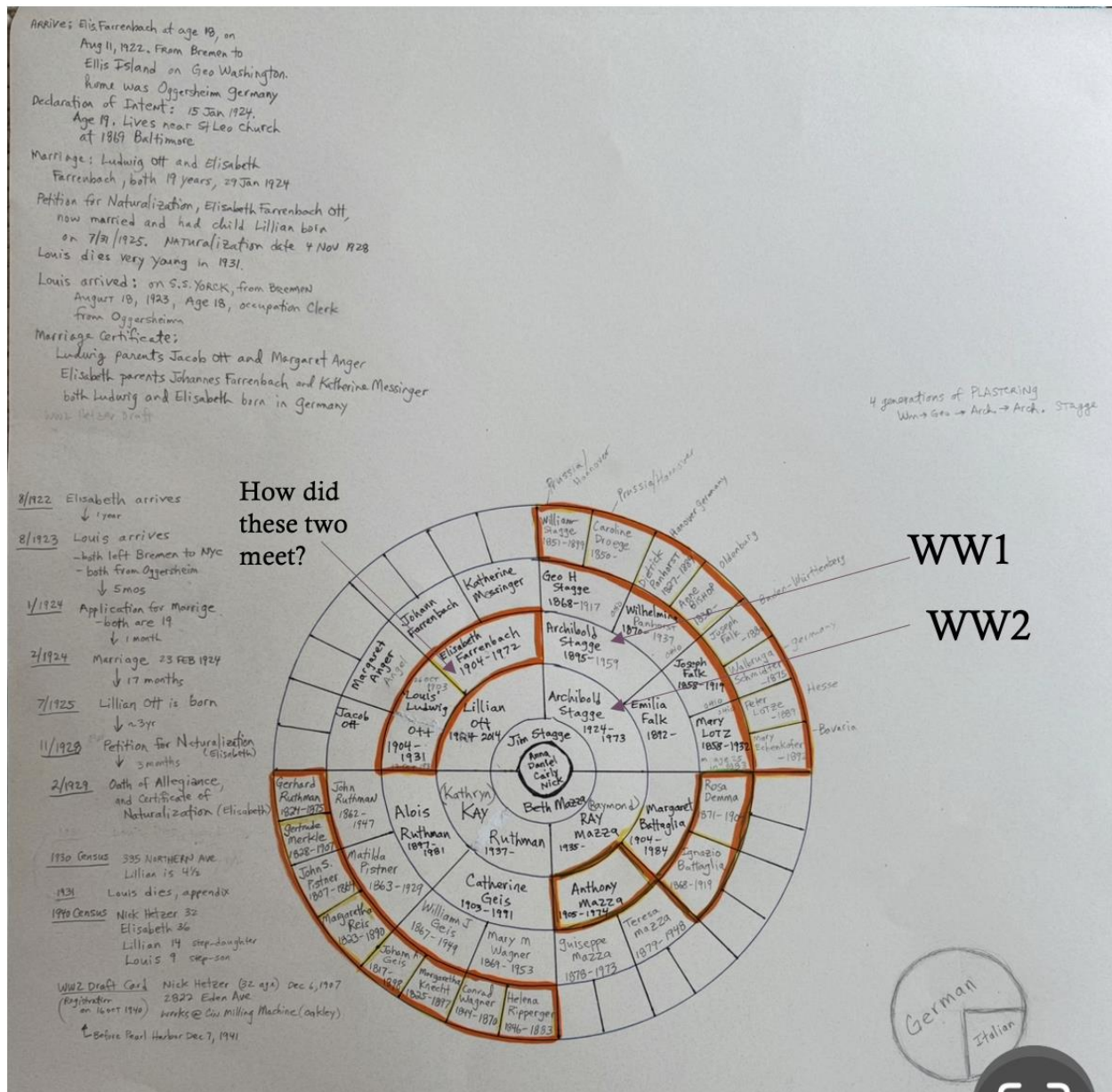


Stagge / Mazza Chart



What This Stagge / Mazza Family Chart Reveals

At the center are **Anna, Daniel, Carly, Nick** --- the children of **Jim Stagge and Elizabeth Mazza Stagge**. They are surrounded by their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and earlier generations. Moving outward through the circles is like traveling backward through American history. The chart is really a visual record of **how separate immigrant journeys became one American family**—and how decisions made in Oggersheim, Bavaria, Hesse, Hanover, Sicily and other distant places more than a century ago ultimately shaped the lives of the generations that followed.

A Family Built Largely from German Immigration

The strongest pattern is German ancestry. Branch after branch leads back to Germany—to places including **Oggersheim, Bavaria, Hesse, Hanover, Oldenburg, Schleswig, and Württemberg.**

These were not people who arrived together. Their migrations occurred at different times and under very different circumstances. Some German ancestors were already in America during the nineteenth century, while others did not arrive until the twentieth.

The chart therefore represents not one German immigration story, but **many separate German migrations that eventually converged in Cincinnati.**

The small pie chart in the corner captures the result surprisingly well: the ancestry represented here is overwhelmingly German, with an important Italian/Sicilian contribution through the Battaglia–Mazza line.

The Battaglia–Mazza Branch Adds the 25% Italian / Sicilian Story

Margaret Battaglia (1904–1989) descended from **Ignazio Battaglia (1868–1919)** and the Sicilian immigrant community that developed around Cincinnati and Covington in the late nineteenth century.

That connects this family chart to the remarkable story of immigrants from **Termini Imerese, Sicily**, who began arriving in the Cincinnati–Covington area around 1890. Many entered the fruit and produce business and created networks of relatives and fellow townspeople on both sides of the Ohio River.

The Mazza and Battaglia families therefore represent another great migration story occurring alongside the German one.

