



John Adam Heydinger
St. Bernard's Cemetery

SINCE 1916

HEYDINGER

Newsletter

Vol. XCIX, No. 3



Catherine Heydinger
St. Bernard's Cemetery

More Reunion Updates

Planning for the "Big One" in 2016 continues.

Alsace-Lorraine Trip

As of this writing, eighteen people have indicated a strong interest in returning to the homeland in 2016. A separate post was sent to all of them in the past two weeks informing them of the planning being done on trip details. The date for making the firm commitment is fast approaching, and all have been informed.

However, there is always room for more to join the adventure. To make the trip even more affordable, we would like to increase the numbers to over twenty in order to gain the next price break. If any of you are still contemplating the trip, PLEASE get in touch with us soon, so we can bring you up to speed and you don't miss out on special savings opportunities.

Our trip advisor with the Passports outfit doing the actual planning has advised us that in family trip such as this, it is common practice for those making the trip to invite along friends who are not necessarily actual family members. In many of the families as large and spread out as ours, cousins meeting for the tour will have met one another for the first time. Not hard to believe in the Heydinger family! Thus, non-family members who are friends of Heydingers are on the same footing as most of the rest in knowing very few. However, they are always accepted into the group without problems and enjoy traveling with the actual family. By the end of the tour, they are usually "adopted" by the family, and lifelong friendships are made.

So if any of those actually signing up have friends who would like to become fellow travelers, we would welcome them. And even if YOU personally are not positioned to take the trip but have friends who would, let them know and put them in contact with us. We can then provide them with all the information they need to help them decide. It's a win-win for all!

Invite them to go up on line to www.Passports.com/login and look at what we are proposing. If they encounter any part of the site that wants a username and password, use this: Username : HMICHAEL and password is gu93. They can see the itinerary, travel dates, pricing, and other details, and then decide. Help make this their adventure of a lifetime!

Facebook Update

All you Facebook people out there - great news! Deb Maliszkeski has set up a Facebook Fan Page and a Twitter account for you all to begin chattering about the upcoming reunion.

Over the years, the average age of attendees at these "Big Ones" has gradually crept upward. If this tradition of five-year reunions is to last another hundred years, then the next generation or two of Heydingers needs to step forward and become involved. And of course, for the younger ones, especially those who have never attended one of these special reunions, sometimes support and encouragement are needed. So we urge you to use this Facebook site to exhort, cajole, encourage, beg, even, your cousins and siblings to attend in 2016. And, as always, if you can think of ways to improve the site, don't hesitate to contact Deb, not this social media challenged Heydinger!

Deb has indicated that she could use some assistance in this project. You don't really need to be a pro at this, as she can show you what needs to be done. But it would be nice if some of you social media enthusiasts could help her get the ball not just rolling but snowballing down the hill to help get the word out and generate more interest in the reunion.

You can contact Deb using either the Facebook or Twitter accounts that she has set up for us. Here are the links:

Facebook (Like Us) - <https://www.facebook.com/Heydinger-Family>

Twitter (Follow Us) - <https://twitter.com/HeydingerFamily>

Deb lives in the Cleveland area, has suffered through a terrific winter up there, and could use lots of likes and Tweets to warm her days. GottaloveDeb for doing this for us! Step on up now.

Genealogy Updates

On the family website a recent update has been made to the family genealogy as folks have sent in new information over the past couple months. We encourage you to check the genealogy for your family or branch and keep sending us updates and/or corrections.

Cook Book Updates

Over the past month, many folks have written with comments about the proposed Heydinger Family Cook Book project. In fact, one has already sent in a recipe from "Grandma" for old fashioned brownies. Now in the last issue we printed conversion tables for grandma's measurements to modern equivalents. The problem is that not too many people today have handled pigeon eggs to know how many ounces that means.

This brownie recipe, however, did make all the requisite conversions, except another problem surfaced - sourcing some of the ingredients. This recipe calls for about a cup of hickory nut halves - some saved out to place atop the dough, the rest to be partially ground and mixed right in. Can taste them now! My North Auburn aunts used to use those hickories harvested in the fall from a tree way out in the middle of a corn field where the squirrels could never beat their kids to them. Giant sized nuts they were, too. Squirrels would have choked on them before they got back to their nests. Serves the little thieves right.

So how does a body come by hickory nuts these days? My Amish friends spend their evenings all winter long cracking nothing but walnuts and then having the kids pick out the meats by firelight. Must keep them occupied when cable or satellite is down! Will have to make a trip down that way to see if this fall's hickory harvest was any good, then put the grandkid to work over spring break slopping up the kitchen to try out a batch.

Bottom line, if you send recipes that call for something that may be hard to find, maybe send some hints of how to come by all the ingredients. Otherwise this old bald head will lose more hair and a cue ball can't be far behind.

