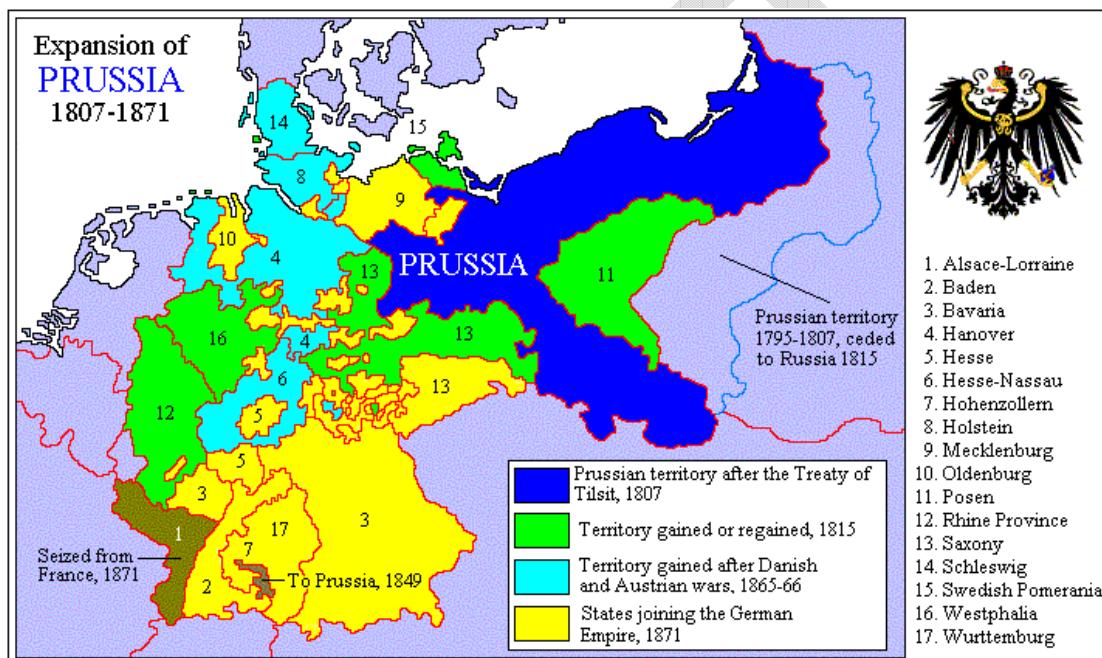


I: A CAST OF CHARACTERS: TOWARDS 1871

The Kingdom of Prussia dominated northern Germany during the 19th century, politically, economically, and in population. In fact, much of the century can be characterized by Prussia's quest for German supremacy, as is demonstrated by the map below. Yet today the term's relevance is limited to historical, geographical, or cultural usages. Prussia as a state was abolished by the Nazis in 1934 and disappeared altogether under the Allies in 1947.



As an entity, Prussia was dominated by Protestants. However, their virtues and value system continue to influence wider aspects of German culture up to the present day. For instance, a true Prussian of the time was considered industrious, obedient, self-disciplined and orderly. They were also seen to be austere, subordinate, incorruptible, reliable and punctual. These are traits we also tend to characterize Germans by today.

Lutheranism is the theological movement behind Protestantism that grew after its forefathers were excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church in 1521 (hence the term protestants). It teaches justification "by grace through faith alone."

Combined these virtues helped shape the Prussian identity, whose motto is: "To each his own."

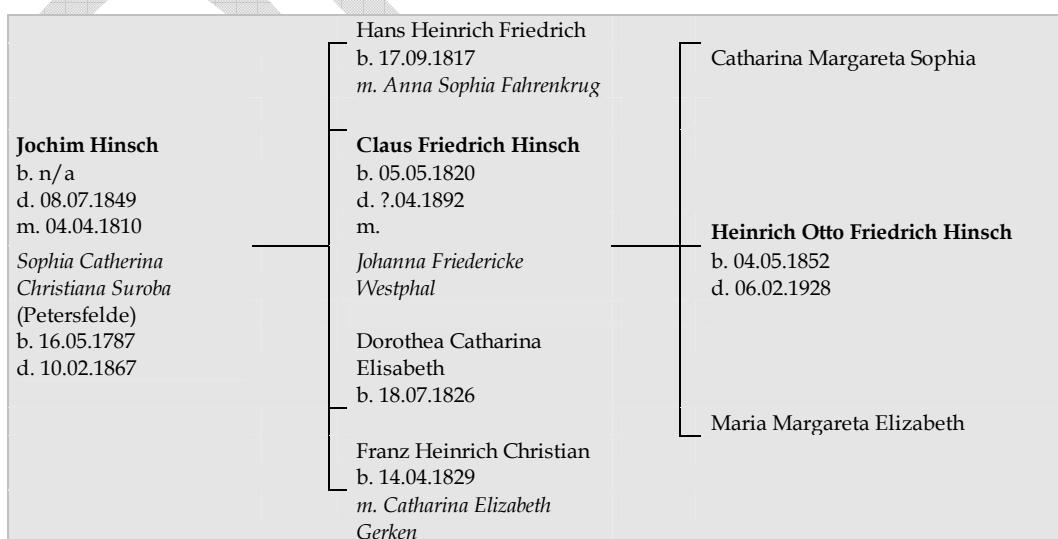
Birth and death certificates show this to have been the milieu into which my forefathers and their wives' families were born. Both my grandmother's maternal and paternal grandparents' stories begin in fairly rural areas which is probably quite fortunate, because "cities were, until the late nineteenth century, relatively unhealthy places to live."¹ So much so that the infant mortality rate in 1839 meant 285 newborns in a thousand would die before the age of one (compared to 151 for England and Wales and 160 for France). This figure hardly improved until 1920, so we can perhaps be thankful we are here at all today!

