

The Brick Walls, 3: Wilkens, Schutt, Erler

Labelled with names, found photos can be a real treasure for a genealogist. Sometimes, just knowing the name and the location can start a domino effect of research. And voilà, the lives of the persons in the photographs unfold in front of your eyes with the help of facts and details.

And then, there are the brick walls. And no matter where you look, there is no paper trail on the persons. Or too many paper trails and you cannot be sure which trail to follow.

These are my brick walls. We can just enjoy them, or dive into more research together. Send me your comments, questions, corrections and let's see what we can find out together!



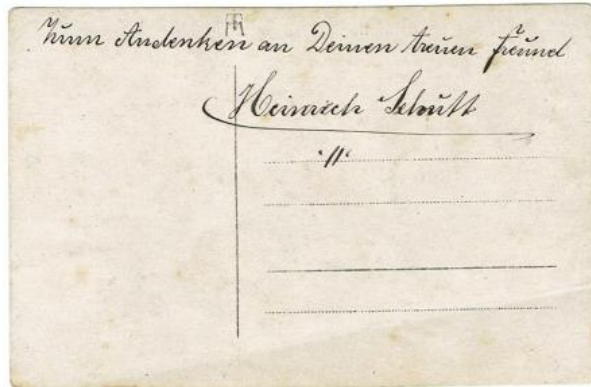
*"A keepsake of yours truly, **Fritz Wilkens**. Wittingen, September 4th, 1916"*

The gentlemen of Wittingen, such a handsome bunch! I have so many questions. Which one is Fritz? How old are the young men? Were they students? If so, what did they study? Was this their last photo together before they were drafted to serve in WWI?

The photo was taken in Wittingen, presently a town of about 11,000 inhabitants in the Lower Saxony, Germany. The photo was (re-)printed in Braunschweig, some 70 km away.

I would say the gentlemen in the photo are about 18-22 years old, as young students would be. So they were probably born between 1894-1898. They were old enough to serve in the WWI.

So, I have a name and two locations. And yet I find nothing! I found a Fritz Wilkens, worker, living in Braunschweig in 1914-15, but this could easily be our Fritz' father. The address books do not state the listed person's age or marital status or family members. I found two babies born as Fritz Wilkens (with different additional first names) and born in the same state as Braunschweig in 1896 and 1898. But I have no way of knowing that either one of them is the Fritz in this photograph. The church books of Braunschweig do not seem to be available online, so I'm stuck. All I know for sure is that Mister Wilkens had quite the calligraphic handwriting.



*"A keepsake of your true friend, **Heinrich Schutt**"*

I think this might be young Heinrich's confirmation photo. There might be a small Bible on the secretary he is leaning on. He looks very young, about 16-17 years old if this was his confirmation photo. Hard to say when this photo was taken, as it bears no marking of the photo studio. It was taken after 1903 after it became popular to print real photos on postcard stock.

But other than that, I am lost here. There are too many persons with the name Heinrich Schutt in the historical records, and without any hints to the location where this photo was taken, I cannot narrow the list down.



"Cousin **Erna Erlen, Treuen**". Birth date 13.01.1907 scribbled on the back of the photo.
This is clearly a Lutheran confirmation photo (hint: the black dress and the Bible Erna is holding). She would be about 16-17 years old in this photograph. Which means this photo was taken in about 1923/24.



Again, I thought I had hit a jackpot – a name, a birth date and a location! What more can you ask for! And yet, I have nothing on Erna! The church books of Treuen, a town of about 8000 residents in Saxony, Germany, are not available online. And so I hit another brick wall.

Please let me know if you recognise any of these persons or have new clues for me. Thank you for stopping by and taking the time to read this :).

Photos Without Families, originally shared on www.photoswithoutfamilies.blog