

Schorlau – A last name that ends

By Cheryl Herrmann

June 2026

Surnames can reveal a great deal about where a family's journey began, often tracing back many generations. For much of history, preserving a surname was deeply important. It symbolized continuity, identity, and lineage—one reason families often hoped for male heirs to carry the name forward.

Many immigrants came to America with that hope in mind: to escape war, famine, or religious persecution, and to build a future where their family line—both in blood and in name—could endure. They sought not only survival, but continuity.

And yet, sometimes, a surname disappears.

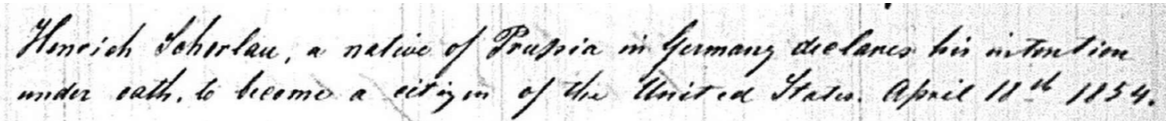
Names can fade for many reasons—changing spellings, small family sizes, or entire branches producing no heirs. Often, the end comes quietly: a generation with only daughters, marriages that carry the name into another line, or the loss of sons before they can pass it on. When the male line ends, the surname often follows.

This is what happened to the Schorlau family of Vanderburgh County, Indiana.

The surname Schorlau is exceptionally rare. Even today, it is estimated to be held by only 100 to 200 people worldwide, most of them in Germany. In the United States, the name has always been scarce—likely fewer than 15 to 20 individuals have carried it. It has never appeared among the Census Bureau's most common American surnames, and historical immigration records show very few families arriving with this exact spelling.

Among those few was the family of Henry Schorlau.

Henry Schorlau and his wife, Rosina (Schnacke), immigrated to the United States with their son, Casper, sometime between 1852 and 1855. The 1900 US Census record later suggests 1854 as their year of arrival. Like many immigrants of their time, they settled in German Township, Vanderburgh County, Indiana, where Henry became a farmer and established a new life.



Henrich Schorlau, a native of Prussia in Germany declares his intention under oath, to become a citizen of the United States. April 18th 1854.

Henrich Schorlau, a native of Prussia in Germany declares his intention under oath to become a Citizen of the United States April 18th, 1854.

Declaration of Intention for Henrich Schorlau
Recorded in Indiana, Vanderburgh County, Circuit Court,
Volume H, Page 635



Location of Kasson in Indiana
Source: <https://kids.kiddle.co/Kasson>



Kasson was a town located at the intersection of Big Cynthiana Rd and New Harmony Rd in German Township.

Older maps first show the town around 1850s and indicate it was also called Germantown. By the late 1800s, it had an ice house, a wagon and blacksmith shop, a saloon and a post office.

The Five-Mile House, now razed, was located across from the Old Mill and provided lodging for those heading to and from Evansville on the first/last 5-mile leg of the trip (the exact distance to the Courthouse).

When IN-66 was expanded, the four-lane highway bypassed New Harmony Rd, paralleling to the north.

The new route bisected Big Cynthiana Rd splitting the old road through Kasson (it also bisected Allens Ln).

A new route, Resurrection Dr, connected the roads next to Resurrection Catholic Church, built there in the 1950s. The old segment is now called Old Cynthiana Rd with both sections dead ending.

Source: <https://www.vchshistory.org/2014/02/19/welcome-to-kasson/>

By 1870, Henry was settled in the area known as Kasson. He had six children: Casper, Frances, John, Joseph, Henry, and Katherine. Their household reflected both the challenges and successes of immigrant life—modest means, but stability, land ownership, and eventual citizenship. Rosina, however, did not live to see the full course of the family’s successful farming story; she passed away in 1868.

Page No. 25 Inquiries numbered 7, 16, and 17 are not to be asked in respect to infants. Inquiries numbered 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 19, and 20 are to be answered (if at all) merely by an affirmative mark, as /.

SCHEDULE 1. Inhabitants in German Township, in the County of Vanderburgh, State of Indiana, enumerated by me on the August day of 1870.