My grandmother, Nanny Týralla, used to tell us her maternal side of the family originated from Schleswig-Holstein, "up north close to Denmark." Her grandfather must have been quite a character for her not to have forgotten that information, because indeed he was born there, on 4th May 1852.



The small village of Sylfeld is where our story begins, more or less midway between the pretty UNESCO world heritage town of Lübeck and the hanseatic port of Hamburg, approximately 35km from both (see map, left). Today it has a population of approx. 3000 inhabitants, but in 1852 when my grandmother's grandfather, Friedrich Hinsch, was born it had a population of just xx.

Parish records show he was one of three children and had two sisters: Catharina Margareta Sophia and Maria Margareta Elizabeth. His father was Claus Friedrich Hinsch (born 32 years earlier on May 5th, 1820). His mother was Johanna Westphal. This is shown in our family tree:²



¹ Guinnane in O&O (pg. 44)

² Data extracted from Sophia Suroba's record of death

Commonly known as Friedrich, his larger family included at least two Hinsch uncles and an aunt plus innumerable cousins. According to Ingrid Schories of the Parish of Segeberg, Hinsch was a widespread name in Sülfeld, while local historian Ulrich Bärwald related in writing details of another Hinsch who lived nearby, a century or so later (see footnote 4 below).

Friedrich's grandparents were also local. Although his grandfather, Jochim Hinsch, had passed away before he was born (in July 1849³), his grandmother, Sophia Catherina Christiana Suroba remained in Sülfeld until she died, when Friedrich was approximately 15 years old (in Feb. 1867). She came from just down the road, a small locale a kilometre or so away called Petersfelde.⁴

I visited sleepy Sülfeld on a dull and wet summer's day in 2001. The only historical building worth photographing at the time was the local church, a characteristic red-brick building with an iron-cast '1835' attached to its main tower. Sülfeld's local postcard also depicts the church as the principal attraction, so I guess I missed little other than the Hinsch family home – oh, and the last bus back to Hamburg.



But back to the time of the Hinsch's, Sülfeld contained more exciting pursuits. Between the 13th and 17th centuries it lay on the major east-west trading route of the 'Hanseatic League.' One important commodity to pass along this route was fur pelts, as can be seen from the map below. These had been traded since the early Middle Ages from *Nizhny Novgorod* in Russia (pictured below left). But the locale itself had long been host to a number of Germany's own fur farms.



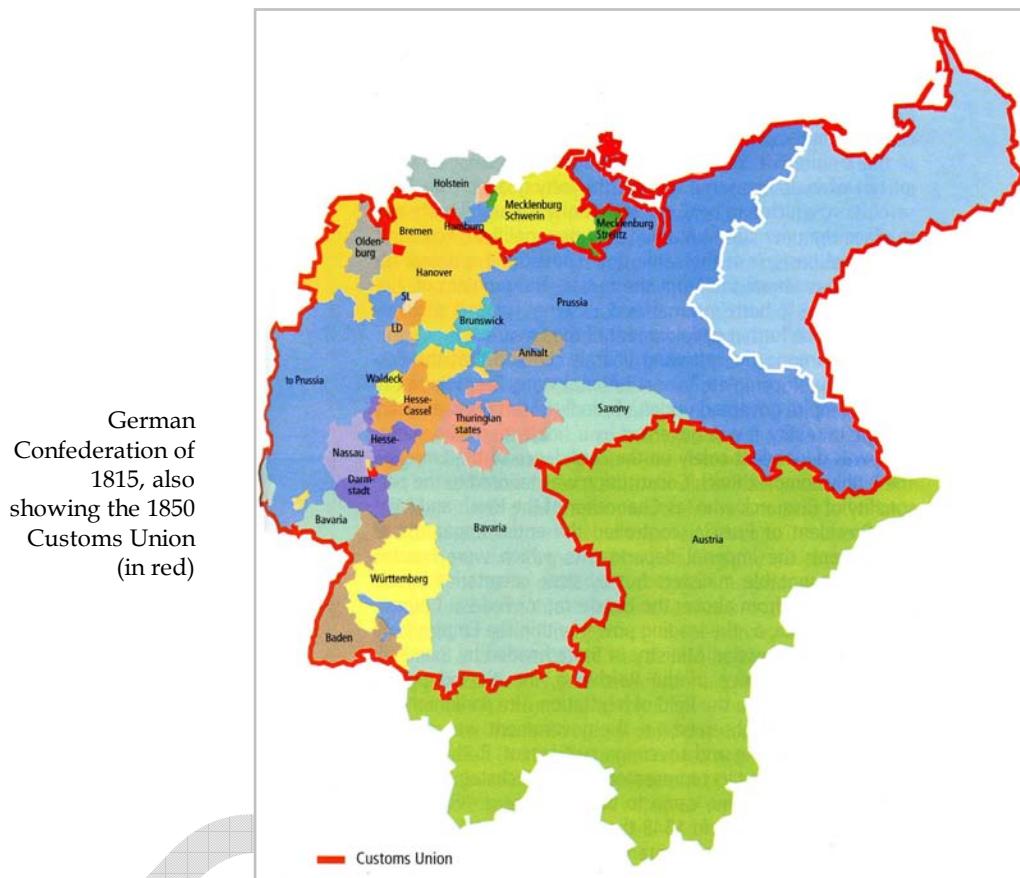
Picture source:
Wikipedia,
Kürschner (1906)

Map source:
Wikipedia,
Hanseatic League.

³ It's possible he lost his life during the 1848-1851 war when the Germans of Schleswig took up arms to protest Danish government policy to integrate the duchy into Denmark. Prussia intervened, causing the ensuing Schleswig-Holstein Revolt to last for three years. The result was a Danish victory and a return to the status quo.

⁴ A hundred years or so later, Petersfelde spawned perhaps its most famous Hinsch; 'Willi,' who may have been a descendent of a cousin of Friedrich called Wilhelm! Born around 1889, he became mayor of Sülfeld shortly after world war two and according to a local newspaper article, clocked up a number of community successes. He died in 1955.

