

Subject: The origin of Andreas Killian

by: Ed Killian August 2003

This report has been outdated by new research by William McCreight (2009)

Having read with great interest William McCreight's report on his research for European records on Andreas Killian and his ancestors, I can say that I truly appreciate his efforts and agree with his findings. That is, I agree that there is no irrefutable evidence, or proof, that Andreas is a son of, or even related to, Wolfgang-Philipp Kilian. As George W. Killian has indicated, this conclusion is not new, but it is comforting to hear further confirmation from yet another researcher.

Never-the-less, we should be reminded that not finding evidence to support a theory is no confirmation that the theory is false. No evidence is just that....no evidence. Nothing is affirmed nor is it denied.

A few thoughts do arise while reading William McCreight's piece..... It does seem entirely conceivable that were Andreas a trained disciple of a family of fine craftsmen who had established an excellent reputation as artists spanning a dynasty of 300 years serving royal courts in northern Europe that Andreas would have brought that skill and used such a talent and reputation to the good of his own family in the colonies. But, alas, it seems obvious that Andreas and his immediate descendants showed skills that were more rudimentary, plebeian almost but necessary in pioneering and imminently practical in the raw forests of North Carolina.

It is entirely conceivable that Andreas Killian is descended from a line of Kilians who took the name from that martyred Irish cleric who was sanctified and is now recognized as the patron saint of Wurzburg. After all, it was well after his martyrdom that surnames began to be used. It is even possible that there were several such surname assumptions in southern Germany such that there were several, genetically separate Kilian families.

The Rhenish Palatinate is a region of cosmopolitan tastes and a virtual melting pot of ethnicities, cultures and languages. Hundreds of petty wars before the 19th century and several much larger wars with pan-European implications have criss-crossed the region in the last two hundred and fifty years. Even into the 20th century, residents routinely learned French and German because they never knew from one war to the next, and from one year to the following, in which country they would be citizens.

The Greek Beta, that the Germans call "SZ" (pronounced "esszet") that William McCreight mentioned is a common, old, German notation for the double-s, particularly in the last syllable of a name. Therefore it seems likely that the ship's logbook entry was indeed "Andreauss Killiaen". If the name has been 'anglicized' to Andreas Killian I think we can be forgiven. It is typical that such entries in logbooks reflect the abilities, or lack thereof, of the recording clerk who was charged with the task of de-coding the sounds and committing them to paper. They relied upon phonetic transliteration; in this case Andreas' name is phonetically "On-dray-euss Kil-e-yan" in German and is found recorded as "Andreauss Killiaen". That is pretty darn good, I think. And we should remember, the recording clerk may have been Dutch, English, Irish or

Scottish, etc. and his 'ear' was trained to the language he had grown up with. The point thereof is that the spelling may well have reflected the clerk's background more than it represented the passenger's ethnicity and surname.

I have no problem believing that Andreas is the same as that Andreauss Killiaen who landed in Philadelphia aboard the 'Adventure'. It was not uncommon to list the paying customer and not include his retinue. Many times the customer made his agreement with the captain, or master, and the recording clerk may never have known the details of that agreement. There was no codified, enforced law as to how these records were to be kept, the clerk simply kept a record that was useful to the master and to whomever counted the payment for passage. There was no need to document everything down to a "gnat's hair." Much of the agreement was "understood" between the captain and the paying passenger.

Rotterdam was a preferred embarkation point because of several reasons, one of which was its proximity to the Rhine River's mouth. The Rhine was the 'spine' of central Europe, much like the Mississippi River is to America; both used extensively to move goods and people west, some wanting to escape or simply look for a better life. Rotterdam was also in Holland, with separate political and religious entities from the many petty states of Germany and much safer as an embarkation point than the German ports where both political entities and religious forces might demand departure taxes, or worse, from immigrants. And, the English were running a booming business hauling Protestants from Rotterdam to the staging port on the Isle of Wight and then to Ireland for provisions before kicking off on the trans-Atlantic journey to the Colonies. The English crown, ever the opportunist, even supported religious freedoms for the non-Catholics being driven from Germany and extended to the Protestants offers of land subsidies in the colonies.

I do think that the German inscription on Leonard Killian's headstone does mean something. Perhaps more to his surviving family members than to himself....but certainly to someone. It is inconceivable that an Irishman would have been buried in the American Colonies under a German worded headstone. Not impossible, but rare, wouldn't you think? After all, there were other headstones being carved at the same time with English inscriptions. The "strange spelling and grammar" is a simple reflection of the educational level of the stonemason and perhaps, too, of the family. Whether it reflects as dialectical or semi-literate does not alter the fact that the ethnicity was German. Therefore Leonard was of German ethnicity and was buried in a German Reformed Church Cemetery. Ergo, Andreas was German. Quot Erat Demonstratum

We can show that the surnames that the Killians associated with in North Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana were largely German in ethnicity.

William McCreight asks some good questions and it would probably be wise to develop answers to those questions so we can reliably have a solid foundation upon which to build the genealogy and history of the Killian Clan.

It is also true that DNA results from a variety of surnamed Killians from widespread geographic locations would help in evaluating the origins of the Andreas Killian descendants.

Best Regards...and Thanks to George W. Killian and William McCreight....

Ed Killian, edkillian@bellsouth.net
206 Rutherford Court
Clinton, TN 37716
Phone: 805-463-1060

See the Killian Family History at: <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/k/i//Ed-R-Killian/>
See the Causey Family History at: <http://www.genealogy.com/users/k/i//Ed-R-Killian-MS/>