

THE VILLAGES

Where the Hommerdings Lived in Germany



Hommerdingen (1)
Nusbaum (2), Ferschweiler (3), Kruchten (4), Biesdorf (5)
Bollendorf (no number) is at lower center of map

"Naturparks"

Apparently the homeland of the Hommerdings is within, or adjacent to, one of Germany's ninety-eight "Nature Parks." They have been established throughout the nation and they comprise about 25 per cent of the total land area of Germany. Some parks, such as the *Germany-Luxembourg Nature Park* which surrounds the Hommerding villages lap into adjoining countries. I found this description of the *Naturparks*:

"Natural parks in Germany are extensive, scenic, specially created areas offering a model habitat for a range of plants and animals. In addition to nature conservation, German natural parks also play an important role in preserving local customs, traditional crafts, historical settlement patterns, and regional architecture. Germany's nature reserves achieve an exemplary balance between the interests of nature conservation and the needs of holidaymakers (walking, cycling, water sports, visits to cultural monuments...). Providing opportunities for people to come face to face with nature is one of their main objectives."

This [website](#) has some lovely photos of the "South Eifel" section of the Nature Park. It's in German, but the photos are easy to understand. [Click on "Naturpark Sudeifel."]. Also, scroll down the first page to "Den Naturpark interaktiv erforschen" and click on the map. You can move the red "outline" around to see an enlarged section of the map. A double-click on the "bullseye" dots will get you more pictures and inscrutable German explanations! Between the towns of Körperich and Bollendorf you'll see the names of all the villages I've numbered on the map above.

It appears that finally after 2000 years of wars and neglect, the Eifel is beginning to heal.

And, according to Charles Thielen of Luxembourg City who has provided the early genealogy of the Hommerdings, the villages our ancestors lived in have also changed:

"..... these villages have grown very much since last World War II and they no longer look like they did when our ancestors left them. Farming is no longer the only business of people living there; since the arrival of cars people have become mobile, and many of them pass nowadays the German frontier each day to come to Luxembourg to work here in the offices or as craftsman etc."

(1) Hommerdingen

It would be difficult to deny that the tiny (52 population in 2006) hamlet of Hommerdingen must be the source of the surname "Hommerding."

Ancestry.com gives this definition of the name "Hommerding"--"German (mainly Saarland): probably a variant of Humberding, patronymic (with the suffix *-ding*) from "Humbert." None of the Hommerdings who emigrated to the United States in the Nineteenth Century were born in Hommerdingen, but they generally lived in nearby villages. The village is in the district (*Kreis*) "Eifelkreis Bitburg-Prüm" in the German state of Rhineland-Palatinate. This [interactive Google map](#) will let you zoom in and get a close-up look at Hommerdingen.

Meeting New Relatives in Germany

In July, 2010 Dave Hommerding, one of the USA Hommerding descendants, visited the Eifel region and some of the villages that are prominent in our Hommerding history. Dave first visited Hommerdingen and at a goat cheese factory, he learned that some Hommerdings might live in nearby Biesdorf. He made his way over to Biesdorf and rented a room in a "gasthaus" (a tavern with rooms to rent). At dinner that night he asked the proprietor if she knew any Hommerdings--not long after, a girl about 25-30 years old came over to Dave's table, introduced herself as "Claudia" and said her great-grandmother (?) was Hannah Hommerding. Before long, Claudia's grandfather, "Nick" appeared. Eventually Claudia and Nick escorted Dave and his wife to where an ancestor, "Matias" Hommerding had lived over 150 years ago.

Dave expects to obtain more detailed "family tree" information from his new German cousins, and promises to share it for this web article. We hope to discover just *which* "Matias" this is in the Hommerding genealogy. You can view some of Dave's photos of Hommerdingen and Biesdorf in [this photo album](#).

(2) Nusbaum

This Eifel village is approximately five miles from the Luxembourg border (the Our River serves as the border). In 2006, there were 454 people living in Nusbaum. The village is at an elevation of about 1,000 ft. [Check out the interactive Google map](#). "A" marks the location of Nusbaum.

Thanks to information received from C. Thielen of Luxembourg City, Luxembourg, we know that **Johann Peter Hommerding** (1780-1848), both of his wives, and all of his children were born in Nusbaum. [No. 2 on map].