The importance of the Hanseatic League (an organization of Low German-speaking foreign traders) declined during the nineteenth century. However, the Duchy of Holstein (where Friedrich's family lived) remained a hotbed of political interest. Following the 1803-1815 Napoleonic Wars (a period of "never-ending warfare and misery"⁵ for most German states), even if the Duchy found itself integrated into the German Confederation of June 1815, it retained the King of Denmark as its Duke.



In 1864 (around the time of Friedrich's 12th birthday), the Danes made a more formal claim for the duchy. The German Confederation (dually led by the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austria Empire) responded by ejecting Denmark. But Prussia – as part of her quest for German supremacy – went one step further by defeating the Austrians during the so-called *Bruderkrieg* or Austro-Prussian war in 1866. Upon its victory, it swept the not only the Duchy of Holstein but Schleswig further north too into a single province.

One might ask whether Friedrich and his family could identify themselves at all amidst this action! However, family records depict they saw themselves as Prussian, as so too were most other 'Holsatians' (that also explains why Bismarck was so popular there, once the Danes and Austrians were firmly out of that leadership race)!

⁵ Reference missing

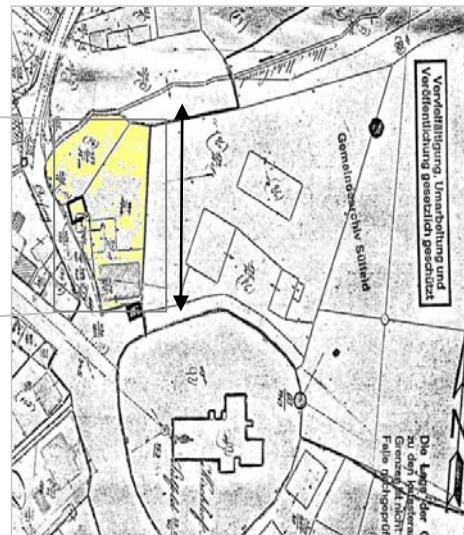
Claus Hinsch occupation was an '*Instmann*' according to Friedrich's birth registration, while a family sales contract of thirty years later reveals he was a '*Käthner*.' Both terms are similar in meaning and are typical of northern Germany. An *Instmann* was something akin to a serf: a semi-free peasant of a low hereditary class, slavishly attached to the land owned by a feudal lord who was required to perform labour and enjoyed minimal legal or customary rights. According to Wikipedia (see [wiki/serf](#)), he often volunteered one family worker (for example, a son or wife) on a seasonal or even permanent basis. The term *Käthner* derives from the word *Kate*, which is a small and sparsely furnished house or cottage, typically found within (or even beyond) a rural community, most commonly in northern Germany.

'*Käthner*' is an unusual term, but it appears in an 1863 poem called '*Abseits*' (or '*Apart*') by Schleswig-born writer, Theodor Storm, in which he describes a heathland farm not far from Danish-occupied territory. A *Kate* was also painted in a 1915 artwork by Lübeck-born Erich Dummer entitled: *Bauernkate in Schleswig-Holstein*.



As is evident, a *Kate* was not much more than a one story barn that afforded some room for straw and food storage. Animals were housed under the prolonged roof (where it came close to the ground). In regions with cold winters, there was no distinction between the space used for residential purposes and that for livestock (in order to benefit from the animals' heat).

The Hinsch's *Kate* was located at Am Markt, 20, opposite the local church in fact, as one can see from the map below (highlighted in yellow). *Käthners* were subsistence farmers ('*Kleinbauers*'), who were permitted to keep a piece of land for agriculture and animals. According to [Wikipedia.de](#), their plots were not small, typically about 2-6 hectares or 5-15 acres in size (between 2 and 7 times the size of an English football pitch)! In Germany such farmers were also called '*Gärtners*' or gardeners (which may partly explain the similarity in sound with the term *Käthners*).



Am Markt 20
(in yellow),
Sulfeld, 1883
(Courtesy of
Google Maps
(left) and
Ulrich
Bärwald
(right))

NB: Vertical
arrow shows
the Hinsch
land, some 75m
in length,
roughly a sixth
of a football
pitch!

Ultimately, however, the *Käthner* owned only a limited quantity of cattle, chickens and maybe a horse. This meant the return from the land was not sufficient for subsistence and they were obliged to perform manual work for larger landowners. Sometimes they maintained a second profession, such as teaching or artisanal work.⁶

Many *Kates* were built alongside streams and rivers in order that the nearby water could be used for metal forging, for instance iron. Water wheels also drove mechanical hammers and grinding stones. It is hardly surprising to see in the map on the previous page that the Hinsch 'home' backed onto the *Alter Alster Canal* – look carefully and one can see the labeled regular lines of a dammed water course to the north of the plot. Noting the names and professions of those who undersigned Friedrich Hinsch's birth, we can identify the tradesman his father would have been affiliated with and envisage the sorts of relationships he kept. For instance, there was a *Schlosser* or metal craftsman named Heinrich Wolgast, as well as the *Hofer*, Fritz Scheel, who was probably the landowner.

Claus Hinsch was required to pay the landlord in cash (for rent) and in-kind too (e.g. chickens, grain), besides give assistance during harvest time. But we can assume he also kept a metal or processing workshop to supplement his income.

However, Claus' own 1820 birth record adds a few twists to our view of him. For instance, his parents (i.e. Jochim and Sophia) were '*Erbpächters*'- or hereditary tenants. Wiktionary tells us a '*tenant*' is not only: "One who pays a fee (rent) in return for the use of land, buildings, or other property owned by others," but is also: "One who by law holds a property by any kind of right, including ownership."⁷ As it happens, the contract I recalled earlier records the sale of the Hinsch *Kate* and land, the size of which was 1222m² – about 12times smaller than a typical *Käthner*'s plot.

