

Albert Gutekunst, Journeyman Carver on the Waltz, 1563

By HL Natlya Alekseya Vasilova

Albert woke up at the hostel¹, in a room with two other journeymen. He got up and stretched, rolled up his cloak and the sleeping pallet and moved them to the side of the room. He read a morning prayer from his prayer book and went into the kitchen where Mama Zimmerman was starting the bread. She asked him to bring some water from the well, so he took the pails and yoke down the street to fill them. When he got back, Papa Zimmermann was the upstairs, waking the other two journeymen who had spent the night.

Albert had split firewood last night, so he wouldn't have many chores this morning. He wanted to get on the road again. He planned to get to Sulzfeld today and then on to Wurzburg by the end of the week. Albert had once seen an altar by the Tilman Riemenschneider² in the church in Kleinschwarzenlohe³ and wanted to go to the master's hometown. Besides, winter was only a few months away and he needed to find a secure place to work and stay during the cold weather. Cities were better for finding work.

He wasn't so desperate though that he had to sign on with just anyone. In the village of Ottenberg, a few days back, he had spoken to the master there, but didn't like the pinched look on the face of the man's apprentice or the sly face the master had presented. Albert didn't want to turn over his wanderbook⁴ to someone like him. He had heard stories of journeymen on the waltz⁵ who were forced to stay with a master who refused to return their wanderbook. The poor journeymen had to continue working under bad conditions and for poor pay until they could somehow get their wanderbook back. And even then, the master might write a bad report of them. Albert was determined to be careful as he looked for a place for the winter.

Albert wrapped his things in a cloth called a Charlottenberger⁶ and took his walking stick in hand. Mama smiled at him and handed him a wedge of cheese, an apple and a bit of yesterday's bread. Papa Zimmerman reminded him to look for the Goat and Star tavern⁷ in Wurzburg. Albert thanked him, shook his hand in the guild manner⁸ and set off.

As he walked along the River Main, he saw the ferry boat⁹ go past. A couple days ago, a boatman had let him to ride from Eurerheim when he showed his wanderbook, but the man at Schweinfurt wanted him to pay a

¹ Walker, Mark, German Home Towns: Community, State and General Estate, 1648-1871. Hostels were run by journeymen's guilds as a cheap place for journeymen to stay on their travels and as a place to live while working.

² Tilman Reimenscheider, 1460-1531, German sculptor in wood and stone.

³ Altar of the Farewell of the Apostles, Allerheiligenkirche, Kleinschwarzenlohe, near Nuremberg

⁴ Wanderbook (wanderbuche)—a combination passport and work record, carried by the journeyman to record where he had traveled and worked during his wander years.

⁵ "On the waltz" is the term for the time spent traveling during the wander years. The traditional length of the waltz was three years and a day, though many lasted longer. Sometimes it is called "on the roll."

⁶ Park, Alistar, "Chatting with Nat and Leo: More about Journeymen Travelling in the German Tradition. "As the Black Death swept across Europe, travelling journeymen entering the town of Charlottenberg were given cloths to wrap their belongings in, as these were easier to keep clean and so prevent the disease from spreading."

⁷ Seyer, Katrin Jutta, Opening the Cognitive Toolbox of Migrating Sculptors (1680-1794), p. 67—Seyer details the way co-fraternities help a journeymen find employment in a new city

⁸ Park, Alistar, "*The European Woodworking Guilds and the Journeymen*". Secret handshakes and other special code words were used to authenticate guild members.

⁹ Durer, Albrecht, Journeys to Venice and the Low Countries. Albert is following part of the same route Durer took on the journey detailed in his book. Durer was a master painter when this journey was taken, but is known to have taken a wanderyear as a journeyman.

toll, so Albert got off there. Still, God had given him two feet and a fine day for walking. Sulzfeld was only 11 miles down the road and he could take his time.

Each morning Albert read from his prayer book before he began walking. He followed the river road for several days, stopping to visit churches along the way. He would sometimes sketch the altar panels or misericords¹⁰ there or the wildlife he saw as he walked. While he rested in the heat of the day, he would whittle on a spoon or comb he could use to trade for lodging or food.

At Wurzburg, the gate guard let him through without a toll when he showed his wanderbook and told him how to get to the Goat and Star tavern. Wurzburg wasn't as big as Albert's home town of Nuremburg, but it was a real city. He got lost once, but soon found the tavern. There he met Hans Eckstein, an altgesellen¹¹, who told him about the carvers in the city. Hans went to the guildhall and found who needed help, then came back to the tavern to take Albert to one of them. As they walked, Hans told Albert a little about Master Wilhelm Zauner, giving a good report of him. At Master Zauner's workshop, Albert looked carefully at his shop and his apprentices and the other journeyman who worked there. He showed Master Zauner his wanderbook and tools. Master Zauner and Albert reached an agreement for Albert to start work the next day.