The Other 75% is Germany ancestors in multiple waves.

Seen together, the four migrations tell almost **a century of German history through one family:**

1832 — Geis & Knecht: *Leave a fragmented, agricultural Germany seeking land and opportunity.*

1850 — Ruthman & Merkel: *Leave amid the aftermath of revolution and one of the greatest German migrations to America.*

1866 — William Stagge: *Leaves while wars, industrialization and Prussian power are creating modern Germany.*

1922–23 — Farrenbach & Ott: *Leave the Germany created by those earlier upheavals after it has been shattered by World War I and hyperinflation.*

That is what I find so compelling about your circular chart: **the German section isn't one immigration story. It is four snapshots of Germany, separated by generations.** Each time history placed a different kind of pressure on ordinary German families, another branch of the family made the same enormous decision:

Leave the old world, cross the Atlantic, and begin again in America.

Elisabeth Farrenbach and Ludwig Ott: A Mystery Hidden in the Chart

One of the most intriguing discoveries is the story of **Elisabeth Farrenbach and Ludwig Ott.**

Elisabeth arrived in America from **Bremen on August 11, 1922**, at about age 18. Her home had been **Oggersheim, Germany.**

Ludwig arrived almost exactly a year later, on **August 18, 1923**, aboard the *S.S. York*, also traveling from Bremen. He was about 18 years old and listed his occupation as clerk.

Both came from Oggersheim.

Yet they apparently traveled to America separately.

Only about five months after Ludwig arrived, the two applied to marry. They married on **February 23, 1924**, both still only about 19 years old. Their daughter **Lillian Ott** was born in July 1925.

That leaves one wonderful unanswered family-history question written directly onto the chart:

How did these two meet?

Did Elisabeth and Ludwig already know one another in Oggersheim? Did their families know each other? Was Ludwig's immigration somehow connected to Elisabeth already being in Cincinnati? Or did two young immigrants from the same German town improbably rediscover one another after crossing the Atlantic separately?

The dates make this a particularly interesting question for further research.

