Ahnentafel Charts

   AHNENTAFEL means ancestor (ahnen) table or chart (tafel) in German. An ahnentafel chart is a very efficient way of organizing one's pedigree chart in an easily understandable form. It is essentially a pedigree chart with each person on the chart being assigned a number.
   The number determines the relationship of any person on the chart to an individual, who is always 1, his/her father 2, his/her mother 3, paternal grandfather 4, paternal grandmother 5, maternal grandfather 6, maternal grandmother 7, patrilineal great grandfather 8, and so on in a consecutive fashion.
   Furthermore, each new generation has double the number of ancestors of the previous generation. Thus, an individual has four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, 16 great-great-grandparents and so on. By the 10th generation, there are more than 1,000 ancestors; many of whom will be unknown and others will be duplicates resulting from cousin intermarriage (it's been estimated that before 1800, about 40 percent of marriages were between first, second or third cousins). Every father on a chart will have an even number and every mother will have an odd number that is her husband's plus one.
   Traditional pedigree charts usually print four generations to a page so that 16 generations usually take around four pages to display. The virtue of the ahnentafel chart is that these same 16 generations would fit on one page, depending on the type size chosen, and the same numbering system used in a standard pedigree chart again allows you to quickly discern your kinship with anyone on the ahnentafel.

The Individual's Ahnentafel Chart

   The ahnentafel chart takes the numbering system described above and uses it to create a continuous list of ancestors instead of a chart. The format is as follows:

1. your name

2. your father
3. your mother

4. your father's father
5. your father's mother
6. your mother's father
7. your mother's mother

8. your father's father's father
9. your father's father's mother
10. your father's mother's father
11. your father's mother's mother
12. your mother's father's father
13. your mother's father's mother
14. your mother's mother's father
15. your mother's mother's mother

16-31. your great-great-grandparents
32-63. your great-great-great grandparents

   The ahnentafel chart is particularly useful for corresponding with other family genealogists. For example,

indicating an unknown ancestor with a blank space or line shows where one's genealogical research ends and, from the names and dates given, where there might be a common ancestor. Most of the popular genealogy software programs have the ability to print out an ahnentafel chart. The most popular format for presenting genealogy data is the pedigree chart, but the simplicity of an ahnentafel chart provides a quick, simple view of one's ancestry. The more popular programs (Family Tree Maker, Legacy, Family Tree Builder, Family Historian, RootsMagic) offer hourglass charts, bow-tie charts, as well as pedigree charts and other reports formats.. Set against these, the simple format of the ahnentafel chart is difficult to beat. Most software programs allow each person to be identified with a number.

Chart Number _____

Person #1 on this chart is the same person as person #_____ on chart #_____

4.
born
place
vied
place
died
place

2.
born
place
vied
place
died
place

siblings

1.
born
place
vied
place
died
place

spouse

siblings

3.
born
place
died
place

1 is you
2 is father of 1 (paternal line)
3 is mother of 1 (maternal line)
4 is father of 2 (your paternal grandfather)
5 is mother of 2 (your paternal grandmother)
6 is father of 3 (your maternal grandfather)
7 is mother of 3 (your maternal grandmother)

siblings

5.
born
place
died
place

6.
born
place
vied
place
died
place

7.
born
place
died
place

8. _____
born
vied
died

continued on chart ____

9. _____
born
died

continued on chart ____

10. _____
born
vied
died

continued on chart ____

11. _____
born
died

continued on chart ____

12. _____
born
vied
died

continued on chart ____

13. _____
born
died

continued on chart ____

14. _____
born
vied
died

continued on chart ____

15. _____
born
died

continued on chart ____