

Some 18th-19th c. Knauth history

From: Geoffrey S. Knauth

Subject: some 18th-19th c. Knauth history

As fellow descendants of Franz Theodor Knauth (whose sons included Percival and Antonio), I thought you might enjoy some family history I got today from my cousin Julie in England.

To explain the connection to Harold Bowditch: Selma Bowditch, the sister of my great grandfather Percival Knauth, married Dr. Henry Pickering Bowditch (Grandson of Nathaniel Bowditch).

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nathaniel_Bowditch

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Pickering_Bowditch

Dr. Harold Bowditch was the son of Henry and Selma Bowditch.

And you might be interested in these old Knauth haunts near Leipzig. I thought the Knauth castle was destroyed in WWII, but today I found out I was wrong:

<http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knauthain>

<http://goo.gl/lzZzRz> (Knauthain pictures)

Geoff

Begin forwarded message:

Date: October 28, 2014

From: Julie Harrington

Letter from Carl Gottlob Knauth to his father Abraham Knauth, Altenburg, 5 Nov. 1795

Translated by Harold Bowditch, July 1920

Dear Father,

Sad though it is for me that you now write to me so unwillingly and with no pleasure, I can yet see that it cannot be otherwise than that any news of me must be disagreeable, and any answer unwelcome. For me, too, it is sad to write to you; I had almost decided to deceive you again and to go to work with the utmost sincerity; and yet I see that this very sincerity would offend you still more and prejudice you against me. Still, this is a well-deserved punishment which I must undergo because for long I lacked the courage to discover to you my true condition-by doing so I might have changed many things for the better. Even while still in school I had never accustomed myself to undertake serious work which required patience; I preferred lighter, pleasanter tasks, and when I did undertake anything of a more serious and tedious nature, it remained unfinished. I came to Leipzig with this habit, so it was natural that I should avoid dry professional studies and employ my time only with the so-called liberal arts. But I see now that my principal error was in not knowing how to study; I vacillated from one method to another, soon began still another, and often wasted my time in useless work. I can accuse myself of doing absolutely nothing only during one very short period; the rest of the time I was busy, but I made things of secondary importance into essentials, and forgot the things of substance. Hence I have acquired with pleasure a number of accomplishments, but have remained almost totally ignorant in the dry subjects of theological study. To distract my

JPH - Hi, this is me now. I have seen a copy of the letter, not sure where.

The girl that Carl married was called Wilhelmina Rosmasler. They had 7 children, 5 of whom are known: Carl Edward, Gustave Albert, Franz Theodore (founder of Knauth, Nachod and Kuhne and our great-great grandfather), Carl Berthold and Ernst Theodore. Carl Gottlob Knauth died of typhoid in 1813, during the Battle of Leipzig. I don't know what happened to Wilhelmina. In the papers from Grandpa (Ted), Carl seems to have been a teacher so he must have gotten over his inability to study!

The estrangement between father and son caused a rift in the family that carried on until for some time. Our great grandfather Percival seems to have ignored this rift. Anyway, Wilhelmina was supposed to have been the daughter of a chimney sweep. I think this was made up to discredit Carl because Wilhelmina's brother was a gold smith and engraver and I attached some copies of the work he did. I really don't think that a chimney sweeps son would have the opportunity to train as a goldsmith unless he was really, very lucky and had a sympathetic patron.



Etchings by F. Rosmasler, Wihelmina's brother.

The story continues, Franz Theodore, our direct line, married Adelheid Esche in 1842, they had three children: Johannes, Camilla (Fels) and the feeble minded Fridolin. Presumably Adelheid died and Franz Theodor went on to marry Fanny Elisabeth Steyer in 1850. They had 5 children; the eldest is Percival, our great grandfather (1851-1900) Selma (Bowditch), Manual, Octavio and Antonio.

So, I have before me a partial letter from Fanny to Selma dated Leipzig, 1874.

