian was not the son of Wolfgang-Philipp Kilian [RIN 937] of the famous Augsburg 300 year artist dynasty, unless someone can provide clues to investigate. He may have been from the Rheinland-Palatinate and he may have been aboard the adventurer, but I have seen no proof of it. I would like to see the proof if it exists.

To continue I need to know more about Andreas Killian himself and hope other people interested in the Killians may be able to provide some leads. Some of Andreas' descendents must have old letters, bibles, deeds, wills, newspaper clippings, paintings, etc. Such things are not uncommon. I have documents pre-dating Andreas on the paternal side of my family, but nothing on the maternal (Killian) side. I would be interested in knowing if there is any real documentary evidence, or even family legends, concerning where Andreas actually originated, when he was born and how he came to be in America. Unfortunately all of my Kilian relatives, except those of my own generation, are dead. They did not record any family stories and did not leave any old family documents that I know about.

I would be grateful for any assistance.

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