Does this imply the Hinsch's were more privileged *Käthners* who enjoyed the right to their own land? In the rural social hierarchy, *Käthners* in fact stood above the peasantry ('*Büdner*'). Wikipedia.de also notes that *Käthners* belonged to the lower middle-class in the village and enjoyed lower tax burdens too!^{8 9}

By the time Friedrich finished school in 1866 (aged 14), his opportunities beyond semi-servitude will have remained limited. My best bet is that he worked toward a deeper understanding of artisanal trade, perhaps fur, while learning to make the best use of his hands in his father's and others' workshops, as a kind of apprentice.

As an adolescent, however, he won't have been blind to the changes taking place around him, mainly those political and industrial. I daresay Claus took him along to nearby *Bad Oldesloe* (see '1' on the map overleaf), a small cure centre 9 kilometers east of Sülfeld (see '2') along the *Alster-Trave Canal*. During the century, it had grown significantly as a trade and storage point, thanks to its position on the *Trave river*. Being also connected to the *Elbe-Lübeck Canal* (see '3') meant huge volumes of goods was now being transported across Holstein's waterways.

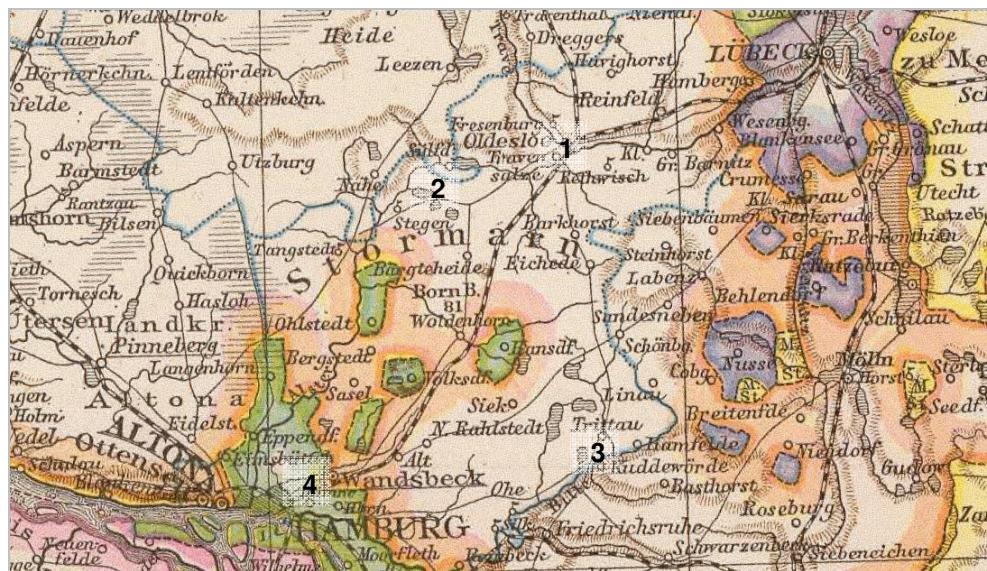
⁶ <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kätner>

⁷ <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/tenant>

⁸ [http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kate_\(Hütte\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kate_(Hütte))

⁹ See also Sofia Margareta von Knorring's culturally important 1846 work: *Der Käthner und Seine Familie*:

Friedrich may have also travelled further afield, to the rapidly growing port of Hamburg for instance (see '4'). Just 55km away and with close to 300,000 inhabitants by 1870, it was already Germany's second largest city (and until 1862 had also been one of the three surviving members of the Hanseatic League together with Bremen and Lübeck). One can almost imagine Claus taking his son off for a taste of the city. To reach it, they would have left Oldesloe, perhaps hitching a ride on a *Treidelkähne*, a special tow boat popular at the time for transporting freight.¹⁰