For those sending recipes and suggestions, right now the designated collector is Gretchen Schellenger. You can either email her at gshelleng@yahoo.com or if still addicted to snail mail, write her at 1786 S State Rt. 53 Tiffin OH 44883.

Good news also! A volunteer has stepped forward to help assemble all the recipes and get everything close to print-ready. She is Jessica Heydinger, daughter of Steve and Karen, by way of Bill, by way of Otto, by way of Peter. Jessica is engaged to be married and very much looking forward to bringing her new husband to his first-ever Heydinger reunion. As she says, "What a great way to join the family!"

So many thanks to Jessica for stepping forward and to all who have written or emailed thus far. Keep them coming. We have not yet set a deadline for submissions, but it should probably be sometime in the fall of 2015. That would give Jessica, and anyone else who wants to step up and help, plenty of time to get things print ready by next year at this time. Keep that in mind now as you get ready to turn to outdoor chores with spring coming.

And if you live within an hour or so of Sandusky and need a quality control expert to test your recipe, ring us up!

More Genealogy Updates

You will notice in the next section of this issue, which is devoted to Ancestral Homes, a family tree of sorts for parts of the family extending back to 1669. It is printed in this newsletter sideways so that it would all fit onto a page without being scrunched together. It is easy to rotate so you can read it by going to the top of the PDF form in which you are reading this to the View tab. Click to open that tab and then click on the Rotate View, then the clockwise button and it will jump around for you. Of course, it will rotate the entire document, so you just reverse the procedure to read the rest of the text.

This genealogy is still a work in progress. Two points to be made:

You will notice a rather patriarchal point of view in that very little of the spouse's sides of the family is given. That is customary when presenting data like this in a family where most of the descendants come from males. However, we have been collecting data for the females and are working on a method for presenting it as well. You will find some of it presented here, mostly squeezed in where there was a little room. A more complete presentation will follow some day.

Second, we are working to break through an historical barrier that occurred during the first half of the 17th century - The Thirty Years War. If you think what the Taliban and ISIS are doing today in the Mideast, then you have never read about how Catholics and Protestants went after each other during the Counter-Reformation period. The area around Merlebach from where our ancestors last lived in Europe was devastated, not once but three times in history, the latest being during WWII. But during the earlier war from 1618-1648, at one point only about eighty people survived in the area - people, not families! Churches on both sides were burned to the ground. And as these buildings and parsonages contained most of the records, they were, in most cases, lost to history. However, we have recently been made aware of a couple other sources in Europe that may hold more records to leap back over this great family gap, perhaps into the 1500's. We will be working on that with a French speaking comrade and report if anything comes of it. Wouldn't it be nice to learn that we were descended from one of William Shakespeare's illegitimate children or Richard III's, or Otto I from Germany?

You will also notice that this genealogy, way down at the bottom, does not go any further down than merely listing the names of the nine boys. So none of you reading this, regardless of age, will be reading this. That's where the on-line genealogy comes in to save your egos. You will notice that this listing lists seven generations only. We suspect that right now, from the eighth generation down, at most two or three are still alive and able to read this!

So peruse the listing and use it to read the article on Ancestral Homes. All places in the article are on the map and are numbered in order of appearance. It beats pins!

John Adam Heydinger Ancestors Beginning 1669 and Offspring to 1883

Andre Heydinger (meunier/a miller) = Anne Marie Brandmann
 1669-1739 m 1690 1669 – 4/3/1739

Ebring (Tenteling Moselle)

From here down, all were born in Fr. in Lorraine, dept. Moselle except where noted.

(A total of 11 children were born of this marriage.)

Pierre Meyer = Apolline Mohr
 1665-1715 m 1691 1670 – ca 1725

Elisabeth Meyer =
 b 1/20/1700 2/1/1717
 d 4/3/1749 Rohrbach
 (St Jean's)

Andre Heydinger = Etienne Schon
 b 1690 Etzling-Kehrbach b 1713 m 1726 b 1713
 d 5/8/1744 Behren d 12/14/1763 d 1/20/1763
 Barbara Schon b 1739

Jean Nicolaus Heydinger = (Maria?) Catherine Lauer
 b Bousbach m 1/11/1707
 d 1/22/1715

(Simon Wenner = Anna Oswald)

Christophe Christian Heydinger = (1) Anne Marie Wenner(Venner)
 b 12/25/1719 Behren m 1744 b 9/30/1719 Etzling
 d 6/21/1774 Behren Ch 10/1/1719
 (Jean Schwartz = Ann Greff) d 11/05/1780 (St. Antonius)

(Jean Etienne Delesse = Catherine Haag)
 1728-1725

1729-1779

(1) Susanna Schwartz = **Pierre Heydinger** = (2) Barbe Dellese
 b 1762 m 1785 b 3/11/1759 Behren m 11/23/1790 b 1/30/1769
 Oelmuhle (Ger) on 11 Jan d 12/3/1811 Behren d 6/20/1834
 d 10/5/1789 (Jean Brun = Barbe Nicolas Petit) both d. after 1827 m. in 1793

