



A Brief History of Uttenreuth, Bavaria, Germany

Our Hoffman ancestors lived in Uttenreuth, Bavaria, now part of Germany, before they emigrated to the United States.

Christian and Barbara Hoffman and their daughter Caroline lived in Uttenreuth, a small village in the Kingdom of Bavaria, before emigrating to the United States. At this writing, I have no information on any of their ancestors in Uttenreuth or elsewhere.



The Hoffmans brought this stein with them from Bavaria when they emigrated to the United States in the 1840s.

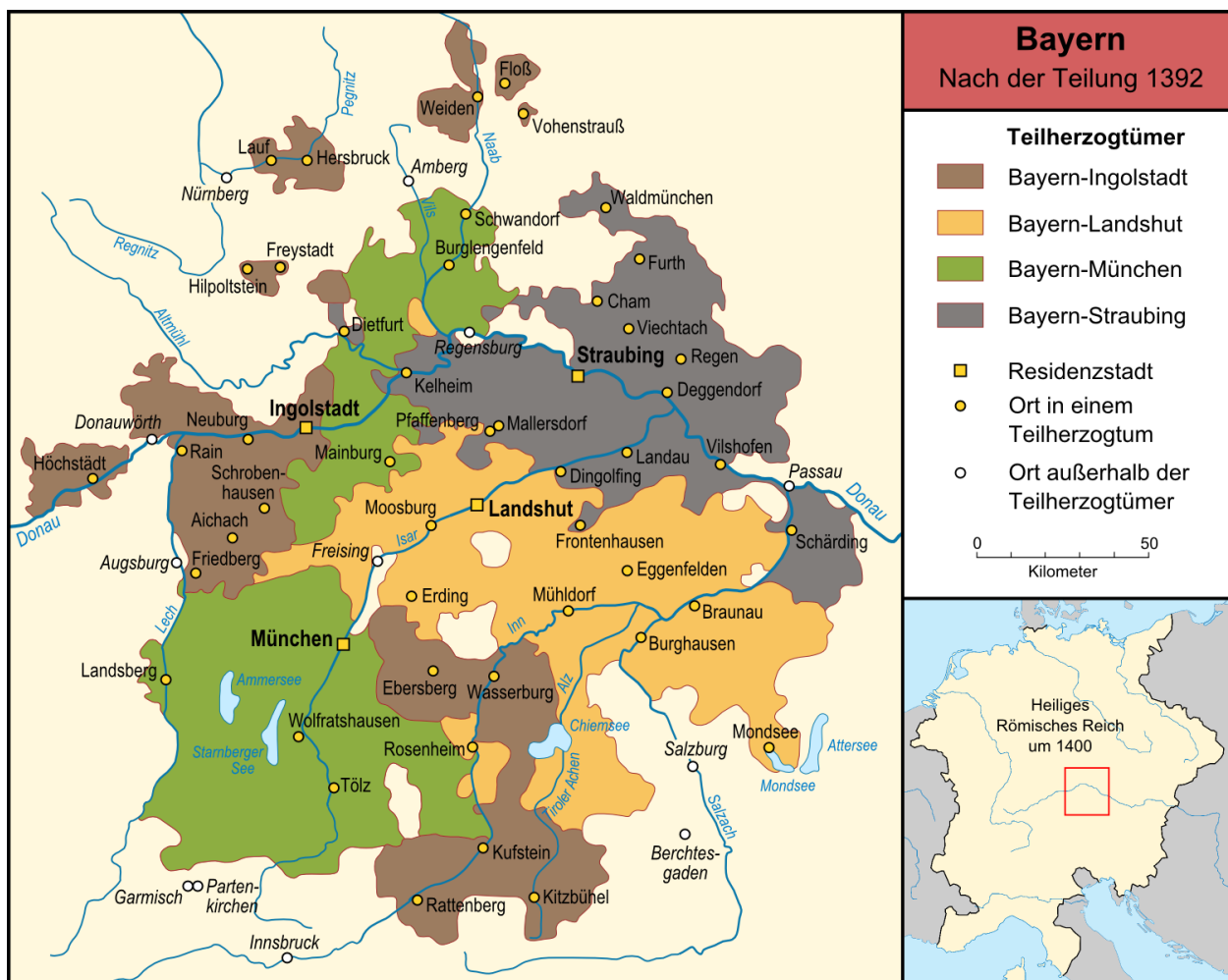
Bavarian History before the Holy Roman Empire

Although most of today's Germany was not part of the Roman Empire, the Romans conquered this area in the 1st century BC. After the collapse of the Roman Empire, it became the Duchy of Bavaria in the 6th century AD under the Frankish Merovingian kingdom.