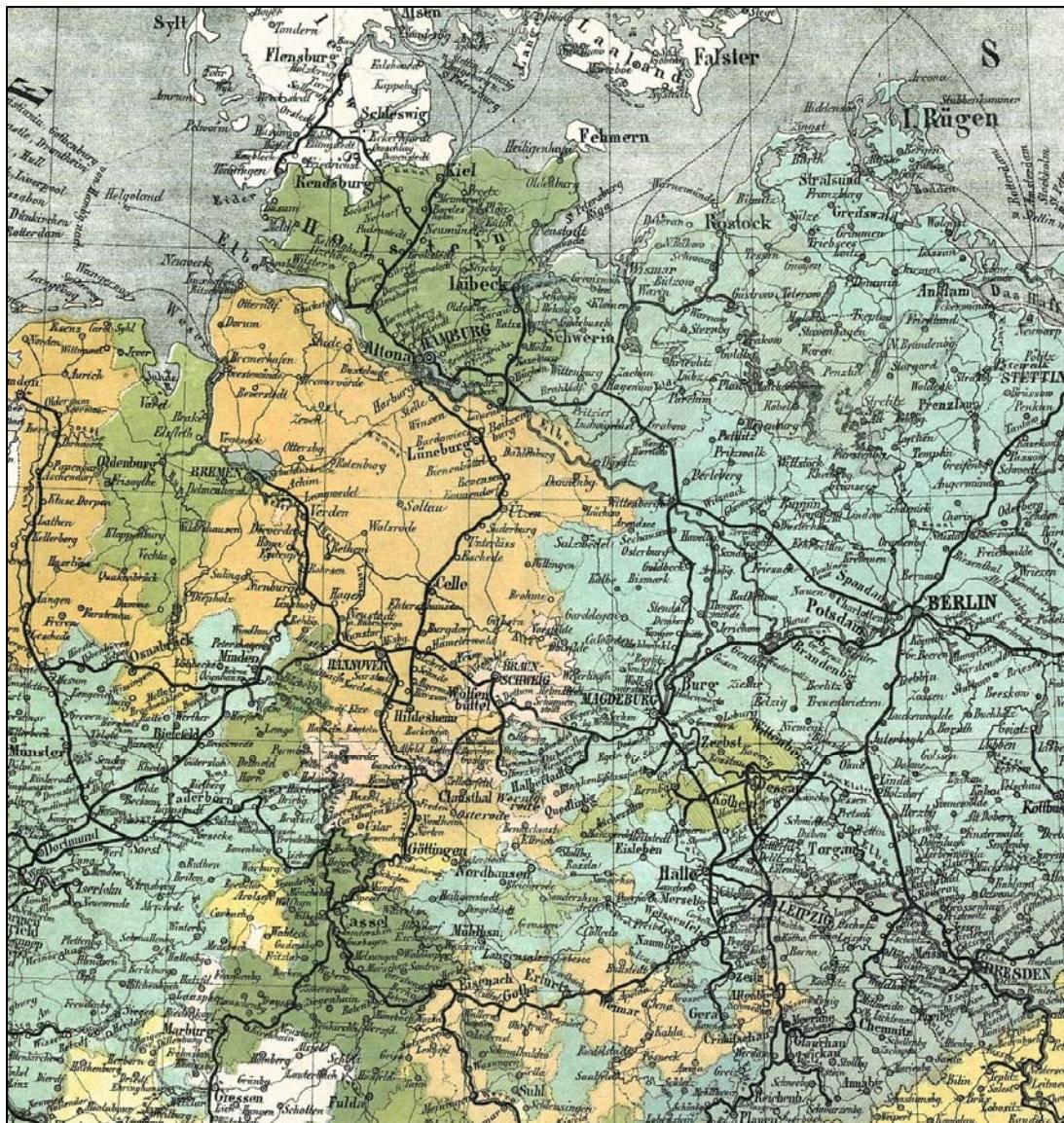
In 1865, however, local modes of travel diversified. Holstein was connected by the *Lübeck-Oldesloe-Hamburg* railway (as is shown on the above map from DavidRumsey.com). But let's also not forget, the railway carriages in the 1860s did not provide the comfort of our days. The heating and lighting was primitive and in the winter period, only those who took the train had no other choice! Travel was neither cheap, so IVth class would have been the norm. Nevertheless, the advent of the railway meant Hamburg lay just over an hour from Oldesloe. That in turn opened up much of Germany, as the rail network map from 1861 overleaf shows.

1.1: Networked Germany: The Rapid Rise of the Railways

Railways transformed public and private life in Germany to a far greater extent than any other technological achievement. They opened up entirely new trade routes that facilitated the cheap, rapid and reliable transport of raw materials and products. They also stimulated increased production, not only of coal and iron – but textiles too. Even more important than the growth in total railway length (which tripled between 1850 and 1870), was the gradual creation of connections among the producing and consuming regions in the German states. As a result, individuals (and enterprises) took advantage of this newly-found mobility. Masses of unskilled workers flooded into towns from over-populated rural areas to warehouses and factories. Others would stand on street corners, in docks and harbours, waiting for lifting and carrying work. For the Hinsch's, Hamburg and Lübeck's consumer markets opened up, as did those farther afield including Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Cologne and Frankfurt – cities that were experiencing rapid population growth during the second half of the 19th century too.

Sources: *Questions on German History and Breuilly*, pg. 203, O &O

¹⁰ Oldesloe brochure posted online in 2010 at: www.badoldesloe.de/Bilder_Stadt_OD/Stadt/BO_Stadtpoetaet.pdf



German Railways in 1861
 (Wikipedia: [/en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_first_German_railways_to_1870](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_the_first_German_railways_to_1870))

Before delving deeper into Friedrichs' world, let's now head to *Mitteldeutschland*. This was a region that at the time included most of what was known as *Thüringen* besides two entities that went by the name of Saxony. One belonged to Prussia (as in the *Prussian province of Saxony*), while the other was its own independent state (known as the *Kingdom of Saxony*), whose western half could still be considered 'central Germany.'

Here we find ourselves sixty kilometres west of a rapidly developing city called Leipzig, in a town called Querfurt, with a family that would eventually provide Friedrich a wife and mother to his kids.

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Map of 1828 showing the Kingdom of Saxony east of the yellow-green border with Leipsick, besides the Province of Saxony west, including Querfurt, and the Thuringian States to the south of the just visible border.

Source:
www.davidrumsey.com

In its 15th century heyday, Querfurt (see '1' on the map above) was the capital of a principality which had a population of 20,000 and an area of nearly 200 square miles. But by 1806, with its importance diminishing, it first found itself part of the newly founded *Kingdom of Saxony* before then becoming part of Prussia's *Province of Saxony* in 1813.

What was the reason for these frequent political changes? During the Napoleonic Wars, from 1806 the Saxon King had been allied to the French. As a consequence of Napoleon's defeat (a symbolic event which occurred at the 1813 'Battle of Leipzig' – see '2' on the map above¹¹), a forty percent share of the Kingdom (i.e. the western part) was annexed by Prussia (the victor). Come 1816, Querfurt was no more than a rural district of Merseburg (see '3' above) within the *Province of Saxony*.¹²

The town itself lies in the fertile Saale valley surrounded by vineyards and fields full of golden oilseed rape. Its historically preserved old town is flanked by a magnificent Middle Age castle and its fortressed walls. The town's income typically arose from agriculture, although in the second half of the 19th century it also became a centre for sugar processing and wine production.