Apolline Hey. 1758-1781
 Margaret Hey. 1756-1803
 Jean Nicolas Hey. 1744-1772

John Adam Heydinger = Catherine Brun Marguerite Heydinger Susanna Heydinger = Jean Nicolas Fortener (Fortens)
 b 10/3/1797 Behren m 1827 b 2/17/1802 (1793) twin died b 10/26/1793 Kerbach m 11/21/1831 b 9/2/1787 in Merlebach
 d 3/21/1878 N.W. 27 Feb d 1/6/1871 (1793) at birth d ca 1839 (2) d ??? (a stone mason)

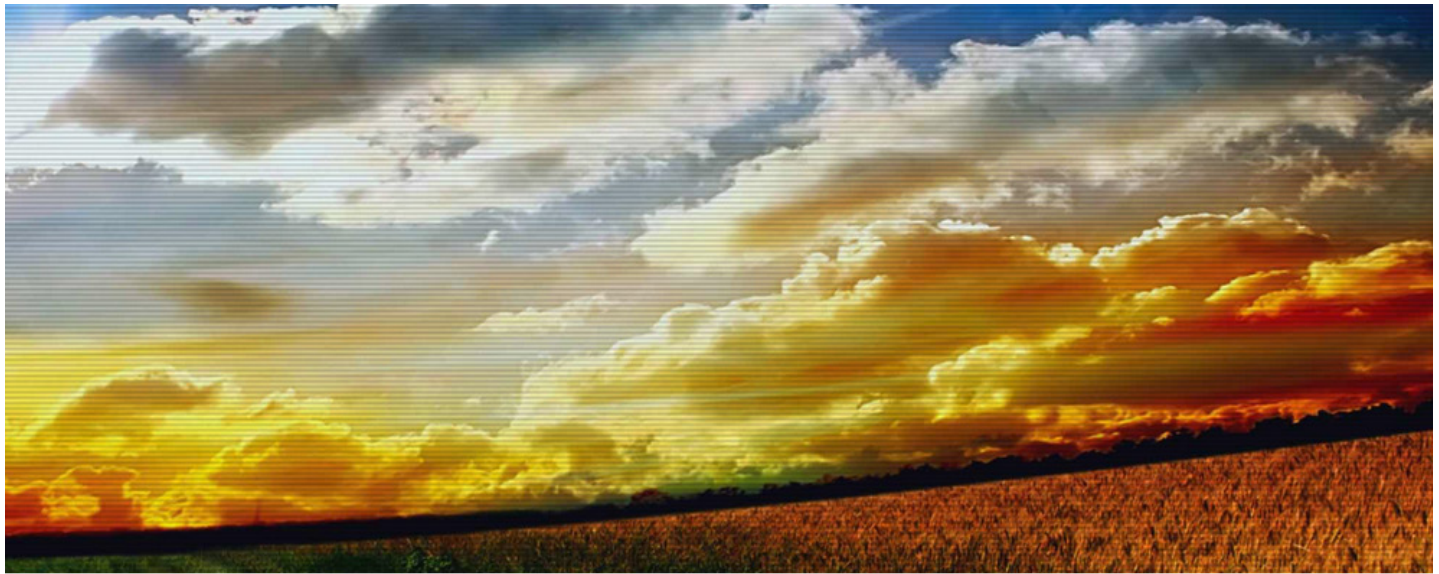
(Peter Gullung b 1814)

John Heydinger = Mary Gullung Joseph Heydinger Elizabeth H Margaret H = George Miller Mary H = Frank Wechter
 b 12/19/1827 m 11/25/59 b 11/18/1838 b 4/14/1830 1832-1855 b 2/2/1835 b 6/30/1832 b 1837 b 5/17 1838
 in Merlebach d 3/25/1920 d 9/13/1851 d 7/7/1905 d 1/1/1915 d 3/9/1883 d 1917
 d 12/10/1894 N.W. Marriage produced 8 children Marriage produced 8 children

Peter Steve Frank John Adam Bernard George Joseph August William Charles
 b 10/12/1860 b 12/26/1862 b 5/8/1865 b 4/11/1867 b 12/23/1869 b 6/8/1872 b 5/29/1875 b 11/8/1877 b 2/28/1880 b 3/24/1883
 d 12/7/1953 d 1943 d 5/19/1911 d 6/5/1940 d 8/6/1939 d 1957 d 1958 d 1/14/1954 d 4/19/1880 d 7/18/1957

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 to rotate
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Ancestral Homes in Lorraine



An Ebring sunset, ca. 2014, showing the still rural character of the village.