Immigration Was Followed Very Quickly by Becoming American

Elisabeth's records also illustrate how quickly immigrant life could change.

She arrived in 1922, married in 1924, had Lillian in 1925, petitioned for naturalization in 1928, and took the **Oath of Allegiance and received her Certificate of Naturalization in February 1929.**

By the 1930 census, the family was living at **335 Northern Avenue.**

In less than eight years, Elisabeth had gone from a teenage immigrant arriving from Germany to a married American citizen raising a family in Cincinnati.

Tragically, Ludwig died very young in **1931**, leaving Elisabeth and their young daughter behind.

The World Wars Are Present Inside the Family Tree

Another striking feature of the chart is the way the family intersects with the two world wars.

The lines marked **WWI** and **WWII** are a reminder that these were not simply historical events occurring somewhere else. They happened during the lives of the people represented here.

Some members of the family were born in Germany during the era of the German Empire. Their children and grandchildren then became Americans. Within only a generation or two, descendants of German immigrants were living in the United States while America fought Germany in two world wars.

A particularly vivid example is **Nick Hetzer**. His WWII draft registration places him in Cincinnati shortly before Pearl Harbor, working at Cincinnati Milling Machine in Oakley.

The family chart therefore captures one of the remarkable transformations of the immigrant experience: people whose parents or grandparents had been German became Americans whose own lives were shaped by America's wars with Germany.

Cincinnati Was the Place Where the Branches Converged

Perhaps the biggest discovery in making this chart is that **Cincinnati itself is almost another ancestor.**

The Ruthmans, Otts, Stagges, Geises, Mazzas, Battaglias and related families did not begin as one family. Their ancestors came from different villages, regions, occupations and even countries.

They arrived at different times.

They spoke different dialects.

They belonged to different immigrant communities.

Yet Cincinnati gradually brought their descendants together through neighborhoods, churches, workplaces, schools, marriages and friendships.

Looking from the outside of the chart toward the center shows that process happening generation by generation.

Four Generations of Plastering

One small observation says something profound about inheritance: **four generations of plastering**. That represents a different kind of genealogy—not the inheritance of DNA, but the inheritance of **skills and occupations**.

Immigrant families often passed trades from father to son and from one generation to another. A trade provided something immediately valuable in a new country: a way to earn a living that did not depend upon wealth, social position, or even perfect English.

The repeated plastering tradition is therefore part of the family story just as surely as the names and birthplaces.

A Portrait of OGGERSHEIM in 1922-1923

For Elisabeth Farrenbach leaving Oggersheim in August 1922 and Ludwig Ott following from the same town in August 1923, the timing is extraordinary. They were leaving not simply a poor German village, but a community caught in one of the most unsettled periods in modern German history.





Oggersheim, 1922–1923: why two teenagers might look toward America

Oggersheim was still an independent town then—it would not become part of Ludwigshafen until 1938. Its center retained the appearance of an old Palatinate town: cobbled streets, modest houses and shops, the Rathaus, churches and surrounding agricultural land. The photograph/postcard above of the **Oggersheim Marktplatz** dates to about 1915, only seven years before Elisabeth left, so it gives us a particularly good idea of the town she knew.

But underneath that peaceful appearance was enormous disruption.

Germany had lost World War I only four years earlier. The monarchy had collapsed, the new Weimar Republic was politically fragile, and Germany was burdened with reparations imposed after the war. Oggersheim had another complication: it was on the **left bank of the Rhine**, in territory subject to Allied occupation after the war. The broader Rhineland occupation was explicitly connected to enforcement of Germany's postwar obligations.

Imagine Elisabeth in **August 1922**. She is only about **18 years old**.

The Germany of her childhood had disappeared. She had been about ten when World War I began and fourteen when Germany lost it. She would have experienced wartime shortages, the absence or loss of men from families around her, defeat, revolution and then the economic turmoil that followed.