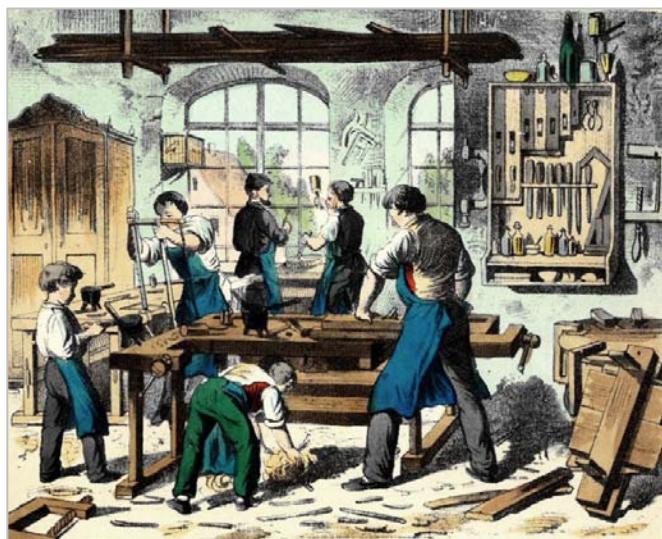


Much of the town's centre was destroyed during the 17th century by two heavy fires. One building that survived, however, lies in a street called 'Kirchplan.' Number five (pictured right) sits under the shadow of the town's dominant 15th century gothic 'Hallenkirche,' east of within-view *Burg Querfurt* and just behind the main town square.

¹¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Saxony

¹² http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regierungsbezirk_Merseburg

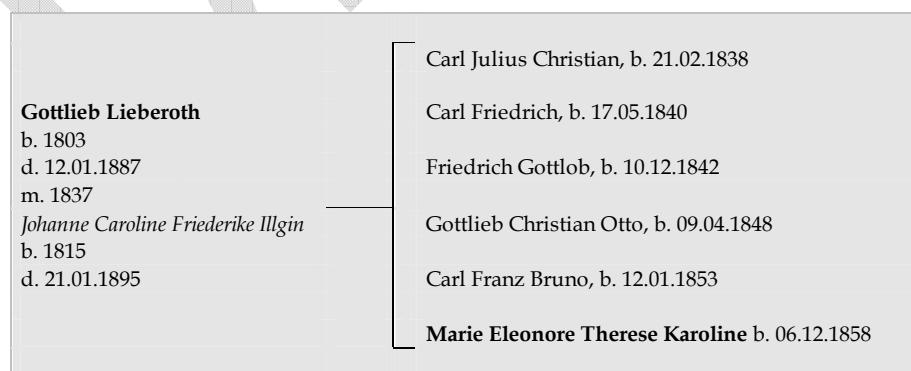
A visit in summer 2000 to this delightful locale of narrow and crooked streets and its population of 13,000, revealed that until 1995, *Kirchplan 5* belonged to the Lieberoth's; a middle-class family of master carpenters whose trade had evolved in the twentieth century into shoe-making, horse saddle tannery, and bag weaving. At the same time I learned that the house's first stone was laid in 1643 and that the front door, its hinges and handles originated from 1730 (see the close of this chapter for a corresponding photograph)! Closer inspection of the house reveals a small courtyard to the rear that once housed the carpenter's workshop.



Source: Wikipedia, Tischler entry

The trade of a carpenter involves working with wood to construct, install and maintain buildings, furniture, and other objects. A 'joiner' (*Tischler* in German) undertakes similar work, but differs in that he or she cuts and fits joints in wood that do not use nails. This means his work was typically practiced in a workshop environment, since the formation of the various joints generally requires non-portable machinery – as opposed to a carpenter who would normally work on site. The image left shows us what a typical workshop would have looked like around 1880. Note how all the men of the family are involved!

As in the case of the Hinsch's, archive records give us details on several generations of Lieberoths, which are shown in the family tree below. We'll begin with Gottlieb Lieberoth, who was born in 1803 - in the midst of the Napoleonic wars, a good 15 years or so earlier than Friedrich's father, Claus. Records provided in August 2000 by the Evangelisches Pfarramt of Querfurt indicate that Gottlieb was the only son of the carpenter, Johann Christian Gottlob.



These records also tell us that when Gottlieb got married in 1837, aged 34, he had already inherited his father's business. We may speculate that perhaps his father had already grown too old to continue working or that maybe his mother had died early and he'd directly inherited her dowry or property, a perfectly customary occurrence.

This will have meant that, 1) he'd acquired a fair degree of financial independence and 2) his master's qualification entitled him to trade at that age. All of which means that as a single man with a large home and workshop, Gottlieb Lieberoth would have cut an exceptionally eligible bachelor!

It was a family of ropemakers living almost 20km away in a place called Laucha that eventually netted this unattached thirty-something – not once but twice! The unusual situation arose because Gottlieb's first wife, Carolina Dorothea Illgin had died childless a year earlier in 1836. The parish record makes specific reference to this fact, probably because of the dowry (i.e. money, goods, or estate) that were brought into the marriage by the Illgin's. The customary rules state that if she died without bearing a son, her husband would have to refund the dowry.

Judging by the ensuing events, the Illgin's preferred to maintain their 'alliance' with the Lieberoth's and therefore betrothed Gottlieb another daughter: this time Johanne Caroline Friederike, twelve years his junior, aged 21!¹³ (In case you, the reader, are wondering whether Gottlieb bumped off his first wife because he preferred her younger sister, please consider that one of the basic functions of the dowry was to serve as a form of protection for the wife against the possibility of ill treatment by her husband and his family. In other words, the dowry provided an incentive to the husband *not* to harm his wife!)

Although Johanne and Gottlieb's was an arranged marriage – something that by today's standards would have us in uproar – it was nevertheless a fertile one! The pair reared six children between 1838 and 1858, including five boys, many of whom quite bizarrely shared the same name! That's not a bad innings, considering the poor harvests and potato blight of the mid-1840s plus a financial crisis of 1857-8, all of which contributed to food riots in Berlin, widespread famine, and mass emigration to places like America.

To weather such storms and raise such a large family one can imagine the Lieberoths must've been a reasonably affluent and trade-wise well-connected household – a trait the Ilgins obviously perceived early on!