Long have the Heydingers been attached to the soil. From medieval times and even before, they have been tillers of the land and harvesters. There have been several branches scattered throughout Western Europe, and in our investigations we can trace our branch back to about the late 1600's. Each village where we have discovered Heydingers has been, and continues to be, small farming communities up until the post war era. Sometimes today they are merely crossroads on a map, and aerial views supplied by Google Maps show the area as part of an ancient quilt-like patchwork of fields and hedgerows. Sometimes a building remains, other times nothing but the fields. Those making the trip next spring will visit many of these sites as they are today.

Ebring-Tenteling

The very earliest record we find of a Heydinger in our line was Andre Heydinger (1669-1739), born in a little crossroads hamlet called Ebring-Tenteling. We shall call him Andre I to distinguish him from his son, also Andre. During the Thirty Years War, the area had been completely destroyed, when the Swedes had come down to help reinforce the Protestant armies trying to crush the Catholics. Because of the absolute destruction of churches during this period, we have no idea as to where Andre's parents had come from nor what occupation they had. We do know that the records list Andre I as "meunier," or a miller. Whether he began the business himself or inherited it from his father we have no clue.

In 1690, when he was twenty-one years of age, Andre I took as his wife Anne Marie Brandmann, a village lass, also twenty-one. Between them they had eleven children, eight of whom survived to marry. For the first born, Jean Nicolaus, we have no record of a birth date, but we know that he married in 1707 and only lived until 1715. Do the math, and we can surmise that he was an infant and probably present at his parents' wedding. Notice also that he was not born in Ebring but in Bousbach, another village up the road from Andre's milling operation. Why the move? For comparison's sake, we need only look to what was happening in America at exactly the same time, right around 1690, around Boston and up the coast at Salem. Nathaniel Hawthorne, in his fictional account *The Scarlet Letter*, tells the tale of what happens in small villages when such "accidents" were wont to occur. Hester Prynne and her illegitimate daughter Pearl were totally ostracized within the village, with Hester forced to wear a red letter "A"



A view of Etzling FR where Andre Heydinger came from in the late 1600's, showing the rural character of the land even today.

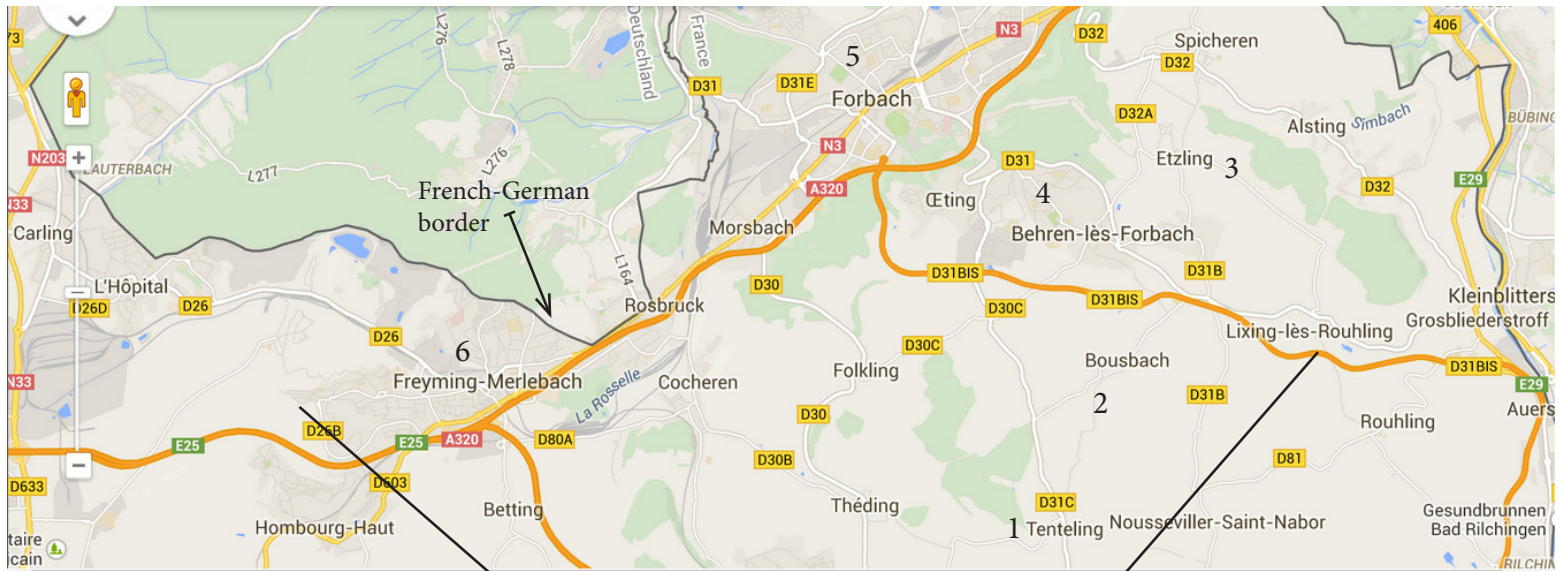
on her bodice to remind all of her sin. Who can forget either the terrible events recorded in Arthur Miller's drama, *The Crucible*, which was set two years later in 1692 at Salem, Massachusetts at the height of the witch trials. Non-conforming sinners then were called out and killed. Interesting that the first person to be put to death in the play was killed by pressing - placing a mill stone on his chest and adding rocks to the weight until he could no longer breathe. It was a practice equivalent to the Old Testament stonings, though more humane, less bloody, and easier to accomplish, as all one had to do was bring a stone to the gathering and lay it gently upon the mill stone. Perhaps Andre and Anne Marie thought it much too handy that they might be made to provide their own mill stone. (At least the millstone practice was biblical, though, as Christ Himself advised using a millstone to drown in the sea one who had merely scandalized another.)