And by the summer of 1922, the German mark was beginning its catastrophic collapse. Economists generally date the extreme hyperinflationary phase from roughly **July 1922 through November 1923**.

So when Elisabeth boarded a ship at Bremen on **August 11, 1922**, the economic crisis was accelerating around her.

She wasn't leaving before the trouble began.

She was leaving as it was becoming dramatically worse.

Then Ludwig stays behind for another year

This makes Ludwig Ott's story even more remarkable.

According to your research, Elisabeth leaves Oggersheim in August 1922. Ludwig remains there.

During the **twelve months separating their departures**, conditions deteriorate dramatically.

In January 1923, after Germany fell behind on reparations, French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr. Germany responded with passive resistance. In the nearby Palatinate, railway workers also resisted French authority. Railway installations were occupied, workers stopped cooperating, and a French-Belgian railway administration took control of operations in occupied areas.

This wasn't happening hundreds of miles away from Ludwig.

Ludwigshafen itself became part of the confrontation.

In March 1923, authorities imposed states of siege and traffic restrictions on Ludwigshafen amid conflict over the railways.

Oggersheim was immediately adjacent.

So the 18-year-old Ludwig Ott whom your immigration record describes simply as a "**clerk**" was living through military occupation, transportation disruptions, political confrontation and a currency that was rapidly becoming worthless.

And then there was the money

This may have been the most bewildering part of daily life.

A family could save money and watch the purchasing power disappear. A worker could receive wages and discover that prices had risen before the money could be spent.

By late 1923 the numbers became almost incomprehensible. One contemporary regional example records an egg costing as much as **320 billion marks**, a kilogram of rye bread **470 billion marks**, and a kilogram of beef **5 trillion marks**.

Ludwig escaped before the absolute peak.

He left Bremen and arrived in America on **August 18, 1923**.

That date is significant because Germany's hyperinflation would reach its most surreal stage only a few months later, before introduction of the Rentenmark finally stabilized the currency in November.

So their immigration dates almost bracket the collapse:

Elisabeth — August 1922: leaves as hyperinflation begins accelerating.

Ludwig — August 1923: leaves while the crisis is approaching its climax.

Now imagine Oggersheim through their eyes

This is where I think your family story becomes much more human.

Imagine Elisabeth walking through that Oggersheim marketplace in 1922.

The buildings would have looked much like the photograph above. Perhaps she passed the Rathaus. Perhaps she attended church nearby. Perhaps she knew the shopkeepers and families living around the square.

But she was an eighteen-year-old looking at a Germany that offered very little certainty.

Then she leaves.

She travels north to **Bremen**, boards a transatlantic ship, crosses an ocean and arrives at Ellis Island.

Back in Oggersheim is another teenager named **Ludwig Ott**.

A year passes.

Conditions become considerably worse.

And then Ludwig does almost exactly the same thing.

Oggersheim → Bremen → New York → Cincinnati.

Five months after Ludwig arrives, the two apply for a marriage license.

On **February 23, 1924**, Elisabeth Farrenbach and Ludwig Ott marry.

That makes the handwritten question on your ancestry chart—

"How did these two meet?"

—even more intriguing.

Given that they were approximately the same age, came from the **same relatively small German town**, emigrated only twelve months apart, traveled through the **same port of Bremen**, and married only months after Ludwig reached America, I would put serious weight on the possibility that **their relationship began in Oggersheim rather than Cincinnati**.

We cannot establish that from the evidence yet. But the chronology certainly makes it a hypothesis worth investigating.

Perhaps Elisabeth wasn't simply the first to leave.

Perhaps Ludwig followed her.

And if that eventually proves true, the immigration story changes completely. It becomes not merely a story about escaping the hardships of postwar Germany, but a story about two teenagers from Oggersheim separated by the Atlantic during one of the worst years in German history—and somehow finding their way back to one another in Cincinnati.