Post Office: Kasson Philip Stock, Ass't Marshal

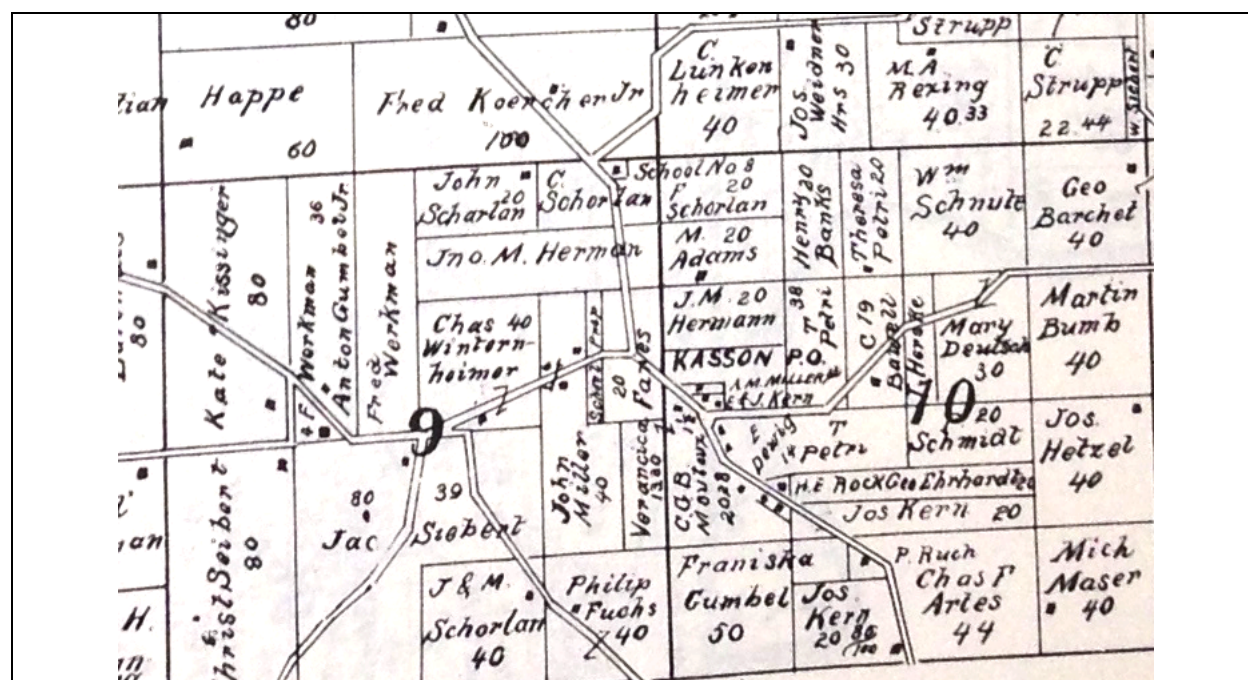
Scharlen Henry	50 m	tax m	1250	200	Prussia	/	/	/	/	/	24
Casper	18 m				"	/	/	/	/	/	25
Frances	15 f				"	/	/	/	/	/	26
John	14 m				"	/	/	/	/	/	27
Joseph	12 m				"	/	/	/	/	/	28
Henry	8 m				"	/	/	/	/	/	29
Katherine	6 f				"	/	/	/	/	/	30
						/	/	/	/	/	31

1870 US Census – Indiana – Vanderburgh County – German Township

Henry Schorlau is listed with his children, Casper, Frances, John, Joseph, Henry and Katherine. Henry is a farmer. The value of his real estate is \$1,250 and his personal estate is \$200. He is a citizen of the United States.

1880 Atlas

Henry Schorlau owns
20 acres of land in
Section 9, Range 11 West,
Township 6 South,
in German Township,
Vanderburgh County,
Indiana



Casper Schorlau is listed with his siblings, John, Henry, Frances, and Katherine. Casper is a farmer. His year of immigration is given as 1854 and he was naturalized. His siblings were born in Indiana. They all could read, write and speak English. They owned their farm free of a mortgage.

