

The pied piper of Hamelin

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Once upon a time, a pied piper came to the town of Hamelin in order to free the inhabitants from a plague of rats (Hamelin is a town in Germany, near the famous City of Hanover).

With a wonderful little melody, played on his pipe, the odd character charmed all the rats to follow him. He led all the vermin into the river Weser. They all drowned.

Being now free of rats, the city council refused to give the vermin-killer the agreed payment.



The oldest drawing of the legend about the Piper of Hamelin, made in the year 1592 in Hamelin for the purpose of the description of a journey by Augustin von Mörsperg, a baron from Elsaß. The drawing is based on the pictures in the windows of the old church of Hamelin.

Once more the journeyman revengefully took up his pipe and played. This time, with a more beautiful and captivating melody, he drew all the children of the town of Hamelin after him. The pied piper led them all out of the town and he was never seen again - neither were the children. Thus he got even with the ungrateful citizens of Hamelin.

This legend came into being approximately in the year 1550 A.D. The scientists of the 18th century declared that it is based on some historical background.

The historians of the 20th century say more specifically that this fairy tale must be seen as closely connected with the emigration of 130 citizens of the municipality of Hamelin. This bonded citizens of Hamelin, called "Kämmerlinge", were not free, that is to say, they were serfs.

By means of documents from the municipal archive of Hamelin and the documents called „Lüneburger Handschrift“, we know that:

On June 26th 1284 A.D. one nobleman conducted 130 so-called "Kämmerlinge" (children) across the town limits of Hamelin. Having passed through the town gate, the procession disappeared. Nobody knows what happened to Hamelin's children.

In the middle ages (about 1550 A.D.) one leaded glass window in the church near the market place of Hamelin displayed the exodus. At the present time this window no longer exists. But we must note that this leaded window was put in about 30 years after the event.

This are the facts concernng the exodus from Hamelin: Historians have gone much trouble to investigate the connection between the fairy tale and the historical facts. In the 1950s, for example, Heinrich Spanuth, one famous citizen of Hamelin, gathered all the facts and theories concerning the piper of Hamelin. The teacher Hans Dobbertin and the archivist Wolfgang Wann have also devoted their energies to research on this subject.

Everybody has now the opinion that the exodus from Hamelin must be considered as an emigration from the town to the eastern part of Europe on the 26th June 1284 A.D. In the light of the fact that more documentation is missing, we must accept this logical conclusion. The historians have done so.

In this short essay we look at only two hypotheses about where the pied piper of Hamelin could have gone.

Mr. Dobbertin says that the piper of Hamelin went to a village or municipality named „Kopahn“. The settlement of „Kopahn“ you may find in the northern part of **Poland** near the coast, about 20 miles east of Kolberg (Kolobrzeg).

Dobbertin's hypothesis is based on a leaded glass window in Hamelin's municipal church, showing the exodus of the pied piper and his followers. This window was destroyed during construction work carried out in 1660 A.D. but municipal records describe the wonderful window and its heading.

This caption includes the location "Kopahn" in the word „koppen“. Because of the lack of orthography in the early Middle Ages, one could establish the phonetic relationship between the word „koppen" and the settlement „Kopahn“ (according to Mr. Dobbertin).

The caption of the window, in the historical language, is shown below (German language of the Middle Ages):

» anno 1284 + am dage Joannis et Pauli + ist der 26te dach des mantes junii gewesen + sint durch einen piper so mit allerleige varve becedet + einhundert und drittich kinder in hameln geborn + uth der stadt gebracht + unde up den koppen by Calvarie buthen dem oisterdore verbracht unde verloren«.

Because of the lack of further informations concerning the whereabouts, Mr. Dobbertin firstly supposes that the piper of Hamelin and the children entered a boat to shorten the burdensome journey on foot. The second assumption then follows that the unfortunate children must have been drowned when sailing on the Baltic sea. This is Mr. Dobbertin's assumption.

According to the hypothesis of Mr. Wann, the pied piper of Hamelin walked to a site in **Moravia**, Czech Republic. His argument is based on the person of the archbishop Bruno, who was reigning over the dioecese of Olmütz in Moravia before the year 1284 A.D.

Archbishop Bruno of Olmütz in Moravia was a count (earl) of Schaumburg (Lower Saxony). The ancestral seat of the counts until today is the castle of Schaumburg, which is near the city of Rinteln. Hamelin is only about 22 miles away from Rinteln.

Having reached their destination in Moravia, the citizens (children) of Hamelin called their settlement Hamelingow, according to Mr. Wann. Hamelingow is the Slavic name corresponding to Hamelin (suffix -ow). The settlement Hamelingow you may find in historical maps dated before the Thirty Years War (1618- 1648 A.D.)
On modern maps look for the city Vyškov, near the capital city Brno/Moravia (Czech). Until the year 1945 Vyškov was a german speech island named Wischau. During the Thirty Years War the inhabitants left their settlement because of the chaotic affairs resulting from the war.

With the help of historical documents and records from the years 1250 A.D. – 1618 A.D., Mr. Wann succeeded in establishing the evidence that certain family names are present in the town of Hamelin as well as in Moravia. This names are:

Hamlinus, Hamler, Leist, Rike, Fargel, Hake and Ketteler.

On account of these pieces of evidence, we prefer the hypothesis of Mr. Wann.

The exodus dated 26th June 1284 A.D. definitely corresponds to the story, „The pied piper of Hamelin“. Most people believe that the pied piper of Hamelin and his 130 „Kämmerlinge“ hiked to Moravia and founded the settlement Hamelingow.

Final proof of this hypothesis will never established because of the lack of documentation.

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