What your chart shows especially well is that your German ancestry did **not** come from one great immigration event. It came in **four distinct waves spanning about 90 years**, and each family left a very different Germany.

1832 — Geis and Knecht: Leaving a Germany that wasn't yet Germany

When the **Geis and Knecht families left in 1832**, there was no unified German nation. They were leaving a patchwork of kingdoms, duchies and principalities loosely joined in the German Confederation.

This was the beginning of the great 19th-century German migration. Population was increasing, farmland was being divided among heirs into ever-smaller parcels, traditional craftsmen faced growing economic pressure, and ordinary people had limited political power. Meanwhile, letters arriving from America described inexpensive land and opportunity. German immigration was accelerating sharply by precisely this period; more than 10,000 German immigrants reached America in 1832.

For the **Geis and Knecht families**, America represented something Germany could not easily offer them: **land, independence and the possibility that their children could live better than their parents.**

They were pioneers of your family's German-American story.

1850 — Ruthman and Merkel: Revolution, uncertainty and the great exodus

The world the **Ruthman and Merkel families left in 1850** was different.

Only two years earlier, revolution had swept across the German states. Reformers demanded constitutional government, political rights and greater German unity. The revolutions of **1848–49 failed**, and thousands of political refugees—the famous *Forty-Eighters*—left for America.

But most emigrants were not political revolutionaries. Economic pressures were at least as important: rural overpopulation, fragmented farms and industrial competition threatened the livelihoods of farmers and craftsmen.

The Ruthmans and Merckels were therefore traveling as part of an enormous movement. **Nearly one million Germans immigrated to the United States during the 1850s.**

And Cincinnati was one of the natural destinations.

By the time they arrived, earlier German immigrants had already established churches, businesses, neighborhoods and social organizations there. The Ruthmans and Merckels weren't stepping completely into the unknown. **They were joining a German America that was already taking shape.**

1866 — William Stagge: Leaving just as Germany was being created

William Stagge's departure in 1866 occurred at another fascinating turning point.

The Germany he left was still divided—but that very year **Prussia and Austria went to war** to determine who would dominate the German-speaking states. Prussia's victory fundamentally reordered Central Europe and paved the way for German unification under Prussian leadership in 1871.

So William left during the transition between two worlds.

Unlike the immigrants of 1832, he was leaving a region being transformed by railroads, factories and industrialization. Unlike the immigrants of 1850, he wasn't part of the immediate aftermath of the failed revolution.

He was leaving during the emergence of a **more industrial, militarily powerful and increasingly unified Germany**.

By then German migration to America was well established. Family and community networks made the journey less mysterious than it had been for the Geis and Knecht generation. From 1830 until World War I, nearly 90% of German emigrants who went overseas chose the United States.

William Stagge was therefore part of a mature migration chain—following paths earlier Germans had already created.

1922–1923 — Farrenbach and Ott: Leaving a shattered Germany

Then there is an extraordinary **56-year gap** before the last German immigrants shown on your chart.

When **Elisabeth Farrenbach left Oggersheim in August 1922**, and **Ludwig Ott followed in August 1923**, they were leaving a Germany almost unimaginable to the earlier generations.

Germany had finally unified in 1871, become one of Europe's great industrial powers—and then lost World War I.

The Kaiser was gone. The German Empire had collapsed. The new Weimar Republic struggled with political violence, war debts, reparations and a collapsing currency.

Most strikingly, Elisabeth left at almost exactly the beginning of the catastrophic hyperinflationary period. The extreme hyperinflation is generally dated from **July 1922 through November 1923**.

Elisabeth departed in **August 1922**.

Ludwig departed in **August 1923**.

So their two departures almost perfectly bracket the descent into economic chaos.

They weren't looking primarily for inexpensive farmland as their ancestors might have been in 1832. They were two young people—only about 18—leaving a country traumatized by war and facing extraordinary uncertainty.

And within months of Ludwig reaching America, **he and Elisabeth married in February 1924**.
