From Gymnastics to Geraniums

Local Research Project
Summer 1976.
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Coming from a family of civicly and commercially active individuals, himself having been a leader in the youthful German community, Peter John Ott chose for himself a quieter world. The mature Ott found his happiness in his own home, in the joys of his children and the beauty of his flower garden.
A native of Monbacc, Germany, George Ott and his family settled in Savannah in or about 1841. Within his first five years in the United States, George, jointly with Nicolas Wolfe, purchased a farm on the Thunderbolt Road (Wheaton Street), property through which ran a road soon to be named Ott in George's honor. The farm, an apparent success both financially, as evidenced by the loans extended by George, and agriculturally, as evidenced by the twenty-eight pound cabbage grown there, was the home of the Ott family for a number of years, this being their residence at the time of Sherman's occupation of Savannah. That occupation touched the lives of the Otts directly as the soldiers of that army allowed the family a specific period of time in which to carry what they could into the house after which took the vegetables and livestock left behind, never entering the house.

The Ott family which immigrated from Germany consisted of George, his wife Catherine Siegfried, and their two small daughters, Barbara, born in 1839, and Anna, born in 1840; another child, Julia, was born in Georgia in 1847. After Catherine's death on February 2, 1853, at the age of 37, George returned to Germany where he married Elizabeth Siegfried, the younger sister of his first wife. This couple had two children, Peter John, born November 13, 1856, and Elizabeth A. (Lizzie), born in 1859.

The world in which Peter (the principal interest of this paper) grew up was one with many ties to his parent's native land. George's name appearing on the papers selling the
property of the "Coffee Pot Church" indicates an affiliation of the Ott family with that ill-fated effort by a group of Lutherans to have services conducted in German.\textsuperscript{16} Peter himself spent a number of years in Germany where he learned to read and speak German as well as to speak French.\textsuperscript{17}

The social education of the youthful Peter was also centered in his German heritage, as he participated in the activities of the Schuetzen Gesselschaft, a group of military origin\textsuperscript{18} which paid particular attention to the use of firearms.\textsuperscript{19} Peter's particular strength was his skill in shooting at Creedmore targets, his marksmanship winning him both recognition and prizes.\textsuperscript{20} He was also quite active in both the German Volunteers\textsuperscript{21} and the Turnverein Society, being elected an officer of that social organization\textsuperscript{22} and winning first prize in May 1878 and in July 1880 for his performances in the gymnastic competition\textsuperscript{23} which was a prominent feature of the organization.\textsuperscript{24}

Peter's mother, Elizabeth, died November 17, 1864, four days after Peter's eighth birthday.\textsuperscript{25} Ten years later, on October 27, 1874, his father, who suffered from bronchitis went out on the back stoop of his daughter, Barbara's home, and in an accident for which the newspaper gives George's nearsightedness credit, he fell over the banister, fracturing his ribs. The fall proved fatal,\textsuperscript{26} and George Ott died at the age of sixty-two years and five days leaving an estate consisting primarily of real estate and stocks to be divided between his children.\textsuperscript{27}

Mr. F.J. Ruckert, husband of George's eldest, Barbara, served as administrator of the estate which, no will having been
Left, was divided equally between Barbara (Mrs. P.J. Ruckert), Anna (Mrs. Henry Sack) and Peter J. Ott, the surviving children of George Ott at the time of the distribution of the estate in 1879; Julia (Mrs. John Christian) having died in 1873, prior to the death of her father, and Lizzie having died of yellow fever in 1876, between the death of George Ott and the final settlement of his property.

By the settlement of that estate Peter received:

10 shares of Central Railroad and Banking Company of Georgia.

15 shares of Atlantic and Gulf Railroad Company

2 shares of Coastline Railroad

Lot 4 Sloper Tything, Percival Ward

40 lots in Kelly Ward

White Bluff second section Farm Lot 5 Tycornell Tything, Derby Ward (property referred to in later documents as lots 36, 37, 44, 45, 52, 53, 60 Tunnings Ward).

Between the death of his father and his marriage, Peter worked as a clerk and a grocer, boarding in three different locations, Bryan, Congress, and Bolton Streets. The Congress Street address being that of the lock and gunsmith establishment of Christian D. Sack. And in 1883 Peter began a three year career with that establishment learning during that time to repair locks and guns and to make keys.

The year 1883 saw another beginning in Peter's life, this time of a more lasting and romantic nature; for on the second of December 1883, after obtaining a license in Chatham County
On November 28, A. W. Clisby married Mr. Peter J. Ott and Miss Emalie O. Thieme in the Presbyterian Church of Macon, Georgia.