Bavaria later became a stem duchy under the Eastern Frankish realm which evolved into the Kingdom of Germany and the Holy Roman Empire.

The Holy Roman Empire Years

Within the Holy Roman Empire, the Wittelsbach family became the rulers of Bavaria in 1180, a position they held as dukes, electors and kings until 1918. Because of how the land was divided among heirs, there were four Bavarian duchies by 1392, and these often engaged in war with each other. Bavaria was reunited in 1503.



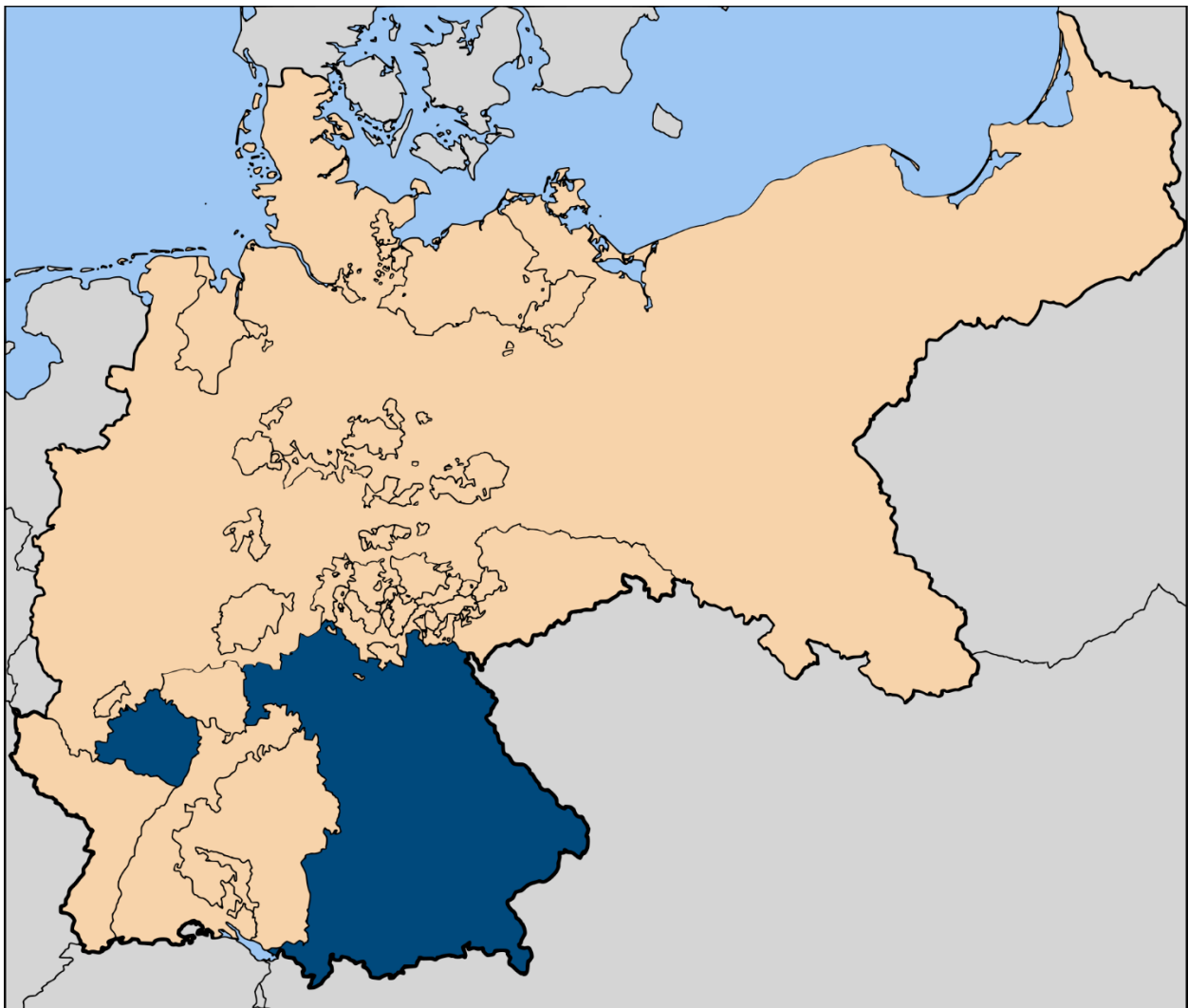
The Bavarian duchies after the 1392 partition