The Our River, west of Nusbaum.

The following information is from a (now missing) web page devoted to the village of Nusbaum. The original site is in German, but can be “translated” into English (sort of).

"For a long time before Nusbaum is mentioned for the first time in writing in documents, the area was already settled. Numerous finds prove that already in the Stone Age humans have used such tools here. From the Bronze Age finds are present, likewise remainders of three Roman and two Frankish settlements, as well as numerous graves of Roman soldiers, partially with weapons. These are witness of settlement here from former times. Nusbaum is first mentioned in documents in the year 1317 as Echternacher possession. One tells that in former times lead was dug up, in which also some silver was found. Since 1317 the way of writing of the place name was often changed: Nozboum, Nosbomen, Noissbaum, Nossbaum, Nosbaum (1766)"

Nusbaum, and the surrounding villages where many of our Hommerding ancestors lived, has an unfortunate location. Being almost on the German border with Luxembourg it is smack on the traditional path for armies invading Germany from the West. During World War II Nusbaum

was almost adjacent to the famed "Westwall" which was constructed by Hitler as a western perimeter of defensive forts and tank defenses. The Allies renamed it after a similar defensive line from World War I--the "[Siegfried Line.](#)"

While I have found no photos of Nusbaum on the Internet, it was easy to find references to Nusbaum in accounts of World War II. Just as during so many earlier wars, the Eifel Region was once again a battleground. After General George S. Patton's Third Army broke through the "Siegfried Line," Nusbaum was among the villages soon captured. It even served as a temporary command post for the 317th Regiment in February, 1945 as the Allies were fighting their way into Germany.

I found this account of the 317th Regiment's actions in and around Nusbaum in a [Master's Thesis, "The Attack Will Go On" by Dean James Dominique](#), B.S., Regis University, 1997 (pdf file)

ENTERING THE FATHERLAND

February 5 - March 30, 1945

"On February 5, the regiment received a warning order that the 80th would attack at 2 a.m. on February 7, cross the Our and Sauer Rivers, and breach Hitler's West Wall, which consisted of concrete "dragon's teeth," bunkers, and anti-tank ditches.