Etzling

The second village of importance to the Heydinger family history is the village of Etzling, where John Adam's grandmother, Anna Marie Venner, and great-grandfather, Andre Heydinger, were born. That would be Andre II now, (1690-1744). In 1690, when Andre entered the world, his mother would have delivered him at home with perhaps a neighbor as midwife. At most there would have been a half dozen or so homes built in a small area. Their farm fields, animals, and outbuildings, however, would have been quite a distance from the actual homes. Families then did not live by themselves on their farms. The families who worked the fields would have walked to and from their tasks daily, returning only at dusk to a cluster of homes to enjoy companionship with family and friends. The system actually dated back to the Roman times when families lived separately, but closely, in one area, mostly for protection but also for ease of performing common tasks. Threshing of grain and using common baking ovens were frequent examples of this "communal" type of sharing that existed until well into the 18th century in much of Europe.

The character of such people was molded by this separateness from other villages and willingness to share not only tasks and belongings, but also children. Most marriages took place between spouses born no more than five miles from one another, if that much. Since every bend in a stream, every intervening forest, every fold in the landscape that produced a valley that could separate

Map of areas where Heydingers lived in Lorraine, 1669-1850, and showing relative distances from major places during their emigration in 1850.



Le Havre
up here
200 km

Paris - over here
370 km



hamlets, these small clusters of folks proliferated throughout Germany and France. Of course, in a situation such as this, it could be very easy for a population to become inbred and produce all sorts of negative genetic consequences for many offspring. However, the Catholic Church, through this entire time period, insisted upon no marriage within six degrees of consanguinity. Thus first and second cousins could not marry. The result of such scrupulous enforcement of marriage laws forced youths to marry outside of each hamlet, and thus take the long five-mile courting walks!

Andre II, though born up in Etzling, walked a tad further, about ten miles south to Rohrbach St Jean, to marry his wife, Elizabeth Meyer. How her father made a living we don't know, but we do know from court records that he was declared mentally incompetent in May of 1700, just five months after the birth of Elizabeth. Elizabeth's mother, with the help of her brother-in-law from Kerbach, moved the family up to the Kerbach-Behren region. Without institutionalized aid in those days, we don't know how she kept the family together. But, fifteen years later, in 1715, we find another record that, after husband Pierre's passing, his wife Apolline divided his property among the children. So what was a fifteen year old girl, Elizabeth, without a father and only a widowed mother but no dowry, supposed to do? At this point, Andre Heydinger II entered the picture and married this teenager, 17 years old by only ten days, on February 1, 1717, in her hometown, Etzling, in her baptismal church. Andre was 27 years old, now married to the equivalent of a high school sophomore, but on Christmas day of 1719 she delivered him a present, a fine son, Christophe Christian Heydinger, named after Elizabeth's uncle Christian who had saved the family from ruin by moving them to the Behren-Kerbach area where he lived.

Through his life, we have no direct information as to how Andre II and his wife earned a living. We can only guess that he took over his father's business, that of milling. Whatever it was allowed him to father three sons and two daughters before his death in 1744 at the relatively early age of 54. Elizabeth followed in death five years later, age 49, leaving five unmarried children. But this generation of Heydingers was a hearty lot as they all eventually married, though only five grandchildren survived childhood.

Saint Barbara (Barbe)

John Adam's mother, Barbe Dellese, and thus John Heydinger's grandmother, was named after this patron saint of this area of Lorraine in eastern France.

St. Barbara is depicted here, as usual, carrying a tower in her arms. She had been imprisoned by her father, supposedly to protect her virtue, but then turned Christian against his wishes. For that, she was said to have been beheaded by her own father in anger! He, in turn, was immediately hit by a thunderous bolt of lightning, so thereafter Barbara has been associated as patroness of armorers, military artillery, and miners. Since the Merlebach area today is heavily mined, it is no surprise that we find her still venerated in this area - even though most of the today's miners themselves are of the Muslim faith!

It is also not unusual to find Catholic Churches in America named after St. Barbara if the area had a large influx of immigrants from the Lorraine area of France. Cloverdale OH, in western Ohio's Putnam County, is an example from the Toledo Diocese alone.