The Otts boarded with Christian D. Sack for two years; then in 1885, the same year in which the Sack business is changed in its listing from Christian D to Henry Sack, they moved to the home of Henry Sack on Second Street. The couple moved again in 1886 to board at 198 President for three years, one of those years, Peter working as, 1888, in the restaurant, saloon, of George Schwarz at 172 Broughton Street.

Changes of both residence and employment came in 1889 as the Otts, who now had a daughter Amelia Marie, moved to 23½ Montgomery where they remained for two years as Peter operated a billiards and pool establishment at 174 Broughton Street.

However, in 1893 that address was occupied by the Women's Christian Temperance Union and W. K. Tarver. Peter's occupation is, in 1893, not recorded, and so it remains until 1899 with the exception of 1897 when he is listed in the City Directory as being retired. During this period the Otts, a family of five by this time, George Ott having been born on March 29, 1891 and Elizabeth Georgia having been born October 10, 1892, lived first at 109½ York; then in 1897 they moved to the three story brick house Peter had built in 1892, at 17-19 York Street, upon the Percolva Ward property he had inherited from his father.

In 1899 Peter became the manager of the saloon and cafe of Gustave Fox located at 21 Broughton Street. He continued at this occupation for the next nine years, losing in 1902 the title of manager as the occupant of the property ceased to be
listed as Gustave Fox, his name being replaced by that of Peter Ott.48 This establishment, called by the Ott family a tavern, offered a meal prepared by Emelie Ott with the purchase of a nickel beer.49 In 1908 Peter left this occupation relying upon his real estate investments as his source of income for the remainder of his life.50

The financial status or economic activities of Peter Ott are only partially completed by an account that fails to record his dealings in real estate for both investment purposes and as a medium of exchange used in the securing of loans. The first of the loans secured, however, required no transfer of land. Peter being allowed to borrow $5500 from the Germania Bank in 1897. The reduction of this debt over the next eleven years to a sum of $1100 made it possible for Peter to borrow an additional $2000 in November 1908, the year in which his trade in the Broughton Street tavern was terminated.51

The Cummings Ward property, lots 36, 37, 44, 45, 52, 53, 60, was frequently used in the securing of funds for short periods of time. Lots 53 and 60 were sold for $600 in 1886, in a deed of debt, for that purpose,52 the property being repurchased in 1890 for $800.53 In May of 1906 the property was divided and was again sold through a deed of debt, lots 44, 45, 52, 53 going to the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Georgia54 and lots 36, 37, and 60 going to the Ladies Diocesan Missionary Aid Society of Christ Church.55 Each of the portions of real estate were sold for $537.5056 and both debts were repaid in July of 1910.57 The Kelly Ward property, a portion of the original
Farm property bought by George Ott\textsuperscript{58} was sold to the Savannah Land Company on April 18, 1890 for $18,000.\textsuperscript{59}

On lot 4 of Sloper Thything, Percival Ward, Peter chose to build a home for his family; in what was assessed as a $1250 improvement on that York Street Property.\textsuperscript{60} Peter built a three story brick structure\textsuperscript{61} in which he and his family were to live for seventeen years.\textsuperscript{62} They moved from this home to take up residence at 18 Brady Street in 1914,\textsuperscript{63} after the 1913 sale of the York Street property to George Miller,\textsuperscript{64} an attorney,\textsuperscript{65} who dealt in real estate,\textsuperscript{66} for $100 plus valuable considerations.\textsuperscript{67}

Among his investment purchases was that of seven lots of the newly divided property of the Forest City Gun Club, for $560 on November 10, 1919;\textsuperscript{68} he sold that property two months later on January 16, 1920 for $1000.\textsuperscript{69}

Giving up the tavern as a means of support, Peter invested in rental property in order to assure himself of an income.\textsuperscript{70}

The first such purchase was that on July 25, 1913 of lots 7 and 8 Law Ward for $1400.\textsuperscript{71} The purchase was made from Samuel K. Platshek,\textsuperscript{72} a man who was party to a number of real estate transactions with George H. Miller,\textsuperscript{73} the man from whom Peter was to receive valuable considerations.

His other investment was made jointly with John Ernst, as they paid $6750 to Rena Falignant Travis on January 9, 1914 for lot H Falignant Ward.\textsuperscript{74}

Behind, and in many ways beyond, these ventures in business stood Peter Ott, the son of a German immigrant, married to a
A woman of similar background, Emilie's parents, Albert and Marie Thieme, being German immigrants like the Otts, for only through his private associations, as he carries the influences of his childhood throughout his life and as he reaches out to embrace his family, is the man Peter John Ott revealed. Continuing his interest in the use of guns, Peter enjoyed hunting and was an active member of the Forest City Gun Club. He also continued his association with the Turnverein Society, he and Emilie being members of the Turnverein Singers.