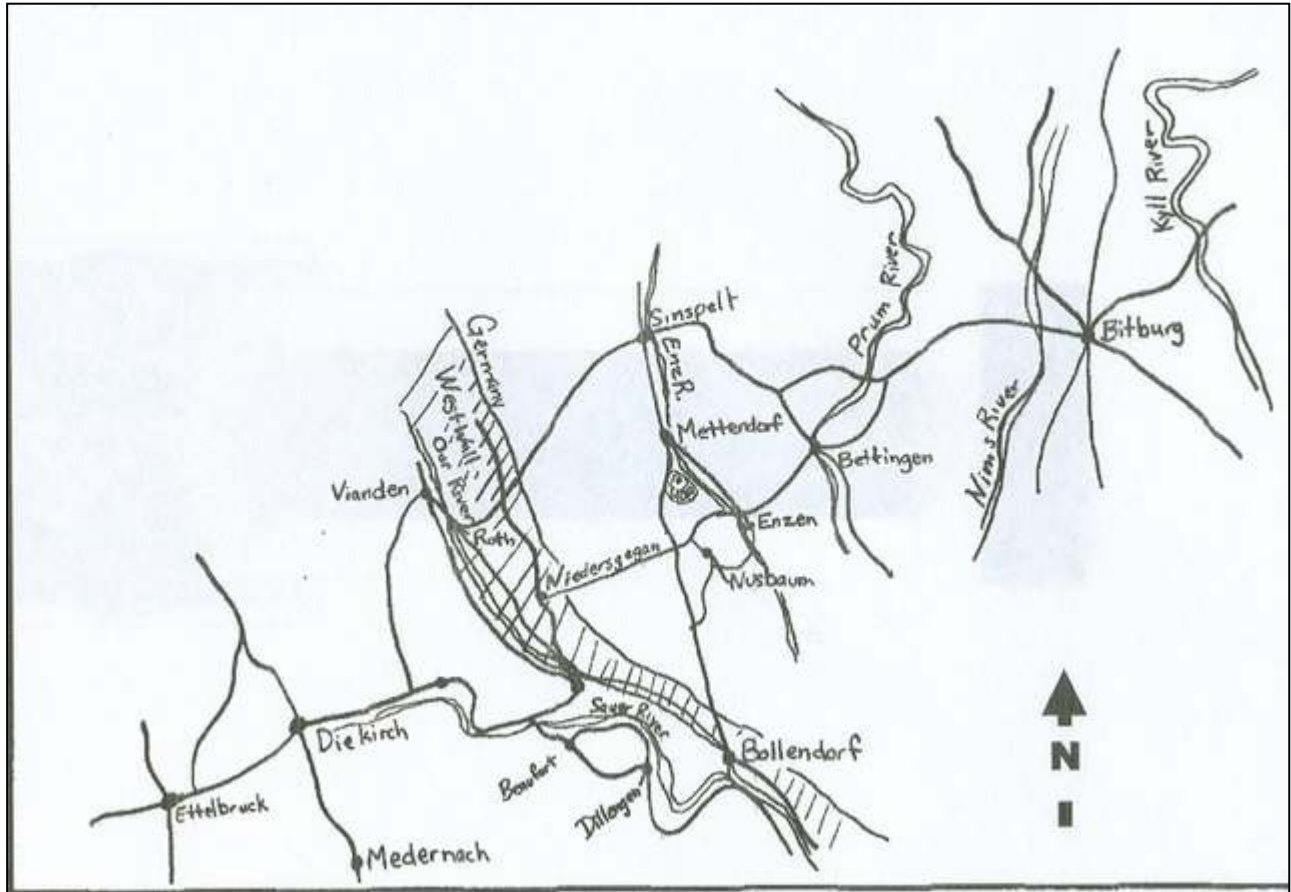
As part of Patton's Eifel Campaign, the 317th Regiment was ordered toward Mettendorf and Hill 408, the most commanding ground in the area. The next objective was **Nusbaum** and the mission was to uncover the pillboxes of the Siegfried Line along the Our River. The 2nd Battalion returned to regimental control as the 317th moved to Nusbaum on the February 15.

On February 19, the regiment continued toward Nusbaum against German rear-guard units and captured over 170 prisoners of war. The 3rd Battalion reached the Enz River and moved the regimental command post to Schwarzenbruch. The following night, the 317th crossed the Enz River and captured the town of Enzen by surprise. The town was southeast of Hill 408 and had a bridge intact. The next few days found the infantrymen clearing enemy resistance around Nusbaum.

The regimental command post moved from Nusbaum to Mettendorf on February 25. The Germans were destroying bridges and leaving mines while withdrawing troops out of the area."

--pgs.80-83

MAP OF BATTLE AREA AROUND NUSBAUM



Map from D. Dominique's thesis



"Dragon's Teeth"--Tank Traps in the Eifel



Americans Crossing the Siegfried Line into Germany

(3) Ferschweiler

Johann Peter's son **Mathias No. 1** (1804-1882) married Eva Becker (1801-1881) from "Ferschweiler" [No. 3 on map above] in 1827. Apparently the newly-weds first settled in the bride's village. Of this couple's eight children, the first five were all born in Ferschweiler, the seventh in Stockigt (Nusbaum) and their last child was born in Silberburg in 1841. (Silberburg is a small village between Nusbaum and Stockigt.) Ferschweiler is less than four miles southeast of Nusbaum. Also check out the [interactive Google Map](#). "A" marks the location of Ferschweiler. In 2006 about 890 people were living here.



Judging from these photos, they know how to have a good time in Ferschweiler! These young people are enjoying "Rosenmontag" ("Running Monday") which is part of the local pre-Lenten celebrations.

(4) Kruchten

This village of about 400 people is even closer to Luxembourg than Hommerdingen or Nusbaum. (It is no. 4 on above map) The village is about a mile west of Hommerdingen. I drew a blank in finding images or other references to Kruchten online. It IS on [the interactive Google map](#).

Mathias Hommerding No. 2 (1825-1892), married Susanna Dockendorf (1830-1919), at Ferschweiler in 1855. They apparently immediately settled in Kruchten because their first child was born there ten months later. The rest of their six children were also born in Kruchten.