Behren

In the eighteenth century, Behren-Kerbach became the next focal point of Heydinger lives. Actually today we would probably consider the two named villages subdivisions, or allotments, within a single larger city area. The villages were separated only by a river, and census data shows only a few hundred people living in the areas during that time. The entire area spanned about 250 acres, the size of a good sized Heydinger wheat or corn field here in Ohio. Most folks existed by farming small plots, though there may have been opportunities for employment in the burgeoning glass and pottery works for which the area was becoming more famous. The period also seems to have been one of stability for the family, as two successive generations lived and died within a five mile radius of one another.

The first Heydinger born in Behren was the Christophe Christian that we have already met - born in Behren, married in Kerbach in 1744, and died in Behren in 1774. In his entire lifetime, there is a good probability that he never ventured more than ten miles from his place of birth. From an inhumation record filed on the 21st of June that year, we discover that he was employed as "tisserand," a weaver. Whether he was employed in the cottage industry of weaving or in one of the earliest "factories" of the beginning Industrial

Revolution we do not know. (In our next issue in April we will explore in depth the vast transformation occurring in the countryside in Lorraine from the mid-eighteenth century up until John Adam emigrated.)

Christophe Heydinger married an Anne Marie Wenner, sometimes spelled Venner in the records, in 1744, when both were twenty-five years of age. It's tempting to say they were school mates, but there were no public schools then in small villages such as Etzling from which Anne Marie came. How the two met and where is lost to history. That they raised six children is not. That Anne Marie was buried from St. Antonius- Trier is a mystery. After losing her husband in her mid-fifties, she moved north to Trier where records show at least a dozen other Heydingers had settled, most buried from St. Antonius, as was Anne Marie. But why would she have moved as a widow? A reasonable guess would be that she was part of the mass internal migration that began occurring around 1750 in France. With the beginning of industrialization, mostly in the cloth making and leather industries to outfit the growing European population, thousands of workers were required. With the population devastated after the Thirty Years Wars and their aftermath, not much could be done. Reconstruction took decades and generations, but with relative peace returning, folks again married earlier and had larger families. This then produced an over-abundance of workers and not enough land in the countryside. So thousands of laborers each year left farms and villages for more urban areas to fill the labor shortages in the cotton and linen weaving centers. We conjecture that Anne Marie, in order to survive after being widowed, joined these workers. After all- she would have known quite a bit about the trade as her husband himself had been a weaver. Suffice it to say that this generation of Heydingers, for as little as we know of them, did produce a son who, for our branch of the family at least, was extremely important - Pierre Heydinger was John Adam's father.

Pierre had been born at Behren and lived his entire life there as a weaver. He is interesting to our family narrative for many reasons in addition to being John Adam's father and John's grandfather. First, he was married twice. His first marriage to Susanna Schwartz ended with her death only four short years after their marriage. The records show no children from this marriage, nor a reason for Susanna's early death. Our lineage would have ended there, with none of us even reading this now, had not Pierre married again shortly over a year later, this time to Barbe Dellesse. This marriage was fruitful, though, with John Adam being the youngest of three children.

Barbe, Pierre's second wife, is interesting also because she had a brother, Gaspar, who married a Margaret Heydinger, Pierre's sister. This is extremely important in the Heydinger emigration narrative later on. Gaspar actually emigrated to America earlier and settled out near Chatfield OH. The problem was that when he left the boat, wherever he arrived in the States, the scribe who recorded his name did so phonetically, as was the custom, and misspelled Dellesse as Dallas. Hence, the profusion of Dallas tombstones in cemeteries in the New Washington area. But more importantly, in the next generation, when John Adam finally made it to Ohio and needed a place to stay that first spring here, it was the Dallas family that took John Adam and his brood into their cabin for a few weeks. John Adam then journeyed out to the Delphos OH area to look at farmland before deciding that someone else needed to drain the Black Swamp first. Smart man, for he returned to the North Auburn area, purchased land, and moved his family to their new home. (More will be forthcoming on this home in a later issue.)



Modern Kerbach-Behren, France, Moselle,
the birthplace of John Adam Heydinger in 1797

How Pierre died is not known nor anything about the death of his wife. They were born, lived, and died completely within the Behren area.

John Adam actually was the most traveled Heydinger of them all up until the twentieth century. Born in 1797 in Behren, he died in New Washington, but not without moving several more times prior to leaving Europe. Later when you read his biography in another issue, you will be amazed, and at the same time humbled by comparison, when you realize all that he accomplished and the bravery with which he managed all. He, too, is listed in all documents as "tisserand," weaver, but was unlucky enough to have lived right at the time when cottage industries were being swallowed whole by companies that were being founded right at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution.

