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Section I

Historical Background

The first documented appearance of the Welden name was in 980, in the region of Augsburg. This city is now in Bavaria, but at that time it was in Württemberg, part of SWABIA (Schwaben). A great part of Schwaben belonged to Austria until 1803.

At this time the main residence of the family was no longer WELDEN (near Augsburg) but LAUPHEIM (Württemberg). However, many members of the family had connections with the Kingdom of Bavaria.

On the following page I have drawn an approximate map of Swabia at the time of the Holy Roman Empire (800-1806). Boundaries changed often, but the general outline remains.

The Weldens belonged to one of the oldest Swabian aristocracies and bore the titles of Freiherr (Baron), abbrev. FRHR, and Freifrau (wife of a Baron) and Freiin (daughter of a Baron). Both the sons and daughters of a Baron inherited the titles. In Germany and Austria titles of nobility were abolished at the end of WWI (1918) with the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany.

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Map of SWABIA (Schwaben) in Southern Germany, showing approximate boundaries during the HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE (800-1806). This comprised ALSACE (now belonging to France), BADEN, northern SWITZERLAND and WÜRTTEMBERG, which until 1806 belonged to Austria. Augsburg and Welden are now part of Bavaria.

[Drawing of Swabia]

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Most of the names on the map are mentioned in the history of the Welden family.

1. WELDEN - a medieval castle, fortified with moat and ramparts, the first documented abode of the Welden family. It is now a town, still on the map, a few miles north of Augsburg (Bavaria).

The castle was sold in 1597 to the Fuggers, who were at that time the most important merchants’ and banking family in Europe, and based in Augsburg.

Mr. and Mrs. Schwinger (Danny’s maternal grandparents) visited WELDEN on a golden honeymoon trip to Europe and were shown around the castle and estate by the caretaker. Several Weldens spent time at this castle, even long after it was sold.

[Copy of Postcard]

Copy of the postcard that Mr. Schwinger sent to my brother Frank from Welden in 1969.

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1. AUGSBURG - a city in Bavaria, a few miles south of WELDEN and about 90 miles from Munich. Augsburg was established as a Roman colony under the emperor Augustus. The Latin name of the colony was Augustodunum.

In the 6th Century it had become and important bishopric. Many Weldens served as clergymen and one as Dean of the Cathedral of Augsburg. They are buried here.

In the 15th and 16th centuries Augsburg was a thriving city under the impetus of the Fuggers.

1. HOCHALTINGEN - a castle with considerable estate just north of Nördlingen. Carl II von Welden in 1585 inherited Hochaltingen through his marriage to Cordula von Hirnheim. He also inherited Laupheim from his father Michael I, who was fond of Welden at that time.

Hochaltingen was passed on to Carl’s youngest son Johann Dietrich, while his first two sons received Laupheim, which was divided into Gross and Klein- Laupheim. The Hochaltingen line died out in 1897, and the other two lines have endured to the present. The castle Hochaltingen was sold in 1766.

Johann Dietrich did not live long to enjoy his inheritance. He died at age 41 in the plague of 1635. Most of his 11 children died before him. Four sons remained. Only his third son, Johann Franz, had a family.

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1. LAUPHEIM - a city south of ULM, WÜRTTEMBERG. It was the residence of the two most important lines of the Welden family for 2½ centuries from 1584 to 1840. Therefore, the history of the Weldens is actually part of that of Laupheim and vice versa - More details about this later.

Our branch, the GROSSLAUPHEIM line, lived at Schloss(castle) Grosslaupheim and the cousins at Schloss Kleinlaupheim.

The earliest mention of Laupheim (Loupheim) is in a Latin document of 778, when it was a tiny market village. In the 16th century it had become a fairly important market town. The farmland was fertile and the market days and annual fairs attracted people from surrounding areas. This meant that it was also attractive to the marauding armies that swept across southern Germany in the 30 Years War (1618-1648) and the Napoleonic Wars at the beginning of the 19th century.

Laupheim became a city in 1869 and celebrated its 100th anniversary in 1969. By coincidence Dan and Shirley Welden were in Germany at the time. Danny was studying lithography in Munich. On a visit to WELDEN they met a Ludwig Langenmair who had thoroughly researched the history of his town and of the Weldens and had a wealth of information.

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Mr. Langenmair took Dan, Shirley and a Leontine von Welden (of the Kleinlaupheim line) to Laupheim and then to Hürbel, to which the family had moved in 1843.

In 1978 Laupheim commemorated the 1200th anniversary of its founding with an elaborate jubilee. They published a beautiful 500 page book entitled “Laupheim”, which contains many chapters about the Weldens, including reproductions of the 20 paintings of Welden ancestors that are now in the museum of Laupheim. The paintings had been donated to this museum by the Rev. Erwin von Welden, who died in 1976. He was the son of my Uncle Agustus von Welden.

Danny told me about the book, and we both sent for a copy. Then the Mayor of Laupheim, Dr. Otmar Schick, sent me two copies as a present for my brothers Gus and Louis. He also gave Anna a copy when she and her daughter Carol visited Laupheim in 1981 (Nov.). On the way to Munich (Carol driving) they stopped at Welden and looked up Mr. Langenmair, who was very gracious and helpful.

I have gleaned much information about the family from this book.

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1. LEUTSTETTEN - Castle and town at Lake Starnberg, a few miles south of Munich (Bavaria). Our fathers’ father, Max August von Welden, owned this castle, where our father Franz Seraph and all his brothers and sisters, except the youngest, August, were born. August was born at Hürbel (Württemberg). In 1873, when Max August’s brother Carl died, the family moved to Hürbel, where the cousins and rest of the family were living.

Max August sold Leutstetten to the Royal Family of Bavaria, named Wittelsbach. The descendents of the King of Bavaria still own and live in Leutstetten. When, in 1936, I visited my uncle August, a lawyer in Munich, he took me to see Leutstetten. The family were not at home, but the caretaker showed us through the building, which was very interesting and surrounded by beautiful grounds. In 1886, King Ludwig II, who had been referred to as the “mad” King of Bavaria, drowned in Lake Starnberg under unexplained circumstances.

When our sister Anna visited Leutstetten in 1981 the “Prince” and “Princess” were very hospitable, showed her around and then drove her back to Munich.

Unfortunately, the picture I took of Leutstetten was lost, but it was a 3 story building with cupolas and turrets, similar to Hürbel (next page).

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[Painting of Hürbel]

Painting by a Karlsruhe cousin - Adalbert Otto

1. HÜRBEL - Last residence of the family. Some of the Weldens moved there in 1843 when they left Laupheim. My father’s family had been living in Leutstetten (near Munich), which they sold to the Royal Family of Bavaria in 1873 and moved to Hürbel.

From a letter by Daniel Welden.

“We have been to Hürbel where I got a fantastic greeting as “Herr Baron.” One man - very old - named Altfater was a boy of 12 when Max V.W. He carried the cross for his funeral and admired him very much. As we said “Aufwiedersehen” he gave me such a hug and tears came to his eyes. It was really a heart warming experience”

My father’s eldest brother Max von Welden, died in 1912.

[Etching of Hürbel, Jan. 22, 1859]

Etching of Hurbel. My father’s youngest brother August, was born here in 1877.

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