Hans then took Albert to the guildhall where he became an associate of the local brotherhood of journeymen. To mark his membership, he was baptized and rechristened with a new name and all the brothers shared a ritual drink of wine. Albert, now called Johann, received the Geschenk (gift) of the town, binding him to work in the town for at least two weeks¹². He enjoyed meeting the other gesellen and they all returned to the Goat and Star, sharing a drink and supper. Albert took a room there for the night and, after his evening prayers, fell gratefully into bed.

The next day, he bought a small loaf at a bakery and hurried to Master Zauner's workshop. Master Zauner would pay him the standard wage for journeymen, but deducted two pfennigs a week for letting Albert sleep in the back of the shop. Albert would eat his meals with the apprentices. The other journeyman working there had a room in the town, so he only got dinner (lunch) at the shop. Albert could have a little free time in the evening but was expected to return to the shop to sleep soon after dark.

Albert took out his tools and stowed his pack under a bench in the back of the shop. Master Zauner introduced him to his apprentices and the journeyman Franz Simon. Franz showed him the panels they were to work on. Albert had not done a lot of pierced panel work, so he closely watched how Franz used the drill to make the initial holes, following the design sketched onto the panel. Master Zauner showed Albert the cartoon of the design and how to apply it to a panel. Then Albert began to rough cut the panel Franz had drilled.

¹⁰ Misericord—a drop-down seat for clerics to lean on during mass. Many were sumptuously or humorously carved.

¹¹ Seyler, *Opening the Cognitive Toolbox of Migrating Sculptors (1680-1794)*, p. 67. Seyler's thesis cites Janusz Pulubicki in an article on sculptors active in Danzig in the 17th and 18th centuries—'from 1650 a shift in the status of Gesellen was gradually taking place "[from] persons in the middle state of training between the apprentice and the master". Instead they became a "type of professional assistants [...] with few possibilities to advance their careers".' She includes a footnote: 'In contrast to *Wandergesellen*, who were explicitly in transit; there is also the term *Altgesellen*, which refers to a middle-aged or elderly sculptor, who did not possess the status of master.' "Gesellen" is also translated as "stranger", the term for a journeyman, who often did not have citizenship in any town.

¹² Seyler, *Opening the Cognitive Toolbox of Migrating Sculptors (1680-1794)*, p. 78

A fortnight later, Albert was more confident about pierced work and decided to stay to finish the panels he was working on. Master Zauner was pleased with his work and offered to extend his contract for several months, but Albert had decided to go on to Heidelberg. He had learned a lot and Master Zauner was fair, but the food, while sufficient, was not very good. Albert was hungry much of the time. As soon as he finished his panels, he went back on the road, this time going overland. It was shorter than the meandering river road but there was less traffic, so there could be more danger of bandits.

It rained on his second day out from Wurzburg. The road was muddy and the ruts filled with water and slowed his progress. He was cold and his cloak was sodden. Sometime after Triefenstein, he found a man lying in the ditch. He had been robbed and beaten, stripped of his shoes and shirt. Albert worried about the robbers coming back, but he helped the man up and asked his name. He wrapped his cloak around the man Gerhardt. They picked up the few items the robbers had left and started moving down the road, looking for a safe shelter. In a while, they came out of the woods and Albert soon saw the lighted window of a farmhouse across a field. They followed the edge of the field to the house and knocked at the door. The farmer was suspicious, but let them in when he saw Gerhardt's condition. They sat before the fire to warm up and get dry and were given some pottage to eat. Albert gave his spare shirt to Gerhardt while Gerhardt told of the men who robbed him. The rain continued to fall as they bedded down before the hearth.

The rain had nearly stopped during the night. In the morning, Albert gave the farmer's wife a spoon he had carved, with the apostle Matthew on the handle. He and Gerhardt walked on to Wertheim am Main together. Gerhardt was a journeyman tailor and they compared their experiences as they walked. They decided, as they seemed compatible, that it would be safer to travel together¹³. In Wertheim am Main, they reported Gerhardt's loss to the reeve, though they did not intend to stay while the bandits were sought. They spent the night in the inn to let Gerhardt recover from his injuries.

The stay in Wertheim had taken most of Albert's money so they decided to go to Kloster Bronnbach¹⁴, only six or so miles away. The brothers there would let them stay and might help Gerhardt get some shoes. He wrapped his feet in some rags from the inn and they set off. Abbot Mayer was welcoming and Gerhardt was given some old shoes from one of the brothers. The infirmarian checked Gerhardt's injuries and gave him a salve for the bruising. The next morning, the journeymen were ready to continue.

Albert and Gerhardt had spent the winter working in Heidelberg. The winter had been long and hard. It was nearly March and still there was snow and cold. They stayed at a hostel and although Albert enjoyed the lively discussions of philosophy with the other journeymen there, he and Gerhardt were in a bad situation. Gerhardt was still frail after his beating and had a persistent cough. He complained that his master kept the workroom so cold, he could hardly sew. He sometimes missed work with a fever or chills.