The couple in fact left their greatest achievement till last (or perhaps it was their aim all along), when in December 1858 they welcomed into the world a daughter - Marie Eleonore Therese Caroline! A glance at her godparents' trades reveals the sorts of company skilled artisans indeed liked to keep: a horn master (as in animal horns), timber merchants and farmers. In no small part this was done to maintain a safe social distance from the poorer levels of society, but at the same time probably as much to secure their status as part of the new German bourgeoisie that had begun to emerge in the nineteenth century.

Having at least one son to take over the family trade was paramount, but having a multitude would have been invaluable. It not only assured Johanne and Gottlieb they'd be well-looked after in their old age (they both lived to be octogenarians!) but

¹³ Explanations and records from the parish office are contradictory, mixing the names of the first and second wife. Because the certificate of their daughter's christening and marriage certificate lists Johanne Illgin as the mother, this name is indicated within the family tree.

also ensured they wouldn't drift down the social ladder. This was especially important because industrialization was luring many skilled apprentices and masters off to work in construction, the factories, and to service the needs of an increasingly urban-industrial society (as plumbers, locomotive engine repairers etc). Social mobility was effectively draining the artisans of their workforces, even despite the fact that 'mass artisan' trades such as tailors, carpenters, cobblers, furniture makers were actually growing rapidly. Many artisans' offspring therefore worked long hours up to six days a week and probably this was the case for the Lieberoths.

Marie though will have grown up in an environment in which her peers were all a fair bit older than she. Her father was close to retirement age by the time of her earliest memories, while her mother was not far off her fifties. Her closest brothers (in age) were five and ten years her senior while her three eldest brothers (separated by just six years) would have either been masters in the family workshop or away as journeymen.



Interior of a Berlin home. Source: Wikipedia.org/Biedermeier

The family model she'll have likely grown accustomed to seeing was one where the husband was the breadwinner and the wife the homemaker: in other words, a typical middle-class patriarchal nuclear family. Mother will have put her energy into creating a cohesive and stable home environment, while also taking care of the furnishing and design of the house. A popular artistic style among the bourgeoisie at the time was Biedermeier which influenced not only interior design but literature, music, and the visual arts too.

Her mother will have nurtured the family's cohesion, doing most of the rearing and socializing of her and her brothers. Likely she will have brought Marie up with the Prussian values of industriousness, ambition, self-control and thrift, and made it clear that one day too, Marie will have three roles: that of wife, mother and housekeeper, where priorities will have been in that order, too: first to the husband, then to the children and last to their household.

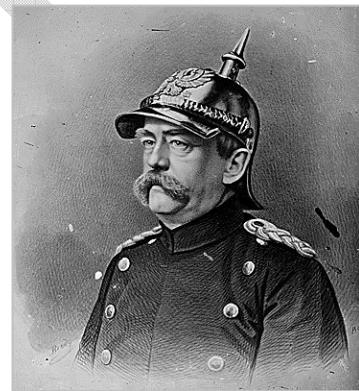
Marie's formal education probably included not much more than needlework, languages, drawing and music (although women's movements were already campaigning for an expansion beyond these traditional subjects as early as 1848).¹⁴ However, informally she will have learned that marriage was the only acceptable status for daughters of the middle class. She'll have seen and heard how a married woman could share the social position and standing of her husband, and that in a bourgeois household one could live on the income of the male provider, leaving her free of the need to do outside work.

¹⁴ Pine, O&O, pg. 359

In this way she would engender and safeguard her husband's success, while ensuring her family would be portrayed as a haven of 'order and tranquility' and a centre of 'warmth and love.' These values and examples Marie will have been expected to uphold in her own relationship, under the watchful eye of her mother who lived until Marie was 37! As if by text book, certificates show that when Marie was married she was indeed '*ohne Beruf*' (without occupation), while by all photographic accounts, she also achieved her own 'bourgeois' household.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves! Instead let's return and conclude by reflecting on Otto von Bismarck, who, thanks to his ambitions to unite Germany will have been Marie and Friedrich's leading political - and national - figurehead. Bismarck had been leading Prussia's quest for German supremacy since he took office in 1862 as Minister President and Foreign Minister. Friedrich's family witnessed Prussia first expel the Austrians from the German Confederation and then annex Schleswig-Holstein in 1865 (see page 10).

Indeed, that event saw the Chancellor welcomed in Holstein by the northern Germans and middle classes "amidst a wave of optimism and enthusiasm." One journalist described the atmosphere saying: "I never breathed in my life a more invigorating air than the one which blew in the autumn of 1866 through North Germany....One felt as if one were standing at the threshold of a new period, a period which promised miracles."



Following Austria's eviction from the German Confederation, the so-called "*Klein Deutsch*" or North German Confederation was founded in August 1866 (see map overleaf and territory in red). This was established as a military alliance of 22 north German states in which the *Kingdom of Prussia* served as the leading state.¹⁵

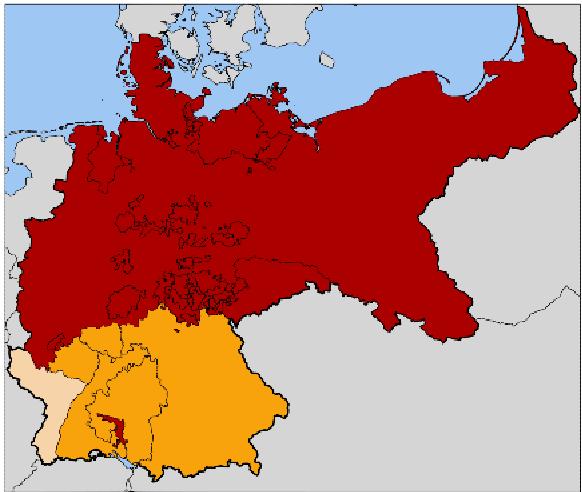
Yet in the absence of a truly unified state, the German people's sense of nationhood remained rooted in their common language, poetry, history and cultural unity.¹⁶ Musical, cultural and sporting associations had promoted German unity through various festivals since the 1850s¹⁷. But it was Bismarck's efforts focused on "national unification from above" that ultimately brought the people together.