However, the Otts' principal interests were to be found within their own home as Peter spent time reading or working in his flower garden, with its wide variety of geraniums, its lilies, lilies, cacti, ferns and herbs—the herbs going to use in the Ott kitchen, in Emilie's cooking which their daughter Amelia remembers as being excellent, while Emilie found her leisure hours happily spent with handwork, particularly crocheting.

Yet beyond these were interests of far greater importance to the Otts, their three children, Amelia, George, and Elizabeth (two of the born by Emilie were stillborn). Birthdays and holidays were given special attention as Easter saw eggs dyed and hidden for an Easter Egg hunt and Christmas with a tree and its gifts followed by a New Years of "church bells, fire goops, boat whistles, and the noisy fire works and pistols" as the source of many happy memories for the Ott children. Much of Peter's time was spent with his children, no special occasion being necessary, as he taught them to play dominoes, checkers, and the new games to be found in the stores.
The Ott family moved in 1920 from Brady Street to 103 Thirty-first Street, this move being that of two, not five, people, all the Ott children having married between February 1918 and June 1919. Here, at the Thirty-first Street address, after suffering a stroke which rendered him unable to sign the document giving his remaining property, lots 7 and 8 to Law Ward and lot H to Alligant Ward, to Emelia, Peter died of a cerebral hemorrhage on June 14, 1920.
Appendix II

Chronology of Property Dealings and Important Loans
Of Peter John Ott

7-7-1879    inherited property and stocks from George Ott

12-7-1897    borrowed $5,500 from the Germania Bank

10-21-1889    sold lots 53 and 60 Cummings Ward to George Schawz for $600.

4-18-1890    sold Kelly Ward property for $18,000

9-3-1890    bought back lot 53 and 60 Cummings Ward with repayment of loan -$800

3-5-1906    sold Cummings Ward property to the Protestant Episcopal Church of the Diocese of Georgia and the Ladies Diocesan Missionary Aid Society of Christ Church for $1037

11-3-1908    secured another loan from the Germania Bank, this one for $2000

7-14-10    borrowed $3000 from Sheldon

7-7-1910    paid the Episcopal Church institutions gaining ownership of the Cummings Ward property

10-4-1911    sold the Cummings Ward outright for $2,500

1-22-1913    sold Percival Ward property for $100 plus valuable considerations

1-23-1913    pay off the Germania Bank loan

7-25-1913    bought lots 7 and 8 Law Ward for $1,400

1-9-1914    bought lot H Pelligan with John Ernst for $6750

11-10-1919    bought Forest City Gun Club property for $560

1-16-1920    sold Gun Club property for $1,000

5-10-1920    gave remaining property to Emelie
Endnotes

1. Laura Grove Cemetery Records, Ott, George, lot 1057. What appears to be a discrepancy between this source and the 1860 Federal Population Census is explained by the fact that Hessen-Darmstadt, the Census listing is the name of the larger area of which Monkaback is a part.