- For more on the origins of the Holy Roman Empire, see [A Brief History of Reetz and Hoher Fläming, Brandenburg, Germany.](#)

The Kingdom of Bavaria

When Napoleon abolished the Holy Roman Empire, Bavaria became a kingdom. It also gained some additional territory, some of which was lost to Austria at the 1815 Congress of Vienna.

As Prussia was becoming a significant Germanic power to the north. Bavaria maintained its independence by playing off the rivalry between Prussia and Austria. However, it became allies with Austria. This partnership was defeated by Prussia in the 1866 Austro-Prussian War. Bavaria and other southern German states joined Prussia's efforts to create a unified German Empire in 1871. Even so, Bavaria was still a monarchy within the German Empire, maintaining for a time its own army, railways, postal service and diplomatic corps.



The Kingdom of Bavaria (dark blue) in the 1871 German Empire

Joining the German Empire was not necessarily a popular move. Bavarian nationalists had wanted Bavaria to remain independent of the German Empire as Austria had. This was due in part to Bavaria being predominantly Catholic, whereas Prussia and other northern German states were predominantly Protestant. Even today, many Bavarians think of themselves as Bavarians first and Germans second.

Our Gensicke and Krueger ancestors who emigrated to the United States did so when where they lived was part of the Kingdom of Prussia. Our Hoffman ancestors emigrated to the United States from the Kingdom of Bavaria, which joined the new German Empire in 1871, a few decades after our Hoffmans left Bavaria.

Bavaria Free State in Modern Germany

The Kingdom of Bavaria was ended as a consequence of the outcome of World War I (although technically no member of the House of Wittelsbach has renounced their claim to the throne). A Communist revolt led to the short-lived Bavarian Soviet Republic in early 1919, but it fell to the German Army a month later. Germany's Bamberg Constitution came into force that September, and what had been the Kingdom of Bavaria became known as the Free State of Bavaria within Germany.

However, political extremism continued, and Munich and Nuremberg became Nazi strongholds (although the Nazis actually got less than half of the overall Bavarian vote in the 1933 election that brought Adolf Hitler to power). Inspired by its ties to the Holy Roman Empire, the Nazis began construction on their Nazi Party Rally Grounds on the outskirts of Nuremberg, although construction was never completed.

- For more on the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, see [A Brief History of Reetz and Hoher Fläming, Brandenburg, Germany.](#)

As a major manufacturing center, Munich was heavily bombed during World War II. After the war, Bavaria was a major part of the American Zone of Allied-occupied Germany, and eventually it was a significant part of West Germany before East and West Germany were reunited in 1990.

The History of Uttenreuth

I have found little on the history of Uttenreuth at this point.

Uttenreuth was founded in the 12th century as the Holy Roman Empire was expanding eastward. In this area, the empire was pushing into the Schwabach Valley east of Nuremberg. Even Wikipedia doesn't mention anything after that until noting that during the postwar era, Uttenreuth became a suburban residential area, little more than a bedroom community to nearby Erlangen and Nuremberg.

The “-reuth” place name suffix generally means “clearing” or “meadow”

When I visited Uttenreuth in 2007, I found only a couple buildings that would have dated back to the time our Hoffman ancestors lived there.

- Matthäuskirche – St. Matthew’s Evangelical Lutheran Parish Church of Uttenreuth – was built in the 1760s, replacing a 14th century chapel that had existed at the site. The churchyard serves as a community cemetery, but we shouldn’t expect to find headstones for any of our German ancestors there. In Germany, both remains and cremains must be buried in cemeteries, but those buried only get to rest in peace long enough to decay, about 20 to 30 years or so. After that, their plot will be reused. For that reason, except for in some historically significant cemeteries, most headstones that one encounters in German cemeteries are generally new. Some headstones in the cemetery have variants of the Hoffman name, and thus some of these people may have been distant relatives of ours.