Joseph and his wife, Mary Anna Weidner, had seven children, though two sons, John and John Henry, died in infancy. Of the surviving children, only two daughters—Frances and Elizabeth—went on to marry. Son Joseph Jr. died at age 20, and daughter Anna did not marry.

STATE Indiana
 COUNTY Vanderburgh
 TOWNSHIP OR OTHER DIVISION OF COUNTY German

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR
THIRTEENTH CENSUS OF THE UNITED STATES: 1910 - POPULATION

SHEET NO. 4
 SUPERVISOR'S DISTRICT NO. 1
 ENUMERATION DISTRICT NO. 149

NAME OF INCORPORATED PLACE Indianapolis
 ENUMERATED BY ME ON THE 21 DAY OF April 1910.

WARD OF CITY William J. Dwyer
 ENUMERATOR

NAME	RELATION	AGE	SEX	RACE	DATE OF BIRTH	PLACE OF BIRTH
Schorlau, John	Head	38	M	W	1872	Indiana
— Casper	Partner	31	M	W	1878	Indiana
— Frances	Partner	28	F	W	1882	Indiana
— Kate	Partner	21	F	W	1889	Indiana
— Henry	Partner	18	M	W	1891	Indiana
Schorlau, Joseph	Head	34	M	W	1876	Indiana
— Mary	Wife	24	F	W	1886	Indiana
— Anna	Daughter	11	F	W	1899	Indiana
— Elizabeth	Daughter	9	F	W	1901	Indiana
— Joe	Son	11	M	W	1901	Indiana
— Leo	Son	11	M	W	1901	Indiana

And so, within just two generations, the Schorlau surname in this line came to an end.

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The final local link to the Schorlau name passed quietly in April 2026, with the death of Bertha Antoinette (Goedde) Schaefer Head, daughter of Elizabeth (Schorlau) Goedde. With her passing, the last direct connection to the Schorlau name in Vanderburgh County closed.

What remains is a story both common and profound: a family that endured, adapted, and grew—yet whose name, once carried across an ocean with hope and determination, ultimately faded from the place it helped build.

The Schorlau name may no longer be spoken in that community, but its legacy lives on in every generation that followed—just no longer in the name itself.

Four Generations in America

Henry Schorlau (1820 - 1894) & Rosina Schnacke (? - 1868)

| **Casper Schorlau** (1852 - 1914)

| **Frances Schorlau** (1855 - 1921)

| **John Schorlau** (1857 - 1933)

| **Joseph Schorlau** (1859 - 1911) & Mary Anna Weidner (1862 - 1937)

| | **Anna Marie Schorlau** (1886 - 1952)

| | **Frances Mary Schorlau** (1888 - 1913) & George Kasper Laugel (1872 - 1958)

| | | **Christopher Laugel** (1913 - 1913)

| | **Elizabeth Schorlau** (1890 - 1960) & Frank J Goedde (1893 - 1974)

| | | **Raymond Joseph Goedde** (1918 - 1995) & Mary Elizabeth Deters (1917 - 1999)

| | | **Sylvester Frank Goedde** (1920 - 2012) & Mildred Rose Wildeman (1923 - 1999)

| | | **Ermalinda Mary Goedde** (1923 - 2017) & Harold John Wargel (1922 - 2001)

| | | **Elmer A Goedde** (1925 - 2013)

| | | **Arthur F Goedde** (1927 - 2026)

| | | **Bertha Goedde*** (1930 - 2026) & Edward George Schaefer (~1930-1978)

| | | **Bertha Goedde*** (1930 - 2026) & Charles Thadeus Head (1915 - 2003)

| | **John Schorlau** (1892 - 1893)

| | **John Henry Schorlau** (1894 - 1896)

| | **Joseph Schorlau Jr.** (1898 - 1919)

| | **Leo N Schorlau** (1903 - 1972)

| **Henry Schorlau** (1862 - 1929)

| **Katherine Schorlau** (1864 - 1933)

* denotes another marriage.

The End