¹³ Travel was dangerous. According to "Traveling and Transmission" on the French Carpenters Guild website, In 1450, a carpenter, Nicollas Vatecar, was roughed up, kidnapped, taken into the forest and held for ransom by soldiers. See also, Seyler, Karen, *"The letter in the Writing Cabinet: The Emotional Life of an 18th Century Journeymen"*. She states "Robberies and even murder were regular occurrences on the road and frequently featured in artisans' journals, showing why travelling in pairs or groups...really mattered."

¹⁴ Wikipedia: https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Koster_Bronnbach, a Cistercian monastery since the 11th century, Abbot Wigand Mayer served there from 1578-1602.

Albert worried about his friend but had his own problems. Albert's master had a bad temper and sometimes took a cane to his workers. The noon meal was often no more than a thin gruel of oats or peas, and breakfast and supper just a crust of dry bread¹⁵. Both men felt they had reached the end of their rope. They had to get out. Gerhardt wondered about ending his contract early and going somewhere warmer. He thought his master might agree because of his illnesses. Albert, though, knew his master would hold him to his contract and make him work until Easter. He was desperate—he needed to get his wanderbook and get out of town.

Sweet Lord, it was cold. He and Gerhardt were huddled together under the boughs of a pine tree to get out of the snow and wind. The ground was damp, but the tree branches had kept it clear of snow. A few days ago, they had escaped Heidelberg in the middle of the night. Albert had stolen his wanderbook out of the master's office and they paid a fisherman to pole them down the river for a couple miles. They were short of money and food but soon would be far enough from Heidelberg to chance begging in a town. They laid a very small fire, careful of the branches around them. Gerhardt melted snow and put a ball of bullion into their cup to make broth¹⁶ and Albert showed Gerhart how to cut away the outer bark of the tree and peel out the inner bark to eat. They also opened a few pine cones for the seeds¹⁷. It wasn't much but Albert said a prayer over it anyway. With God's help, they would last until they could get to a town.

Albert was nearing the end of his traveling. He had been on the road for almost four years and had traveled through most of Bavaria, some of the Low Countries, Austria, and had even traveled to the Republic of Venice. Now it was time to settle down. He had been working at Salzburg for several months and enjoyed the city very much. He approached his master about extending his contract. If he could work there for a year and a day and pay the fee, he might be considered a citizen and be able to join the local guild as a journeyman. He might have to buy a house in Salzburg first, to show his intention of staying there. And then, if he met the requirements of travel and training, resources to establish a shop, proof of legitimate parentage or six good men willing to vouch for him, he could apply to become a master himself¹⁸. He would make his master work and the guild would decide if he was to become Master Albert Gutekunst. It would be something to dream about.

Information about Wanderbooks and Kundschafts (work letters)--

The wanderbook gave permission to travel and included a physical description of the journeyman and a list of the guild rules he was to follow. The book also requested anyone who met the journeyman to help him on his way. Begging was forbidden to journeymen and they could only accept whatever the "gift" the town offered, such as a free meal or a place to spend the night or perhaps even a small stipend.

¹⁵ Seyler, *The Letter in the Writing Cabinet: the Emotional Life of an 18th Century Journeyman*, p 1. She writes "Food and its quality was a recurrent motif since good quality food was often in short supply in workshops across Europe."

¹⁶ amusingplanet.com/2018/07/what-soldiers-carried-to-battlefiel.html, "Trainband Caliverman, Tilbury, 1588" shows bullion shaped into balls as part of the soldier's kit.

¹⁷ Seyler, *The Letter in the Writing Cabinet*, p.3. See also survival-manual.com/edible-plants/pine.php for information on which parts of pine trees can be eaten.

¹⁸ Walker, *German Home Towns, Community, State and General Estate 1648-1871*, requirements to apply to become a master

The master would keep the wanderbook during the time the journeyman worked for him and would note how long the journeyman worked for him and could add something about his competence. If the master wasn't happy with the journeyman, he was to only mark the dates of the journeyman's work. If the journeyman stayed in a place more than 24 hours without working, he was required to get a seal from the city council.

The oldest extant wanderbook I could find was from 1812, though Tamas Farago in "Immigrations of Artisans into Hungary during the late 18th Century" includes data from wanderbooks in use in 1778. Because the language of the guild rules doesn't really change from 1823 to 1859 to 1870 to 1915 to 1955, I thought it reasonable that Albert might have a wanderbook. Modern day journeymen on the waltz continue to carry one.

The Kundschaft or work letter was a similar way to verify where and when the journeyman had worked. It was dated and signed by the master and the town council. In Opening the Cognitive Toolbox of Migrating Sculptors, Katrin Seyler notes that the Kundschaft had an expiration date, possibly as a way to keep the journeyman looking for work and not just wandering around. In the earlier part of the Middle Ages, before literacy became more common, the master might tell the journeyman a secret phrase to show they had really been at a particular town. One well-known phrase was "I have been to Bremen and have seen the bird's nest." (A sculptor had carved a small bird's nest on the back side of the saint's statue and the journeyman would be expected to describe this detail as proof that he had actually been there. Unfortunately, I have lost my notes for the details on this citation.)

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