2. Amelia Ott Utple, letter containing personal recollections.

3. Deed Book 3Es, Chatham County Superior Court, p. 411.

4. A. O. Ubele

5. Deed Book 3Ns p. 464; 3Rs p. 38; 3Es p. 372; 3Es p. 526; 3Rs p. 44.


7. A. O. Ubele.

8. Ibid.


12. Marker, Laura Grove Cemetery, lot 1057.


16. Mildred Gartelmann, oral interview. / Miss Gartelmann is the historian of the Lutheran Church of the Ascension. /

17. A. O. Ubele.

18. Marianne Kunnnmann, oral interview. /Mrs. Kunnnmann is a native German. /


21 Ibid. vol. 30 p. 761; vol. 32. p. 380
22 Ibid. vol. 30 p. 763.
23 Ibid. vol. 30 p. 776; vol. 32. p. 568.
24 M. Gartelmann.
25 Laura Grove Cemetery Records, Ott, Elizabeth, lot 1057.
27 Court of the Ordinary, file 86.
28 Ibid.
29 Keeper's Records Bonaventure Cemetery, Christian, Julia, sec D lot 8; Savannah Morning News Digest, vol. 25, p. 213. /Mrs. Ubele recalls Julia as being one of the surviving children, producing a conflict in information./
30 Keeper's Records Bonaventure Cemetery, Ott, Lizzie; Mrs. Ubele.
31 Court of the Ordinary, file 86.
32 Deed Book 4Wd pp. 342-3.
33 Savannah City Directory 1878, 1879, 1881, Ott, P.J.
34 Ibid. 1879, 179 Congress Street.
35 Ibid. 1883, 1884, 1885, Ott, P.J.
36 A.O. Ubele.
37 Marriage license, Court of the Ordinary Book D, p. 523; Sunday Morning News, December 16, 1882, 8/8. /Discrepancies exist between the license which gives a date of December 1 for the marriage and spells the minister's name Cisby and the newspaper which gives the date as December 2, (Mrs. Ubele concurs) and spells the minister's name Cisby. Beyond this information regarding the wedding I have nothing. Thus I can not explain why two Chatham County residents, whose family lived in Savannah. (Albert Thiem being in the 1884 Savannah City Directory) and to whom family ties appear strong, the Otts living with the Sacks, Peter acting as P.J. Rockert's Attorney at Law years after Barbara's death (Deed Book 4Wd p. 26.), and August Thiem living with the Otts (City Directory 1890), would go to Macon to be married in a Presbyterian Church./
38 Savannah City Directory, 1883, 1884, 1885, Ott, P.J.; ss. Second Street.
Ibid., 1888, Ott, P.J.

M. Gartelmann, / Miss Gartelmann found a record of Amelia Marie Ott's baptism at the Lutheran Church of the Ascension on October 14, 1888; however, other than a record of Amelia acting as sponsor for Catherine Marie Redman in 1889 this baptism is the only record of any church affiliation on the part of the Otts until the marriage of Amelia in 1919.

Savannah City Directory, 1889, 1890, Ott, P.J.

Ibid., 1893, 174 Broughton Street.

Ibid., 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, 1897, 1898, Ott, P.J.

marker, Bonaventure Cemetery, sec. N lot 129.


Savannah City Directory, 1893, 1894, 1895, 1896, Ott, P.J.

Ibid., 1897, 1898, 1899, 1901, 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1910, 1911, 1912, 1913, Ott, P.J. / Mrs. Ubele remembers the Otts living in their York Street home for twenty-one years not the seventeen indicated here./

Ibid., 1902, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906, 1907, Ott, P.J., 21 Broughton Street.

Mrs Elizabeth Ott Walsh, personal interview on her family's history.

Savannah City Directory, 1908; E.O. Walsh.

Deed Book 27a, p. 193.

Deed Book 6Fg, p. 347.

Deed Book 6Ya, p. 143.

Deed Book 9a, p. 354.


Ibid. pp. 384-5.

Deed Book 10Ge, pp. 284-6.

Deed Book 3Be, p. 144.

Deed Book 69e, p. 365.

Savannah Tax Digest 1892, Ott, P.J.

A.O. Ubele.

64 Ibid. 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918. Ott, P.J.

65 Deed Book 118s, p. 118.

66 Savannah City Directory, 1915. Miller, Geo. H.

67 Index to Deeds: Grantors, vol. 18. M-N. Miller, George H.

68 Deed Book 118s, p. 118.

69 Deed Book 141s, p. 131.

70 E.O. Walsh.


72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 Death Records of Chatham County; "Department of Vital Statistics" vol. 45, p. 33.

76 A.C. Ubele.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

79 Ibid.

80 Laura Grove Cemetery Records, Ott, infant, lot 1142.

81 A.C. Ubele.

82 Savannah City Directory, 1920. Ott, P.J.

83 Marriage Licenses, Court of the Ordinary, Book 2Es, p. 215.

84 Lutheran Church of the Ascension Records, marriages, 1918, 1919.

85 Death Records of Chatham County, vol. 6, no. 1243.
Bibliography


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Federal Population Census: 1850

Federal Population Census: 1860


Index to Deeds and Grantors and Grantees. 1785-1926. Chatham County Superior Court.

Keeper's Records of Bonaventure Cemetery. WPA Writer's Project.


Laura Grove Cemetery Records. WPA Writer's Project.


Markers, Laura Grove Cemetery, lot 1057.

Marriage licenses, Chatham County Court of the Ordinary. Book D, Book 25a.

Savannah Morning News, 28 October 1874.

Savannah Morning News, 16 December 1883.

Savannah Morning News Digest, 1853.

Savannah Morning News Digest, 1878.

Savannah Morning News Digest, 1880.

Savannah Tax Digest, 1892.


Wills and Estate Documents. Chatham County Court of the Ordinary, file 86.
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Seed Books: IVa, 3Vc, 2IVc, 4Vg, 8Qc, 8C, 8Jc, 9Ic, 10Mc, 11Mc.

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Chatham County Map Book 1, Superior Court of Chatham County.

Savannah Tax Digest 1892-1902.

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Middle Georgia Regional Library, Genealogy: Macon City Directories

Savannah Morning News, January - March 1900; June - September 1902.

White Bluff Presbyterian Church,