(5) Biesdorf



*Where Matias Hommerding lived in Biesdorf, before emigrating to America
[Note that the house and barn are attached]
[Photo courtesy of Dave Hommerding, July 2010]*

Biesdorf (No. 5 on above map) is about 2 miles southwest of Kruchten-and is also located close to the Luxembourg border. It has a population of about 250. Apparently Google thinks Biesdorf is not worthy of its own "A" on a map. However a map of Kruchten shows Biesdorf. See [Google interactive map](#). Kruchten is marked "A"--Biesdorf is southwest, very near the Luxembourg border.

Johann Hommerding (1836-after 1910) married Magdalena Mertes (1836-??) in Wallendorf, about a mile south of Biesdorf. Magdalena was born in Biesdorf, and it appears at least some of their children were also born in that village.

Other Villages Where Hommerding Emigrants Lived

Bollendorf



Bollendorf on the River Sauer

Bollendorf is just barely within Germany. It borders the Sauer River, which divides Germany and Luxembourg. Like many of the other villages of our Hommerding ancestors, Bollendorf's location near the Luxembourg border meant that the Allied Army in World War II came right across the Sauer River and through the town on their push into Germany. Today, approximately 2,000 people live in Bollendorf and it is described as: "A recreational village in the Southern Eifel Mountains and in the Sauer river valley in the German Bitburg-Prüm County."

The original villages of the Hommerdings: Hommerdingen and Nusbaum are directly north of Bollendorf (shown as "A" on [interactive Google map](#).) **Cornelius Hommerding (1811-??)** and his family probably lived in Bollendorf before emigrating to Brazil. Cornelius' wife, Maria Feltz (1820-??) was born in this village, as were their children.

Edingen

Jacob Hommerding (1828-1878) married his first wife, Anna Maria Dauven (1823-before 1856) in Edingen, Germany in January, 1853. She was also born in Edingen.

Charles Thielen of Luxembourg has cleared up a mystery for me. The only "Edingen" I could find via Internet searches was a suburb of Heidelberg. I didn't understand how Jacob Hommerding could have traveled so far from Nusbaum in 1853 to find a wife! He didn't.

Per Charles Thielen: *"Jacob found his wife in Edingen, a little place near the Luxembourg-German border, not far away from Echternach and Nusbaum."*

On the map of numbered Hommerding villages at the beginning of this page, Edingen is too small to be shown. It would be southeast of No. 3, Ferschweiler, and almost exactly on the Germany-Luxembourg border.

Reil



The Village of Reil, on the north bank of the Moselle River, downstream from Trier

Reil is one of many charming villages that hug the banks of the Moselle River, with vineyards clinging to the steep hillsides above. Since the Moselle River divides two mountainous plateaus, the Eifel on the north, and the Hunsruck on the south, Reil could be said to be at the southern edge of the Eifel.

Jacob's second wife, Maria Anna Butzen (1833-1912) was born in Reil, located on the north bank of the Moselle River, and about 18 miles from the old Roman city of Trier. Check the [Google interactive map](#)-- Reil is marked with an "A." I enjoyed a visit to my Butzen relatives in Reil in 2003 and have described both Reil and Trier in [my trip log](#). The 2006 population of Reil was about 1200.

Wissmannsdorf



Scenery near Wissmannsdorf

Wissmannsdorf is about ten miles northeast of Nusbaum. (Shown as "A" on [interactive Google map](#).) In 2006 it had 791 inhabitants. Its elevation is about 1100 feet.

Michael Hommerding (1848-1905) and **William Hommerding** (1855-1914) were grandsons of Johann Peter. They, and their siblings, were all born in Wissmannsdorf.

Hommerdings Living in the Eifel Villages Today

From an [Internet phone directory](#) for Nusbaum, I found seven people with the Hommerding surname living in villages within 2 to 13 miles of Nusbaum. They reside in: Biesdorf, Wissmannsdorf, Altscheid, Eichtershausen, Oberweiler, and Wilsecker. (There were **no** Hommerdings listed for either Nusbaum or Hommerdingen.)

Next--[Coming to "Amerika" The Transatlantic Voyage](#)