

# Finding Ursula

## Did Johann Friedrich Fechser have any siblings?

Germans tended to have large families in the 1800s, yet family records, including Johann's autobiographical sketch, did not mention any brothers or sisters for Johann. That just didn't seem right to me, so I decided to do some digging.

One of the first clues I found, once I could decipher the German handwriting, is provided in Johann's birth record (Figure 1). It reveals that Johann's parents were unmarried when he was born and that his mother, Anna Maria Kiesecker, was a divorcee. That was something worth following up on. If she was divorced, maybe there were children from her prior marriage.



Johann Friedrich Fechser

Figure 1 Johann Friedrich Fechser Birth Record

Verfilmungsstelle: Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart 17x  
 LANDESKIRCHLICHES ARCHIV  
 Kirchenbücher d. Kirchenbezirks Weikersheim  
 Nassau

Bd. 6

Zahl der Geborenen	Zusammen der Kinder	Eltern	Dunkelgeburt	Zeit der Geburt	Ort des Tag der Geburt	Mutter im Zeitpunkt der Geburt	Zeuge	Ort und Name des Pfarrers
19	1	Johann Friedrich Fechser Anna Maria Kiesecker (geb. 1785 in Weikersheim) (geb. 1785 in Weikersheim)		19. Jul 1825	Weikersheim	Anna Maria Kiesecker	Herr Pfarrer Herr Schultheiß Herr Notar	Weikersheim

Evangelische Kirche Nassau (O.A. Mergentheim), Kirchenbuch, 1579-1876, Bd. 6, Johann Friedrich Fechser birth (19 Jul 1825); FHL microfilm 1,732,380.

Figure 2 Anna Maria Kiesecker Family Register, Nassau

Geburts-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Vater.	Gebohrter Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Mutter.	Geburts-Tag, Monat und Jahr.	
25 October 1815 auf der Scheinhardts- Mühle.	Anna Maria Kiesecker (denn) gebohren Spörer. de pag. 40. geboren am 1814. vollständig geboren in Weikersheim in Nassau.	den 1. September 1811 nach Mutter.	Maria Susanna Kiesecker (origl. Gersmannin.) de pag. 41 1812 denn Kiesecker, Johann in Weikersheim in Nassau.	den 25. Januar 1814 geboren in Weikersheim	
Vater.	Johann Georg Kiesecker, Schneidermeister Müller auf der Scheinhardtsmühle. † 1812.	Mutter.	Johann Daniel Kiesecker, Schneidermeister auf der Scheinhardtsmühle.	Vater.	
Mutter.	Ulrich, geb. Leitzig. † 1815.	Mutter.	Anna Ursula Spörer, geb. Gersmannin von Weikersheim. †.	Mutter.	
			Einziges Kind: Johann Conrad Wilhelm Kiesecker, geb. 1815 in Weikersheim.		
Zahl der Kinder.	Namen.	Geburt.	Confirmation oder Erste Communion.	Verpflichtung.	Tob.
1. Sohn.	Maria Ursula Kiesecker Anna Maria Kiesecker	22 April 1817.			
2. Tochter.	Maria Susanna Kiesecker	den 11. October 1818 auf der Scheinhardtsmühle.			
3. Tochter.	Anna Maria Kiesecker	den 17. März 1819 auf der Scheinhardtsmühle.			

Evangelische Kirche Nassau (OA. Mergentheim) (Nassau, Württemberg, Germany), Kirchenbuch, 1579-1876, Family register of Anna Maria Kiesecker, p. 501; FHL microfilm 1,732,381.

### A Sister

Since Johann was born in Nassau, a few miles north of Weikersheim, I went back to those records for any more clues about his mother. I found the attached document, a family register, listing two unmarried women and their children. On the left is Anna Maria Kiesecker, Johann's mother.

This document provides several valuable clues. It indicates that she was divorced in 1823 from someone named Spörer and that a record of their marriage in 1814 is available in the marriage register.

It also states that Anna later married the father of her illegitimate child, the tailor Fehser, in Hamburg.

Best of all, it names a child, Maria Ursula Spörer, born 11 Oct 1815 at the Scheinhardtsmühle (the Kiesecker's mill that I posted about before).

So, Johann had a half-sister, 10 years older than him!

But questions remained. Did this child live? Or did she die in infancy? The record gives no information in the columns for confirmation, marriage, or death for her.

Also, could there be any others? If she was born in 1815 and her mother was not divorced until 1823, maybe there were other children.

The next step was to look for clues in Anna Maria's marriage record to this Herr Spörer, and in the birth record of their child, Johann's sister, Maria Ursula.