Matthäuskirche



Gravestones with variants of the Hoffman name in the churchyard

- The Schwarzer Adler Hotel and Restaurant is housed in a building featuring the construction year of 1843.



The Schwarzer Adler Hotel and Restaurant on Marloffsteiner Strasse; the building dates back to 1843, roughly when the Hoffmans emigrated to the United States

The rest of town generally resembles modern German suburbia.

Photos of Uttenreuth



Uttenreuthplatz, a small plaza on Marloffsteiner Strasse



World War I War Memorial on Marloffsteiner Strasse



Matthäuskirche, St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Parish Church of Uttenreuth; this was likely where the Hoffmans attended church when they lived in Uttenreuth



Inside Matthäuskirche

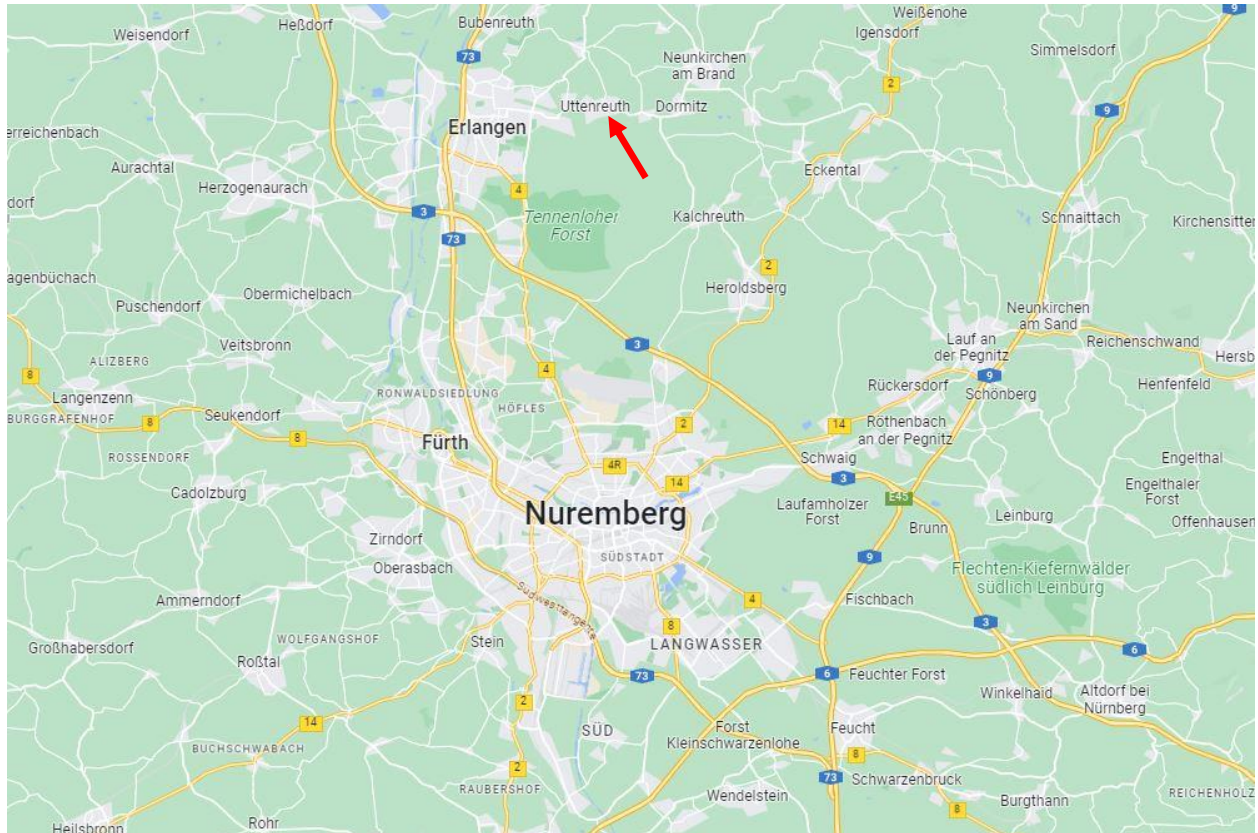




Local housing



Along Erlangen Strasse, the highway to Erlangen



Map of Uttenreuth (red arrow) and surrounding communities. Today, Uttenreuth serves as a bedroom community for Erlangen and Nuremberg. Google Maps

Prepared by Mark David Wasson
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