There is a better than even chance that, while living in Behren, John Adam was a farmer first and weaver second. Small villages at that time in Europe were kind of like Amish Country here in Ohio. All families lived on their farms, but as land holdings decreased in size and thus income to raise large families was diminished, the families had to practice some other forms of industriousness to survive. Hardly an Amish home in the country today is found without a shingle along the road advertising some family specialty - leather goods, wagon wheels, rocking chairs, chicken coops, canned goods, even walnut meats - probably picked out evenings when cable or satellite went down! In John Adam's time, the same practice persisted. John Adam, and maybe some of his children as well, would likely have practiced his craft of weaving, Lincoln style, by the light of candles, in the evenings of long, dark winter nights.

But shortly after John Adam married Catherine Brun in February of 1827, and not long after John was born in December of that same year, change started to come over France.

The Napoleonic Wars, which ended only after 1815 and Waterloo, had drained both capital and manpower from France. It took better than ten years to recover. However, England suffered too, but less than France, and had capital enough to develop industries. England prospered with new inventions that made hand labor almost obsolete, similar to what computers and robots are doing in America today. Once the French “stole” these inventions from the Brits and applied them in France, common folks like John Adam and family were hard pressed to make a living. For John Adam to survive, he had to give up his agricultural lifestyle and move to the centers where the capitalists had begun establishing factories. Merlebach was John Adam’s city of choice.

Merlebach

Merlebach had a long and proud history, but John Adam did not move there for the scenery nor its history. Necessity had another child after invention. In John Adam’s case, the inventions had already been made. He simply needed to survive. There were no social safety nets back then.

Merlebach’s recorded history goes back to the time of the Romans when their town was an important stop on the famous Roman roads that networked the empire. Remember “All roads lead to Rome”? In fact, the remnant of the road that connected Metz FR with Worms DE constitutes the Franco-German border even today in that area. After the Roman empire collapsed, successive generations of illegitimate sons of even more Fat, Proud, and lazy entitled nobles fought over the land. Bishops also entered the fray, and villages and cities were swapped back and forth among nobles and prelates like so many Monopoly game trading cards. Wars also played a part in everything from religious traditions, to what languages were to be spoken, to even beverages of choice - to the French went the vin, to the Germans the bier. It is impossible, though, to trace the tombs of the Merlebachois and possible Heydinger ancestors any further back than about 1590. The cemetery lies today under the parking lot of the present City Hall! Sic transit mundus.

The Verrier - the Glass Maker

A woodcut from the late 1500’s shows a glass maker fast at work in his shop creating blown glassware for the wealthy. The area around Merlebach and even east of the Rhine became the center of glassmaking in the 16th century. A burgeoning upper class demanded fine wares. The enterprising verrier satisfied their wants by setting up small glassworks such as this. They experimented with ingredients that had changed little since glass’s invention. The Merlebach area contained copious deposits of the silica sand, the forests wood to burn to obtain the potash, and the coal needed for fuel. The forests even contained a fern which, when burned and the ash added to the molten mixture, imparted to the glass a beautiful sheen and hardness. Mass production of glassware had to wait until the 19th century for the invention of molds and more efficient methods of directing air into the molds. Until then - one-off’s only.



Le Verrier - The Glassmaker

The city is named after a stream, the Merle, that rose on a small farm owned by the Merle family, near The Hospital on the same farm (which hospital dates to 1241) and flows to the Rosselle, and thence to the Rhine. The town was not named after the river at first but was called Glashütt (glassware) or Glasdelt (glass valley) as early as 1530, named for the glass works established there on the Merle farm. (It’s a good bet that the Glasdell brand of glass located there today sits on the original site.) As is the case with any kind of prosperity, around that farm there eventually grew a village, but still named after the glass works.

In 1629, a problem developed. As the population grew, they wanted their own church instead of having to journey to nearby towns. Except they could not afford a full church, just a small chapel. It was dedicated to the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the area then was called Marienbourg. But some Protestant families also lived in the village and objected. It is a testament to the pragmatism of all of the Alsace-Lorraine area that they were such practical people. They had lived in harmony with different religions mixed together back into the time of the Reformation, even with the Amish. They had learned that disputes over denomination carried sometimes terrible prices. So instead of being hard headed about the perceived Marien-slight, they changed the name to Merlebourg. Except -bourg means city, and the hamlet still lacked a proper church and parsonage which would have qualified them for the title of a full town. So with remarkable inventiveness, they came up with Merlebach (-bach meaning a stream) and all went to bed happily. Somewhere along the line, though, someone stole the ‘n’ from the word, leaving us with Merlebach today.