### Marriage of Parents

I found the Nassau parish record of the marriage of Johann's mother to her first husband, J G Spörer, on 14 August 1814. Their marriage is the first entry on the page. It indicates that the husband J G Spörer, was from N Rimbach (Niederrimbach) and that the banns were also read there.

Figure 3 Anna Maria Kiesecker Marriage to J G Spörer 1814 Nassau

1814-2		1815		1816		1817		1818		1819	
Zahl der Trauungen	Namen des Brautigams und der Braut.	Stand, Charakter, Profession, Geburtsort, Religion.	Eltern.	Leib, geblieben oder verstorben, in welchem Jahre und der Name des gebliebenen oder gestorbenen Gatten.	Obere wohn und wo?	Datum der königl. Erlaubnis zum Heiraten, wofür es erfordert wird.	Ort und Zeit der Proclamation, Copulation.	Geistlicher, der die Trauung verrichtete.	Dispensationen.	Stammzahl des Familiens Registers.	
1	J G Spörer Anna Maria Kiesecker	aus N Rimbach aus N Rimbach	Johann Georg Spörer Anna Maria Kiesecker	lebend	26. März 1814 26. Oktober 1814	14. Aug. 1814 14. Aug. 1814	Nassau Nassau	Herrn Herrn		1814	

Source: Evangelische Kirche Nassau (Nassau, Württemberg, German), Kirchenbuch, 1579-1876, Bd. 8 Heiraten, unnumbered page, Johann Georg Spörer and Anna Maria Kiesecker marriage (14 Aug 1814); FHL microfilm 1,732,381, item 7.

### Ursula's Birth Record

The birth record of Johann's sister, Maria Ursula Spörer, at the Scheinhardsmühle in 1815, confirms her father's name was Johann Georg Spörer and indicates that he is living Niederrimbach.

Figure 4 Maria Ursula Spörer Birth 1815 Nassau

1815		1816		1817		1818		1819	
Namen	Eltern	Leib, geblieben oder verstorben	Obere wohn und wo?	Datum der königl. Erlaubnis zum Heiraten	Ort und Zeit der Proclamation	Geistlicher	Dispensationen	Stammzahl	
Maria Ursula Spörer	Johann Georg Spörer Maria Ursula Spörer	lebend	Scheinhardsmühle Niederrimbach	11. Okt. 1815		Herrn		1815	

Source: Evangelische Kirche Nassau (Nassau, Württemberg, German), Kirchenbuch, 1579-1876, Bd. 6 Taufen, unnumbered page, Maria Ursula Spörer birth (11 Oct 1815); FHL microfilm 1,732,380, item 3.

There is a note in the birthplace column that the mother was living with her parents at the Scheinhardsmühle because she was planning to divorce her husband. The divorce would not be finalized for eight more years, in 1823, as noted in Anna Maria's family register, but they were already having problems a little over a year after their marriage, as she left him to have the baby at her parents.

Figure 5 Johann Georg Spörer and Anna Maria Kiesecker Family Register

Spörer 234 <sup>o</sup>					
Geburts- tag, Monat und Jahr.	Hausvater.	Copulations- Tag, Monat und Jahr.	Hausmutter.	Geburts- tag, Monat und Jahr.	
<del>Vater</del> <del>Nachtr.</del> 1790	Johann Georg Spörer Gülden Dommer 18.52 aus d. Amst. u. mit geyenhol.	<del>Vater</del> 1. März 1814	Anna Maria, geb. Kiesecker aus d. Amst. u. mit d. Amst. u. aus d. Amst. u. 1. 2. 1814.	<del>Nachtr.</del> 1792	
Vater.	Nicolaus Spörer, Gülden		Johann Georg Kiesecker, Gülden	Mutter.	
Mutter.	Anna Catharina, geb. Kiesecker		Anna Ursula, geb. Kiesecker	Mutter.	
			Johann Georg Kiesecker, Gülden		
			Anna Barbara, geb. Kiesecker		
			Anna Ursula, geb. Kiesecker		
			Anna Ursula, geb. Kiesecker		
			Anna Ursula, geb. Kiesecker		
Zahl der Kinder.	Namen.	Geburt.	Confirmation oder Erste Communion.	Berechnung.	Tob.
I. 1.	Anna Barbara	28. August 1814			15. Sept. a.
II. 1.	Georg Spörer	17. Juni 1825			2. Jul. a.
1.	Marg. Barbara	28. July 1826			2. Aug. a.
1.	Anna Ursula	6. Oct. 1827			
1.	Maria Elisabeth	24. Juny 1830			5. Jan. 1836.
1.	Georg Martin	14. April 1835.			26. Dec. 1895.

Source: Evangelische Kirche Creglingen (Filiale Niederrimbach) (Niederrimbach, Württemberg, Germany), Kirchenbuch, 1698-1876, Bd. 8, Familienregister I, p. 234, Family register of Johann Georg Spörer; FHL microfilm 1,732,387, item 9.

