

## **An old Rave letter and County judges on the Internet.**

### **A two centuries old puzzle,**

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### **Looking for Kerkerinck and Baackenfeld.**

All I really wanted to do was a bit of research on the history of the Kerkerincks. The father-in-law of my famous ancestor and contemporary of Goethe and of Professor and poet Anton Matthias Sprickmann (1749-1828), was Dr. Franz Hermann Kerkerinck LLD, (1700-1769) to whom we still owe our double name because of a, as yet, unresolved inheritance question (the Kerkerincks were a so-called "Erbmaenner" family. He was secretary of the cathedral chapter in Muenster. So why not look on the Internet as well? In fact, one can find some of his cathedral chapter records from 1760 on the Internet in excerpts of the University and regional library in Muenster. Furthermore he was - and that was news to us - "Gograf" in Baackenfeld. But, where is Baackenfeld?

The Kerckerincks (as they wrote their name then) had started the 200 years lasting process, famous in legal history, about the "Erbmaenner" question, that is, to be allowed to serve on the cathedral chapter of the diocese in Muenster, together with the High Bailiff zu Huelshoff and others. The Supreme Court and Emperor Joseph I gave a positive ruling in the end. Apart from that we don't know much about the ancestors of our second name. So I rummaged around in the Internet News group soc.genealogy.de. And lo, there was a John Rave from Melbourne who was looking for descendants in America of my 3x great-grandfather Ernst Rave XVIII-50 (1783-1837), a mill owner in Rheine!

Immediately I checked my PC genealogy database (with more than 1500 ancestors and relations): there I found some indication about the emigration of the brother of my ancestor, but nothing else. But while on the Internet, why not look at the Rave Homepage? A pleasant surprise was waiting there for me: a well set-up page on the Internet about the Rave family, complete with information, visitor's book etc. I entered my name in the visitor's book immediately and posed the question: Who knows where Baackenfeld is?

The world is small. Of course Baackenfeld is well-known in Australia! John Rave XXIII-218 referred me by return e-mail to Dr. Wilhelm Rave's book and its appendix, a map showing the "Gogerichte" in Westphalia and there was Baackenfeld! I could have searched there, but then, via the Internet Australia is much closer..! Now I've also located House Bakenfeld (as it is now called) on the city map of Muenster: it is an estate near the "Sentruper Hoehe" between Roxeler street and the Zoo.

It is most likely that Dr. Franz Hermann Kerckerinck LLD, "Gograf" in Baackenfeld (my paternal 4x great-grandfather) and Dr. Wilhelm Rave LLD, XVI-40 (1698-1781) (my maternal 5x great-grandfather) "Gograf" in Luedinghausen knew each other personally as colleagues; both obtained their feudal positions from the cathedral chapter in Muenster and the latter was also the lawyer of St. Mauritz and as such, must have known the secretary of the cathedral chapter in his official capacity. Could these two ever have imagined that, two centuries later, someone would remember them?

### **The old Rave Letter - the Front page.**

But now about the old Rave letter itself which I recently found in a small family archive, a fragment consisting of two parts with writing on both sides and full of riddles. On the front there is an obviously official letter to a certain Mrs. Hauptmann (...no surname) in Muenster concerning a debt of "5 gold ducats" - and with a flourishing signature "Your devoted Franz Rave on behalf of the Government", drawn up on Nov. 10, 1801 in Bocholt and attached to it a wonderful, undamaged Rave seal. But the letter has been torn into two and there is a part missing.

After giving the matter considerable thought - and taking into account the reverse side - the following seems to make sense: the letter was obviously sent to Mrs. Maria Wilhelmine nee Rave XVIII-46 (born in Muenster in 1770) wife of captain Hermann Anton Mueller; she was the half-sister of my previously mentioned forebear Ernst Rave. But who wrote the letter? That could only have been Franz Joseph Rave XIX-6 from Ramsdorf (1779-1851), at least he was married in Bocholt and perhaps lived there; and he was a tax collector and finance officer of the government.

It may have amazed Wilhelmine Mueller nee Rave in Muenster to receive mail from a Franz Rave in Bocholt; those two would hardly have known each other; the relationship was even then rather estranged. But she was presumably rather pleased with the beautiful Rave seal with the raven, just as we are now.

But now to the seal itself: above the raven there are the initials JGR (difficult to see on the printed version). As far as we know none of the ancestors of Franz Joseph Rave had those initials, so where to from here? One possibility is Canon Johann Georg Rave XV-31 (1656-1739) in Muenster (a brother of my forebear Major Hermann Bernard Rave XV-33, 1659-1715); but how did Franz Joseph in Bocholt get hold of this seal? Or do the initials refer to the government or to his job? Perhaps a member of the Rave clan can solve this puzzle.

