

Wilhelm Lautenschläger (c1568-1632) - The Infamous “Wizard of the Odenwald”

Last of Güttersbach, Odenwaldkreis, Hessen, Germany

**Some Known and Proven Descendants and a
Few Probable Descendants to Eleven Generations**

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Preface and Acknowledgements

The Story of [Wilhelm Lautenschläger](#)¹, the Infamous Wizard of the Odenwald, who was Charged with Wizardry and Practicing Devilish Arts. Wilhelm was Arrested and Imprisoned in 1628 in the Tower of Michelstadt in Michelstadt, Odenwaldkreis, Hessen, Germany.



Figure 1: Prison Tower in Michelstadt, Odenwaldkreis, Hessen, Germany
Picture taken by: Charles F. Kerchner, Jr. in October 2013

I have published this book to share with you and document for history what I learned during my visit to Germany in 2013 about the earliest proven direct male line (infamous) ancestor of my mother's father, Raymond Austin Laudenslager (1888-1978) of Allentown, Lehigh County, PA. My mother was Beatrice Brown (nee Laudenslager) Kerchner, born 1911. You can find her in the index at the back of this book.

As you will see Wilhelm Lautenschläger, my 9th great-grandfather, was charged and arrested in 1628 but was punished comparatively lightly. People accused of similar crimes at this time during the 30 Years War which raged in that part of what is now s.w. Germany were often given lengthy prison sentences or quite often even burned at the stake. Thousands so died. But the authorities in the Odenwald where Wilhelm lived were in general not as harsh.

The following story is a transcription and translation and summary of the original story from the very old book: *Documentation for the Story of the German Criminal Law System at the Time of the German Empire*. The book was published in the 1800s using Old German Black-Letter (Fraktur/Gothic) type font. I was made aware of this book and Wilhelm's 1628 arrest by a historian in the Odenwald named Heidi Banse. She gave me copies of [the relevant pages from the book about Wilhelm's arrest and trial](#)² when I visited Michelstadt in the Odenwald in October 2013. When I got home to Pennsylvania I scanned the book pages into my computer and [transcribed it into Modern German type font](#)³ using specialized computer software - along with some manual verification and tweaking. I also googled on the story and found a summary of the same event in modern German font online at Ancestry.com. I then sent these Modern German font documents to my friends in Germany for translation. The final translation below from German to understandable English was done in November 2013 by my good friends, Gerhard & Meli Kircher of Schwäbisch Hall, Germany, with help of their son Joachim Kircher. I wish to thank everyone who helped me learn of my infamous ancestor.

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¹ Wilhelm Lautenschläger and other Laudenslager generalogy webpages: <http://www.kerchner.com/laudenslager/lauden.htm>

² Old German Legal Book; Documentation for the Story of the German Criminal Law System at the Time of the German Empire; by Avocat Bopp in Darmstadt; The Criminaljustiz in a Kleinfstaate (in county Erbach in the Ode-Forest) in Hessen; published in 1800s.

³ ABBYY Historic OCR computer software by ABBYYeu.com which can scan and convert old German Gothic script into modern German font: <https://pdf.abbyy.com/learning-center/old-fonts-recognition/>

⁴ Kerchner.com home page URL: <http://www.kerchner.com/>