There is no notation of a death for Maria Ursula in her birth record, so she may have survived infancy, but more information is needed to prove this. Also, did Johann have any other siblings? To find out, I needed to go to the records of Niederrimbach.

### Another Half-Sister

Going to the records of Niederrimbach, I found this family register (Figure 5) of Johann Georg Spörer (spelled Spörer here) and Anna Maria Kiesecker. It shows that they had another daughter named Anna Barbara Spörer, born in 1814. Sadly, she died less than 3 weeks later. This document does not mention Maria Ursula Spörer, probably because Anna Maria had left Johan Georg Spörer and Niederrimbach by then to have her second child at home.

After their divorce, Johann Georg Spörer remarried and he and his second wife had five more children. Unfortunately for them, none of their children survived to adulthood.

Searching the records in Niederrimbach and Nassau, there were no other siblings found for Johann Friedrich Fehser.

So, our ancestor, Johann Friedrich Fechsler had two half-sisters. Anna Barbara, the oldest, we know, died at less than 3 weeks. But what about Maria Ursula? Did she live?

To find out, I searched the marriage and death records and found nothing. Then I found her confirmation record 1829. (In the Lutheran Church, children were confirmed in their early to mid-teens.) This record proved that she lived to be at least 13 years old. If she made it that far, unlike six out of seven of her siblings, perhaps she ultimately married and had children.

It would take more research to find out and doing so would come quite by accident.

### **The Spörer Name**

A quick note about the name Spörer, Johann F. Fechsler's mother's first married name. There are copies of Johann's autobiographical sketch out there that say his mother's last name was Simpever. This is just a corruption of the spelling of Spörer (also spelled Spoerer). It was not her maiden name, as some have mistakenly thought, but her first married name. Her maiden name was Kiesecker (also spelled Kiesecker, Kießecker, or Kiesecker). Unfortunately, this erroneous Simpever spelling has wound up as her maiden name in some people's pedigrees, including some online. I have done a lot of research on the Spörer family, taking it back six generations, to the early 1600s, tracing back from Johann's half-sisters. Although Johann's mother divorced Johann Georg Spörer, I feel like his family is part of us, too, because they are ancestors of Johann's sisters. I will share more about the Spörer ancestry at a later time. First, I want to finish telling the story of Johann's sister Maria Ursula Spörer.

### **Hamburg**

After a couple of years had gone by since discovering Johann's sisters, and fruitlessly searching for more about Maria Ursula, I was searching for Fechsers in the records of Hamburg. Let me first give some background so you will know why I was looking there.

In his autobiographical sketch, Johann says that his parents left him with his uncle Kiesecker to learn the miller trade in 1832, when he was only seven years old, and went to Hamburg in search of better fortune. Johann's father, Johann Georg Fechsler, was not making a very good living as a tailor in Nassau. In about 1850, when he had grown up, Johann went to join his parents in Hamburg.

The Nassau family register indicated Johann's parents were unmarried at his birth, married after they went to Hamburg. So, I was searching for a marriage record for them in Hamburg.

That's when I stumbled on an unexpected find.

