

A Lunzenauer in Virginia

(about the life of the emigrant Franz Liipfert)

In the mid 19th century Franz Julius Luepfert from Lunzenau (Saxony, Germany) emigrated to Virginia. His father Gottlieb Luepfert came from the family farm in Niederelsdorf near Lunzenau. His mother was Rosine Pfefferkorn, the daughter of Tobias Pfefferkorn, a farmer from Oberelsdorf.

For 20 years Franz's parents owned a cellar mill, which was powered by the water of the Elsbach. It was a grain mill and lay at the side of the street leading to Niederelsdorf. In later years a chronicler wrote of Gottlieb and Rosine Luepfert, "Gottlieb and his treasure sat too often and too long under the lilacs behind the house." The two had ten children.

Franz was the oldest son. He learned woodworking (carpenter) in Penig. (The distance Penig - Lunzenau ca. 8 miles).

Like many young men of that time Franz caught the fever of the "New World". He was further motivated to emigrate because the increasing population of Saxony made work scarce and /or because he did not want to serve in the Saxon army. In the summer of 1852 he left his home town and traveled to Hamburg. (Distance Lunzenau - Hamburg ca. 750 miles! The railway line had not been built yet!) Across the ocean he sailed on the ship "Johanna Elise". According to the existing lists of immigrants of New York, Franz Luepfert stepped onto American soil on May 21, 1853.

He encountered a problem with his family name. Since the letter "ü" is not found in English, the "ü" became "ii". Thus from "Lüpfert" came "Liipfert".

In New York Franz met Mr. Lewis Gilliland from Halifax, VA (southcentral Virginia). Mr. Gilliland had accepted an extensive contract from the College of Halifax and was looking for an experienced cabinet maker. Franz agreed to the work and traveled with him to Halifax.

It was Franz's intention to return to New York at the end of the project, but his destiny was sealed when he met Lewis' sister Mary Eliza. It is reported that Mary Eliza was a spirited girl, pretty and she knew it right well! What a romance it must have been between the young man with an engaging accent and the vivacious young woman.

They married in 1857 and settled in Clarksville, VA (not far from Halifax).

There they began to set up a production of furniture.

Franz was a skillful cabinet maker and Clarksville expanded, so there was a market for Liipferts handmade furnitures.

In the city center they built a residential building and a factory.

Today the factory is used as a church. (1 st photo).

Workbenches, saw's etc. were in the basement. They were driven by horses.

In the upper floor were further workshops and a storeroom.

The street where the Liipfert family lived was called " German lane".

Back in Lunzenau Franz's parents died early. Franz maintained constant contact with his siblings in Saxony. Once he sent the money for a ticket for one of his siblings to come over to visit him but not one made up his mind to come.

An announcement sent by Franz testifies to his homesickness. Franz's youngest brother Otto Luepfert acquired the bar "Schankstaette" on the market square in 1883. He put great effort into its transformation into the Hotel and Restaurant "Saxon Court".

Franz requested that his brother Otto place the following announcement in the newspaper "Muldental News" of Jan. 26, 1886:

"To all the friends of his youth, both male and female
Heartfelt greetings from Franz Julius Luepfert,
Clarksville, State of Virginia, America.
Submitted by Otto Luepfert, Lunzenau."

Franz made only one trip across the Atlantic to Europe to visit his parents and relatives in Saxony. That was in 1892.

In 1905 two of Franz's sons, William Liipfert and Otto Liipfert visited Lunzenau. A photograph taken in front of the cellar mill attest to that. (2nd photo).

In May 2001 three descendants of Franz visited Saxony. They showed great interest in the manner of living of their forebears and in our present situation. They were interested in the remaining architectural structures pertaining to their family history (cellar mill, the Rochsburg Church, the Rochsburg castle, the family farm).

The emigrant Franz Luepfert died on July 23, 1895, in Clarksburg following an accident. (According to Nancy McClung Nading, he fell from the house which he was roofing.) He was survived by 7 children and 23 grandchildren.

An impressive monument was erected in his memory in Clarksville, which is well preserved today even after 100 years. (3rd photo).
It bears the inscription (4th photo) :

Franz Julius Liipfert
Born
Lunzenau, Germany
Oct 29, 1834
Died
Clarksville, Virginia
July 23, 1895

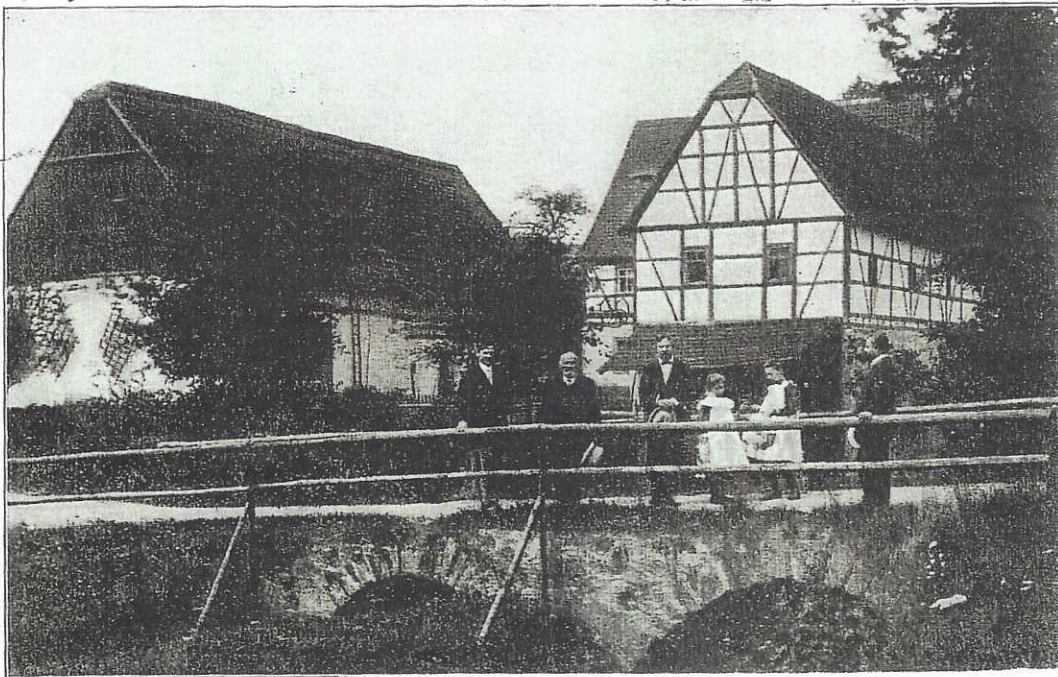
His descendants today live primarily in the states of North Carolina, Virginia, and Georgia.

Klaus Luepfert, Berlin, April 2005

(translated by Louise Karry, Urbanna, VA)



1 st photo



2nd photo

"Cellar mill", a grain mill in Lunzenau, Saxony, Germany, in 1905

On the old picture from left : William Liipfert, Winston-Salem, NC (1860-1911)
 Otto Lüpfer, Lunzenau, Saxony, Germany (1850-1926)
 Otto Liipfert, Clarksville, VA (1870-1933)
 3 children of Otto L., Lunzenau,; Selma, Anna and Max

3rd photo



photo 1, 34: Otto Liipfert, Winston-Salem, 2004

4th photo