Harold Bowditch has kindly written a synopsis in English:

Fanny Knauth advises her daughter Selma Bowditch to have no further correspondence with her half-sister and half-brother, Camilla Fels and Johannes Knauth. (These were the Children of Franz Theodor Knauth by his first wife, Adelheid Esche; Johannes had been disinherited by his father). On the day of FTK's burial (1874) Johannes had come to the house but has not said good-bye to Fanny Knauth, and Camilla had not even come to the house, but had made an appointment to meet her brother at her brother-in-law, Dr Kretschmer's house. These two requested Dr. Kretschmer to act as their deputy in matters relating to their inheritance, as he already represented their feeble-minded brother Fridolin; but he, seeing their attitude toward their step-mother, refused to act for them. Fanny Knauth asks Selma Bowditch to send the letter to her brother Percival Knauth so that he may be informed soon how matters stand; she suspects that Johannes Knauth may offer to be Percival's sponsor in secret and wishes him to be for-warned.

HB 1920.

The next letter, again a partial letter written from Fanny Knauth to Selma Bowditch, is undated, probably 1888 according to Harold Bowditch.

P. (Percival? HB) told me that you intended to celebrate Christmas at Dr. J.K.'s (Johannes Knauth) in Dresden; I am sorry or it, for this family is not on an equal social footing with yours (what a snob !!! JPH) – hard though it is for me, I must tell you so. His wife was impure when he married her; a child is living, a girl, seven years older than J.'s (Johannes) children. Papa (Franz Theodor Knauth) was obliged by the Code Napoleon to give his consent to the marriage; but in order to protect himself and especially you from undesirable relatives he had his protest registered at that very time ad acta and had it filed in court with the marriage papers; so that no claim of relationship between this family and yours can ever be made. Thus your good Papa wished to protect you! Of course your honest half-brother (Johannes) concealed these facts from you ... (meow !!! JPH)

Harold Bowditch goes on to explain:

Franz Theodor Knauth's oldest son Johannes wished to marry an actress but could not obtain his father's consent, requisite according to German law. In order to marry her he appealed to the court which summoned his father to give his reasons; this indignity he would not forgive, and disinherited his son. (we seemed to do that at the drop of a hat!) This is the way I have the story from my mother, Selma Bowditch; the father's reason for objecting to the marriage, other than that the woman was an actress, I never knew until I found the above letter among my mother's papers. At all events, our family never had any correspondence with the family of Johannes Knauth, although his son Willy is married and lives on Staten Island. On the other hand, though my mother followed her mother's lead out of loyalty, her brother Percival's family in New York did not, but have always been on a friendly footing with Mr. and Mrs. Willy Knauth. Various members of our family have met

them at the Percival Knauth house and I have called on them on Staten Island. Willy Knauth is one of the members of the firm of Knauth, Nachod and Kuhne, founded by his grandfather, and there is every reason, in my opinion, for pleasant intercourse between the families. To me it seems strange that my grandfather, Franz Theodor Knauth should have disinherited his son, after seeing the suffering which his father, Carl Gottlob Knauth, went through due to his being disinherited by his father, Abraham Knauth, for his marriage with the daughter of a chimney-sweep at about the same time their eldest child was born.

Harold Bowditch 1920.

Well there you have it. That is all that is in English. It is nice to know some of the personalities of our ancestors, even if they didn't seem to be very nice people. We are nice people so there must have been some good in them! We are also viewing the past with our 21st century eyes. I like to think that Carl and Wilhelmina had a happy marriage and that Franz Theodor and Fanny deserved each other! I have an old photograph of Franz and Fanny on my wall, they do look very sour, especially Fanny, I always put it down to the seriousness of early photography. Perhaps not!

Love Julie

Later Julie added:

Oh dear! I stand corrected! I looked up Rosmasler and they were brothers who were apparently (word used in article suggests some doubt) the sons of a chimney sweep! Well I never ... the website is www.pastellists.com.

They were very talented so perhaps they were able to rise from the ashes (sorry).