### **The old Rave letter - the back page.**

Now it becomes romantic. Wilhelmine Mueller nee Rave obviously left the letter with the seal to her younger half-brother Ernst Rave, my 3x great-grandfather. He gave it via his son Ortwin Ferdinand Rave XIX-74 (1821-1873) to Ferdinand's wife Charlotte Rave nee Straeter (1826 - 1897). And here starts the history of the backpage.

As a law student in Rheine my great-great-grandfather Ortwin Ferdinand Rave supported the Revolution of 1848 - although not with weapons but through an impudent letter to the Government which, as Dr. Wilhelm Rave wrote in his family history book, "...completely went down the wrong way." Ortwin Ferdinand was actually appointed as an articled clerk, but after his training he was banished as an assistant judge to Loebau in West Prussia. This was quite a shock for the family, especially his young wife Charlotte, who would have found very little joy in her new surroundings, 1000 km away from Rheine. Ortwin Ferdinand Rave (or Ferdinando as the family called him) was very competent and soon left his government job and earned a good living as a lawyer and public notary. The couple was blessed with nine children.

He must have been a handsome man, our Ferdinando", as one can see from the enamelled painting; the original is in our archive and came from Atelier Wallnau in Berlin circa 1860. But fate dealt him a bitter blow; Ferdinando became ill and died already in 1863 from typhoid fever. The family soon returned to Rheine. But Charlotte could hardly cope with his death, even three years later she took the 65 years old Rave letter - carefully preserved by her loving husband - and on the back of it she wrote a poem in memory of her "Ferdinando" which still touches us, although it is not completely legible and contains many deletions.

***The Poem.***

*Happily he went, and from afar  
threw me some kisses.  
The moon and stars keep coming back  
But not my peace of mind  
(...)*

*Three years have flown by already  
But nothing will soothe the pain  
Always I feel this tormenting wave  
Around my aching heart.  
(...)*

*He was the total of my worldly goods,  
Caved in now is my happiness.  
From that cold dark grave  
Give me back my Ferdinando.*

*Oh how happy and cheerful I was  
When he walked besides me.  
And he too! so happy and blessed  
When he lovingly me caressed.*

*Then I remember that certain morning  
When he, full of joy and jest,  
Not bashful but caringly  
Pressed me to his chest!  
(...)*

*Oh, Ferdinando is no longer!  
(..?) said, stop that anguish,  
Tomorrow when the moon is rising  
Will I tell you many things  
to lift from you that awful dream.*

*But the moon arose and disappeared again  
While waiting under the greening tree, But  
Ferdinando did not reappear  
Only that awful, awful dream....*

### **The Rave descendants - Straeter, Beckmann, Sprickmann Kerkerinck.**

Charlotte Rave, nee Straeter had - as eldest child in the merchant family Straeter in Rheine - a younger brother named Wilhelm, also a handsome young man - and he fell in love with Charlotte Rave XX-95 (1852-1913), the eldest daughter of his sister. Affairs with pretty cousins usually go awry - but not here: the two got married and - as reported - very happy with each other and their marriage was blessed with ten children, among which my grandmother Elisabeth (Elsa, later married to Beckmann).

Wilhelm Straeter inherited the cloth business from his father and became First Councillor of the city; in that capacity he had to give the jubilee speech in December 1898, for the mayor of Rheine, my grandfather Rudolph Sprickmann Kerkerinck, without realizing that his granddaughter Charlotte Beckmann - my mother - would marry the mayor's son, my father Franz Sprickmann Kerkerinck. The written copy of that beautiful speech is still preserved in our archive, and the two silver candelabras, presented to my grandfather by the city of Rheine, still adorn our table on festive occasions, after a hundred years.

But back for a moment to the Straeter marriage. So now we have a Charlotte Rave, nee Straeter, the wife of Ortwin Ferdinand Rave (my great-great-grandmother and the writer of the poem) and a Charlotte Straeter, nee Rave (their daughter and my great-grandmother, see photo). Somewhat complicated, don't you think ? But all the Straeter descendants were healthy and full of beans; the cloth business B. T. Straeter though went bankrupt in the turmoil of World War I, and even the name Straeter has disappeared from the family. The last one to carry the name, Wilhelm Straeter's son Ferdinand, had no descendants; he and his wife died of starvation during the chaos of war in Wiesbaden in the spring of 1945.

Well, life is colourful but not always easy, however, right now electronics and the Internet help us to put together the jigsaw that started over 200 years ago.