Around about the same time, two other persons came together. No, not Friedrich and Marie! Rather it was Marie's older brother Christian who married Friderika Caroline Bennemann on 6th December, 1866 (that was after all Marie's eighth birthday)! One of the reasons he wedded her was because she was five months pregnant! Their child, a son named Carl Julius Oskar Lieberoth was born on 3rd April 1867. Although he was Marie's nephew, he was like a younger brother to her and they remained close for many years to come. His home in *Thalsdorf* lay a kilometer or so down the road from Marie's.

¹⁵ The Kingdom of Saxony was forced to join the confederation in 1867 – another indemnity for having been on the wrong side again, this time Austria's, in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. Thus Prussia took over control of the Saxon postal system, railroads, military and foreign affairs. See also: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saxony>

¹⁶ Questions on German History

¹⁷ Carr: History of Germany, 1815-1990, published 1991



In July 1867, the North German Confederation transformed into a federal state. Although a number of south German states had opted out of this arrangement (remaining independent, although allied first with the Austria Empire until 1867¹⁸), when France declared war on Prussia in July 1870 (fearing for its own European supremacy) there was national outrage across all German states. The southern states (in orange in the map left) rose to the confederation's aid, and so began the Franco-Prussian war.

A military draft was established for every Prussian male capable of fighting. At the outset of the war, this rendered about 1.2 million males eligible. Universal conscription resulted in the rapid mobilisation of some 550,000 soldiers, with some 462,000 flawlessly concentrated on the French frontier, thanks in no small part to Germany's railway network.¹⁹

Although archive holdings regarding the Prussian Army's soldiers (non-officers) were all but destroyed by American air raids in April 1945,²⁰ according to Lieutenant Colonel Heiner Bröckermann, Branch Head of the *Militärgeschichtliches Forschungsamt* there; "it is very possible that... [Friedrich] served in the Franco-Prussian War...as a common soldier." Bröckermann also goes on to say that: "the likelihood that [he] gained the rank of an officer at the age of 18/19 before or during the ... war ... is very low."

The Franco-German war, as Christine Krüger calls it in a paper printed in the Journal of the German History Society²¹, was the largest European war in the century between Waterloo (in 1815) and the First World War (1914). About two million soldiers took part in the campaign, and more than 180,000 of them died. On the German side more than 40,000 lost their lives, around 90,000 were wounded and even more fell ill.

One soldier wrote in a letter printed in a newspaper: "I cannot describe what we had to see there, in view of so much misery life is not worth anything anymore." Another eyewitness of one of the fierce August battles reported: 'In an instant the regiment was wiped out like a pencil line by rubber.' Modern weaponry had boosted the losses immensely. The range and effectiveness of firearms had been extended considerably. A third combatant wrote in a letter to his family in January 1871:

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Confederation

¹⁹ A slightly trivial point but countries previously without a general staff or a system of universal conscription soon adopted both, along with developments in logistics, military use of railways, and the telegraph system, which all were proven by the German victory to be indispensable. Germany itself went on to establish one of the most powerful and professional armies in the world. For further reading, see also: The Franco-Prussian War: The German Conquest of France in 1870-1871 by Geoffrey Wawro, published by Cambridge University Press; New Ed edition (21 Feb 2005).

²⁰ http://www.mgfa.de/html/anfragen_2005.php

²¹ German Suffering in the Franco-German War, 1870-71. Christine G. Krüger. German History, Vol. 29, No.3, pp.404-422.

"When I once more consider the very high number of dead and wounded, when I shudder thinking about the pools of blood that we had to cross on the battlefield, when I remember all the moaning and crying, all my liveliness and all my willingness to remain in this horrible world pass away."

France was defeated within six months. The Prussian army held a brief victory parade in Paris on 17th February, 1871, after which Bismarck withdrew Prussian forces to the east of the city²². The French Emperor then abdicated and the event went down in German history and school books as one of its great wars and legendary victories.

I contend the war broadened Friedrich's perspective of the 'world,' revealing that beyond Holstein lay 'foreign' yet increasingly accessible German-speaking lands. The conflict will have exposed him to success and victory (which influenced his and subsequent generations until 1914), besides a large fraternity of men assembled from across Prussia, the confederation and the south German states, with experiences in different trades and professions.

Inspired by his fellow soldiers, maybe even encouraged by one of his officers, as he returned to Sülfeld, I suspect Friedrich's mind was made up. His ambition would see him become a tailor. Not just any tailor, but a master. Like this he could become a part of the *Bürgertum* or bourgeoisie. And just maybe one day his own *Junker* lord, with thousands of acres of land to his own name.

The war had rendered him ready to wander and the rural backwater that was his home was no longer enough to tie him down. But in order to realise his vision he would first have to complete a formal apprenticeship and then become a journeyman. There was to be no shortcut, as many long years lay ahead before he could graduate and advertise *Friedrich Hinsch: SchneiderMeister*.

This period we shall cover over the next two chapters. But for the moment, we might share Friedrich's joy as he and millions of other Germans celebrated victory over the French. This not only marked the downfall of Napoleon III and the end of the Second French Empire²³ but at a ceremony in Versailles' Hall of Mirrors on 18th January 1871, saw the southern (orange) states in the opposite map accede to the confederation while Alsace-Lorraine (the tan coloured territory) was annexed from France. This paved the way toward the founding of the German Reich.

Marie was 13 years old, Friedrich 19.



Otto von Bismarck and Napoleon III after the Battle of Sedan, by Wilhelm Camphausen (1878).

Source: Wikipedia/Franco-Prussian_War

²² Its occupation continued several more months and ultimately led it to annex Alsace-Lorraine.

²³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franco-Prussian_war

