

Unveiling Roots: 'Long Sought' Podcast Marries Genealogy with AI, Exploring a German-American Journey

Embarking on a Quest of Heritage: Discover a Tale of German-American Roots as 'Long Sought' Podcast Marries Past Narratives with Artificial Intelligence (AI)

FORT MYERS, FL, UNITED STATES, October 3, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As they reach the age where exploring family roots becomes a fascinating pastime, environmental engineer John Oliver Smith from Fort Myers, Florida, and his wife, audio storyteller Iran Davar Ardalan, delve into the vibrant tapestry of John's lineage. This series not only unveils Smith's surprising German-American roots but also paves the way for the future of podcasting by integrating an AI assistant (in training) and audio synthetic character CK.

Listen to the Long Sought Podcast Series [on Spotify](#)

Venture through Ohio, Maryland, and Virginia, unraveling the compelling tale of the transformation from 'Schmidt' to 'Smith,' all while experiencing the backdrop of historical animosity against German ancestry in America. After being featured in Virginia's Daily News Record, an earlier rendition of the podcast has already facilitated connections between John and other descendants, unveiling cherished ancestral letters. Note that October 6 marks German-American Day.

Guided by genealogists and historians at Rocktown History and Washington Historical Society and enriched by an audio synthetic character, CK (named after John's ancestor, Catherine Kessler), the podcast brings history to life, merging past narratives with the latest in text to speech and AI tech with CK also joining on the "Long Sought" website through October to answer



John Smith, environmental engineer and Ohio State alum, explored his German roots together with his audio producer wife Iran Davar Ardalan.

questions about the series.

Experience this blend of history and tech by visiting the Long Sought podcast website². It's early days for AI Assistants in podcasting, and they are keenly looking forward to feedback and learning and observing how listeners engage with CK. Given eco considerations and computational costs they have limited the number of messages each user asks to 10. CK can respond in multiple languages. Go ahead, ask a question in German or Spanish.

The name "Long Sought" reflects John Oliver Smith's quest to uncover his roots. It also happens that John's ancestor, John H. Smith, owned land called Long Sought in Washington County, Maryland.

340 Years Since Pennsylvania's First German Settlers: On October 6, 1683, German Mennonites, led by Francis Daniel Pastorius, sought refuge from religious persecution. They founded Germantown near Philadelphia, marking the beginning of America's first permanent German settlement.

The Library of Congress notes that over five million Germans migrated to the U.S. in the 19th century, with America serving as a haven from persecution once more. The tumult of 19th-century Europe led many intellectuals and advocates to the U.S. These included fervent backers of Germany's 1848 Revolution. Bringing a legacy of dynamic public debate and activism, they engaged in pivotal American matters, from land reform and abolition to labor rights and women's suffrage.

Today, 42 million Americans can trace their roots back to German pioneers who introduced traditions like Christmas trees, kindergartens, pretzels, and hamburgers. Their invaluable contributions, particularly during the Civil War, have etched a lasting legacy in American history.

For this Fort Myers duo, this exploration took on even greater significance. The journey wasn't only about tracing lineage but unraveling a transformative moment when Johann Schmidt felt compelled to Americanize his name to John Smith, a poignant decision emblematic of the sacrifices made by countless immigrants to assimilate and find acceptance in their new homeland.

They are also eager to go back to Germany to retrace the life of John's great ancestors — Johannes Albrecht Schmidt born in Württemberg in 1729 and his wife Maria Barbara Kolben born in 1731. It's amazing to think that just over 250 years ago, Johannes and Maria left their homes in Württemberg for an exciting new life in America. But what motivated them on this incredible journey?

Meet the Hosts: John Oliver Smith: Smith is a professional environmental engineer and Regional Manager of Municipal Infrastructure at Haley Ward in Fort Myers, Florida. He is an alum of The Ohio State University. His personal voyage is the heartbeat of this series.

Iran Davar Ardalan: Journalist and storytelling technologist, Davar infuses her vast media experience into the podcast. She's the Founder of TulipAI, an early stage AI and content creation venture in Fort Myers, Florida. She's a National Geographic, NPR, White House Presidential Innovation Fellow, IVOW AI & Secondmuse alum.

CK, The AI Assistant and Co-Host: Enabled by Amazon Polly & Botsonic, CK merges historical

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