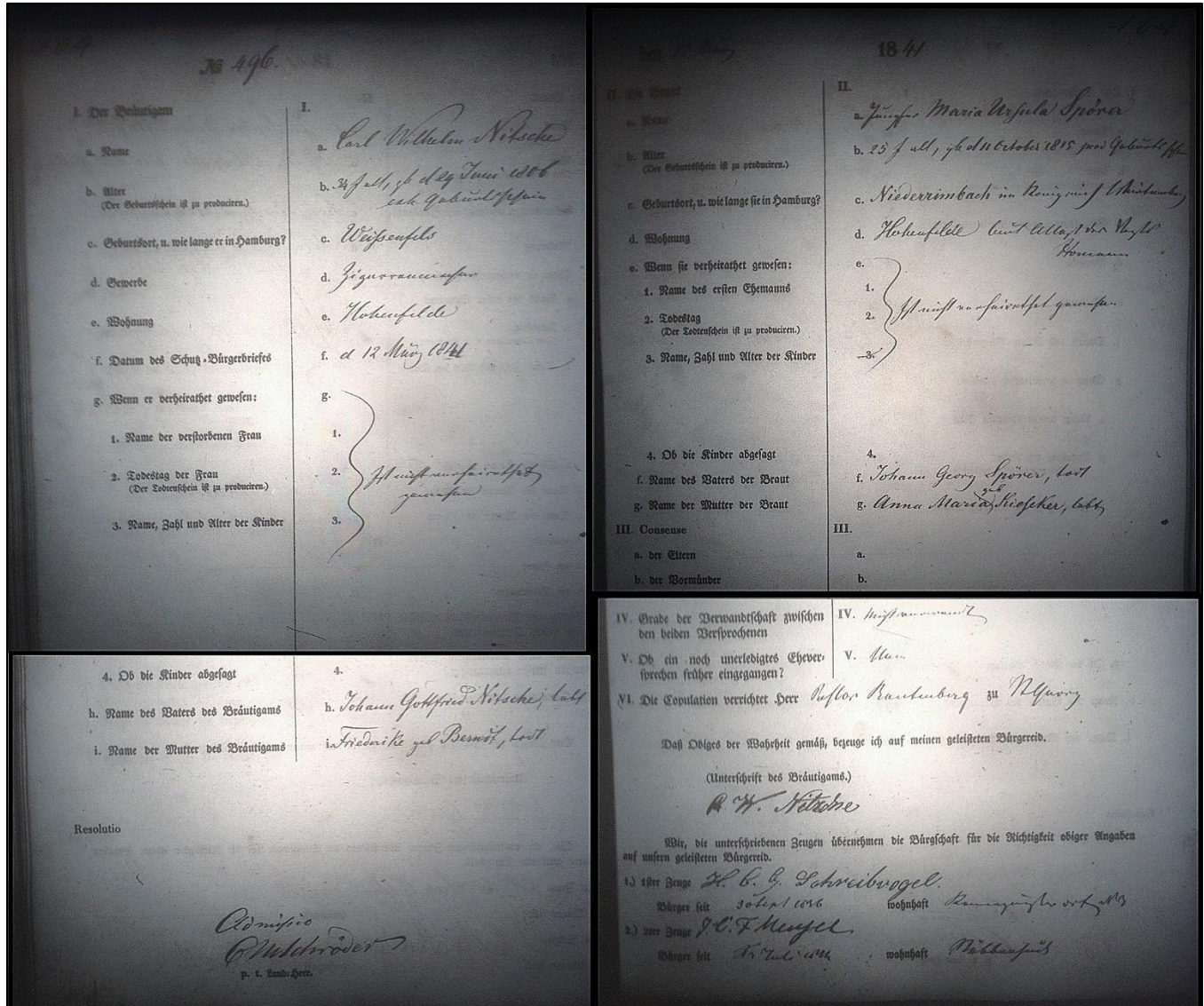
So, as I was in the Hamburg marriage records looking for Fechsers, I had been in these records before, years ago, and had found Johann's own first marriage and also a two marriage records for his uncle (another story). I was coming back to them in case I missed something. Once again, I did not find the marriage record for Johann's parents, which was a disappointment. I was about to move on to other things when I had a feeling I should just check one more thing.

Johann's mother's first husband, Mr. Spörer, after his second wife and all of his children from that marriage had passed away, emigrated to America, or so the records back in Württemberg said, yet I could find no trace of him after he left. I thought, maybe he went to Hamburg like others did, before emigrating

to America. It was very unlikely I would find him but figured I would check the marriage records for Spörer just in case he happened to go there and happened to marry a third time. It couldn't hurt.

So, I scrolled to the S's in the handwritten index. To my surprise, there was a Spörer, but it wasn't Johann Georg Spörer. It was Maria Ursula Spörer, Johann's sister! I quickly looked up the actual marriage entry and found that she was married in 1841 to Carl Wilhelm Nitsche! So, she had gone with, or else later followed, her mother and step-father Fechser to Hamburg and later married there, ten years prior to our Johann coming to Hamburg.

Figure 6 Marriage Protocol for Carl Wilhelm Nitsche and Maria Ursula Spörer, Hamburg



Source: Geesthacht (Hamburg). Standesamt, Zivilstandsregister, 1827-1874, Heirats-Protokolle 1838-1841, No. 496, Marriage protocol for Carl Wilhelm Nitsche and Maria Ursula Spörer (12 Mar 1841); FHL microfilm 577,704.

I sat there stunned. I was not even looking for her, but a little thought to look for something I was sure wasn't there led me to her. So, she did survive, and she did marry, the only one of Johann's half- and step-siblings to survive to adulthood.

## Cousins

If she was married, she must have had children—first cousins to our ancestor J. Fred Fechser of Provo, Utah. And maybe they had children and even grandchildren—who would be 3rd cousins to my Grandfather John Fechser. I just had to keep going to find them, too.

In fact, I did find many them and have since added them to the Family Tree on FamilySearch. Ursula and her husband had at least seven children that I have found that at least three of those children had children and grandchildren. You can view them by going to [Maria Ursula Spörer \(LYQT-4H1\) in the FamilySearch Family Tree](#).

I feel like these cousins of ours, like Johann's sister, have just been waiting to be found and now finally, they are being discovered, connected and remembered.