

Georg Friedrich Gundlach

11 Dec 1899 Walburg, Hesse, Germany

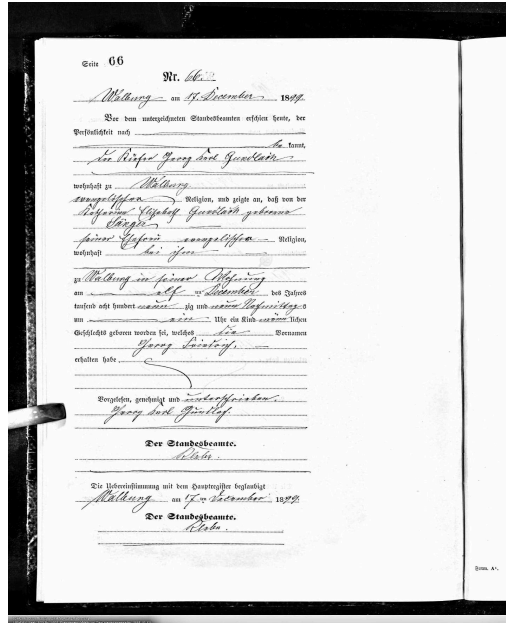
03 July 1934 East St Louis, St Clair, Illinois, USA

I knew just a few basic facts about my paternal grandfather when I was growing up: his name, Fred George Gundlach; his native country of Germany, and his death by suicide.

When I began working on genealogy, I set out to learn more about him by talking to cousins and by researching using Ancestry.com.

My cousin Billy, son of my eldest uncle George, remembered that our grandfather had been buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Belleville, IL. So Billy, his sister Georgia, and I contacted the cemetery and got directions to his grave. We found that he was buried in a family plot of six people, and that his grave was unmarked. Billy remembered his father telling him that since Fred George Gundlach had died during the Depression, the family could not afford a headstone. So we ordered a headstone for him: Fred George Gundlach 1899-1934.

Then I started working on Ancestry.com and messaged a member in Germany who had some of the same Gundlachs on his tree that I did. He kindly sent me a photo of my grandfather's birth registry from the civic registry. Imagine my and my cousin's surprise to find out that our grandfather's name wasn't Fred George Gundlach, but Georg Friedrich Gundlach! We had put the wrong name on his headstone. (I will continue to refer to him as Fred just for the sake of convenience.)



Georg Friedrich Gundlach

Male

Born 11 Dec 1899 Walburg, Hesse, Germany

Father Georg Karl Gundlach

Mother Katherine Elizabeth Gundlach

So I found his parents.

Through working on Ancestry, I found that my grandfather had immigrated from Germany in 1924 aboard the ship Bayern. My cousin Billy remembered his father saying that his German grandmother had died while Fred was still on the ship sailing toward America.

Name	Georg Gundlach
Gender	männlich (Male)
Ethnicity/Nationality	Preußen (German)
Marital Status	ledig (Single)
Departure Age	23
Birth Date	abt 1900
Residence Place	Walburg
Departure Date	13 Okt 1923 (13 Oct 1923)

Departure Place	Hamburg, Deutschland (Germany)
Destination	St. Louis
Arrival Place	New York
Occupation	Müller
Ship Name	Bayern
Shipping Clerk	Hamburg-Amerika Linie (Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft)
Shipping Line	Hamburg-Amerika Linie (Hamburg-Amerikanische Packetfahrt-Actien-Gesellschaft)
Ship Type	Dampfschiff
Ship Flag	Deutschland
Accommodation	3. Klasse
Volume	373-7 I, VIII A 1 Band 305

His father: Georg Karl Gundlach, 1861-1901. His mother: Katherine Elizabeth Sanders, 1864-1924. I was able to trace my German family back to the 1600s.

Fred immigrated to East St Louis, Illinois. This city has a history of welcoming immigrants from around the world, especially western and eastern Europeans. Initial census forms indicate that he worked as a butcher at the stockyards.

Another interesting tidbit I learned was that Fred's brother Heinrich Eduard Friedrich Gundlach, 1896-1989, immigrated to East St Louis two years later; married Anna Gleasia Wiegand, 1905-2004; had daughter Mildred, 1933-2011; worked for the railroad in Illinois; and after retirement, the whole family returned to Germany. A photo labeled "Uncle Henry" and another photo labeled "Mildred Gundlach" were found amongst my Uncle George's paperwork after he passed away.

In East St Louis on 4 April 1925, Fred married Josephine Zimant, 1903-1964, herself the daughter of immigrants from Lithuania.

They had three children:

George Joseph Gundlach, 1925-2002 (father of my cousins Billy and Georgia)

Anne Barbara Gundlach, 1928-1996

Charles Fred Gundlach, 1933-2017 (my father).



In paperwork from my Uncle George's estate, my cousins and I also found our grandfather Fred's military discharge documents. Unfortunately, they were written in German and some sections were very faded. With the kind help of a German professor from nearby SWIC, the documents were translated. Fred's paperwork was in the name of Fritz Gundlach, he was a German soldier in WWI, his hand had been injured in battle, and he had been captured and held in a POW camp.

We were confused by the name Fritz on his legal papers. His first name was Georg and his middle name Friedrich so why were his papers in the name of Fritz, German for Fred? This same professor told us that it was the custom in Germany to call boys by their middle names. Then my husband recalled his own experience with INS. When he tried to explain that his middle name was listed as his last name on their documents, he was told to accept it or take the next plane out of the U.S. So I guess that explains how Georg Frederick Gundlach legally became Fred George Gundlach in America.

And the war wound to his hand? Careful inspection of a family photo of Fred holding his son George on his lap revealed that Fred indeed was missing a finger on his hand.