Chapel of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The Merlebach area suffered badly during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). After the war ended, only 80 inhabitants could be numbered. By the time the Heydingers arrived on the scene in the general area, agriculture still prevailed. Over the decades, though, there developed an almost romantic, idealized blending of both the rural and the urban life. Villages like Merlebach grew in size as more people migrated from farms to village. But the towns were small enough that villagers could still raise most of their own food while carrying on manufacturing, (literally: making by hand) either in their own homes with their own tools, or by working for another who owned any equipment. We have already mentioned that weaving was attracting many, but another “industry” was also drawing like a magnet, nail making. A few sources mention that John Adam was also a nail maker, but we have not located any document mentioning “cloutier,” French for nail maker. The oral tradition within the family, especially on the Peter Heydinger side, has often repeated, though, that John Adam did practice this trade. That he would have had an opportunity, though, is possible, as records of his time indicate that within the Merlebach area there were as many as 88 individual nail makers, not to mention the associated peddlers of their products. Certitude in this area of John Adam’s history must sleep until a definitive record turns up.

When viewing the process of industrialization that was gradually destroying centuries of rural lifestyles, one could be forgiven if he envisioned a strong competition between the two sides of the age old tale of the city mouse, country mouse - whose lifestyle is better. In France and Germany both, from the late 18th century through the mid-19th, the relationship was a symbiotic one - each depended closely upon the other. Farmers who lived in the remotest areas were indeed most severely impacted by the changes and had to move closer to the larger towns. They lived in villages outside the town walls and tended their crops and spun their wool or flax into rough cloth, pounded nails, or whatever other trades they practiced. But by living so close, they did have a ready market for their wares. The more “delicate” operations were performed inside the towns - the fulling, dyeing, cutting and sewing of the cloth. Merchants from town could then sell the final products and all prospered. The townsfolk also needed to eat, and the villagers were happy to provide fresh foodstuffs at the markets as well - vegetables and meat and eggs without the manure and smell! It was a wonderful relationship in that the villagers were also exempt from the many taxes that fell upon those inside the walls. In point of fact, well into the 19th century, the growth in villages exceeded that of the urban areas proper. Can anyone see suburbia flourishing?

The Heydingers seem to always have been well suited to this life adaptive style. That John Adam retained his preferred style of living is evident in how he fared after landing in the New World. In Europe he had gone from farming to weaving, possibly nail making, probably for one of the factories. Once in America, however, he reverted to agriculture in his purchase of successive farms and he succeeded. And to think that this was all accomplished without benefit of formal education.

Merlebach post-John Adam

After John Adam emigrated in 1850, Merlebach continued to prosper. On the opposite side of the river another town had grown up as far back as 1602. A grant was given to clear a forest and begin the village of Freyming, a village of free (frei or frey) men, exempt from duties on salt and tobacco. The village followed a pattern similar to that of Merlebach by building a chapel, to St. Brigit, to attract pilgrims and a priest, then hopefully parishioners enough to found a church. Except they never achieved the latter and were left to share a church with Merlebach, St. Maurice, where John Adam was married and had his children baptized. Since the area was close to iron ore deposits and many coal mines, iron working and forging grew up and sustained the economy well into the twentieth century. Then disaster struck the area with the advent of WWII. After D-Day and the advance of American troops eastward, Hitler’s armies staged their last gasp attempt to salvage something from the war with the famous Battle of the Bulge. Though the main fronts in the Battle were slightly to the north of the Merlebach area, flanking operations on the part of the American 6th and 12 armies required that they advance from the south. To do so, though, they had to clear out nests of Germans who had taken most of the towns in the area. Merlebach was heavily bombarded and much damage resulted, including to the church. With the war over, the area recovered nicely because of the need for iron and coal, and it prospered greatly. Finally, in 1971 the two towns of Freyming and Merlebach were conjoined officially, and on maps today are recognized as joined at the hip, Freyming-Merlebach. Blessed union - they surely earned it!



St. Maurice in 1945, before the bombardments

St. Maurice inside, before the liberation of the city during bombardments in December of 1944.



St. Maurice Church in Merlebach today. The parish is twinned with another so that weekend Masses switch between the two on successive Saturdays and Sundays.



More Merlebach Views



Army aerial surveillance photo of part of the Freyming-Merlebach area before 1944.



Postcard view of Merlebach ca. 1975



Coal mine shaft heads before and after the war.



Coal mining in France continued here in Merlebach until 2001 when the last coal mine in France was closed.

View of Merlebach around the turn of the twentieth century, with St. Maurice in the background right.

In the front lies the rail station.



1. MERLEBACH - Vue générale

Finally

In the next issue we will be printing a survey form for readers to comment upon, contribute to, critique, cuss, or otherwise make known their feelings and ideas about past reunions and the upcoming Big One. If we become more technologically proficient between now and then, you will be able to answer all questions, post comments, and then send it right back without having to print and mail. Saving all that money ought to warm the hearts of some of our more pecuniarily challenged family members.

Also, we will be printing the answer to a question we posed in the last issue about the connection between the Heydingers, weaving, Alabama, and Karl Marx. As we are striving to be a family oriented news vehicle, we shall not print here a couple responses concerning those connections. And no, we do not carry Marx blood, as at least one responder may have been intimating by the use of an imprecation questioning certain familial legitimacies.

Auction Materials

Remember the upcoming auction and continue working on those homemade items.

