

1780 Census of Anabaptists in Le Hang, Ville, Alsace

By Neil Ann Stuckey Levine

Seventh: **Johannes Bächer** (Becher), 63, born at hang, seigneurie of Villé, living on a leased agricultural estate which he has rented for 35 years from the community of Saales under a tenancy agreement. He has had two wives and has eight children from his first marriage [to **Anna Neuhauser**], namely:

- 1) **Johannes Bächer**, 31, living at Hang and the eight had of household enumerated below,
- 2) **Anna Bächer**, 29, married to **Joseph Schürch** (*Schirsch*), also living at hang. He is the eleventh head of household enumerated below,
- 3) **Christian Bächer**, 27, also living at hang and the ninth head of household enumerated below,
- 4) **Peter Bächer**, 25, married and living in the principality of Salm.
- 5) **Joseph Bächer**, 23, the tenth head of household enumerated below,
- 6) **Jacob Bächer**, 21, unmarried, working at Hang,
- 7) **Melchior Bächer**, 19, unmarried,
- 8) **Andreas Bächer**, 17, unmarried. The last two children live with their father, who has no child from his second marriage. His second wife is named **Anna Schmucker**, 50. She was a widow when she married **Johannes Bächer** and has five children from her first husband. Only one child, a girl named **Magdalena**, 15, lives with her mother. The other four children do not live within this jurisdiction. **Johannes Bächer** is not subject to the general fees levied on residents, not even taxation by the community of Salles, even though he rents from that body. But he does pay a variable sum of money in seigneurial fees.

Eighth: **Johannes Bächer**, 31, son of the above-mentioned **Johannes Bächer**, living at the aforementioned Hang, where formerly there was a glassworks and which today comprises a group of various leased agricultural estates farmed by the Anabaptists listed below, belong to heirs of the late **Mr. "D'Anthese"** The aforementioned **Johannes Bächer** leases one of these properties under a tenancy agreement. He is married to **Katharina Gerig**, 31, and has four children who live with him. And they are:

- 1) **Anna Bächer**, 10
- 2) **Barbara Bächer**, 9
- 3) **Magdalena Bächer**, 7,
- 4) **Maria Bächer**, 4.

Ninth: **Christian Bächaer**, 27, son of the aforementioned **Johannes Bächer** the elder, living at the aforementioned Hang. He shares in the said farms and is married to **Rosina Schürch**, 27. He has two children at home, and they are:

- 1) **Christian Bächer**, 3,
- 2) **Johannes Bächer**, 2.

Tenth: **Joseph Bächer**, 23, son of the aforementioned **Johannes Bächer** the elder, living at the aforementioned Hang. He shares in the said farms. He is married to **Magdalena Gerig**, 26. He does not as yet have any children.

Eleventh: **Joseph Schürch**, 31 born in the principality of Salm, living at the aforementioned hang. He shares in the said farms. He is married to **Anna Bächer**, 29, daughter of the aforementioned **Johannes Bächer** the elder. He has four children at home, who are:

- 1) **Barbara Schürch**, 7,
- 2) **Joseph Schürch**, 4,
- 3) **Christian Schürch**, 2,
- 4) **Anna Schürch**, 3 months.

Twelfth: **Johannes Gerig (Görig)**, 37, born at Sainte Marie-aux-Mines, living for the past six years at the aforementioned Hang. He shares in the said farms. His wife is named **Barbara Goldschmidt**, 33. He has four children at home, who are:

- 1) **Christian Gerig**, 12,
- 2) **Joseph Gerig**, 7,
- 3) **Barbara Gerig**, 3,
- 4) **Johannes Gerig**, 1.

Thirteenth: **Christian Gerig**, 46, brother of the aforementioned Johannes Gerig, born at Sainte Marie-aux-Mines, living for six years at Hang. He too shares in the said farms. He has been a widower for fifteen years and has three children, who are:

- 1) **Johannes Gerig**, 25, unmarried, living at "Berringen" near Belfort [Bourogne/Boringen, Haut-Rhin],
- 2) **Anna Gerig**, 18,
- 3) **Christian Gerig**, 15.

The latter two children live with their father.

Note: the last six heads-of-household, who rent the land of the aforementioned former glassworks at Hang from the heirs of the late **Mr. "D'Anthes,"** pay no taxes on the said property and do not pay the general fees levied on residents. They pay only the feudal tax amounting to the value of one-

tenth of the harvest from their property. The general lease is to run for nine years and began six years ago.

Fourteenth: Ulrich Schlabach, 36, born at Climont, seigneurie of Villé, living at the aforementioned hang, where he has rented accommodations. There he carried on the trade of weaver. The name of his wife is Maria Adam, 37, and by her he has two children who live with him, namely:

- 1) Johannes Schlabach, 10,
- 2) Magdalena Schlabach, 7.

This woman was a widow when she married the aforementioned Ulrich Schlabach, and she has two children from her first marriage, who are:

- 1) Peter [Müller], 15, living with his mother,
- 2) Anna Müller, 13, working at Hang.

.....Observations

The bailliage of the county of Villé is located in the Vosges Mountains. These mountains are studded with leasable agricultural estates belonging to the seigneurie and to some of its property owners of privilege or exceptional status. It is the Anabaptists who farm the majority of these properties. Those estates belonging to the seigneurie and to property owners of privileged status are not subject to any fees generally leveled on the populace. These estates are taxed only on to the particular properties adjoining the farms that are rented out. Persons leasing those properties pay all fees levied on the general populace without exception, as do residents of places within the jurisdictions in which the estates are located.

No complaint against these Anabaptists has been lodged with me in the 26 years I have worked in this bailliage. These people live in a Spartan manner (*sans luxe*), abstemiously (*sobrement*). They love peace and tranquility. They are highly industrious, charitable to their own. One can fault them only for errors in their religion, about which they are zealous and to which they are passionately devoted. They come together one Sunday a month at the home of a designated individual selected by themselves. That individual reads and interprets from a kind of false Bible, on which he expounds according to their custom. Afterwards he speaks to them about their own particular concerns.

They obey strictly the laws of the kingdom, except for the taking of oaths, which they are not willing to take in connection with either civil or criminal matters. For compliance on this subject it is necessary to use force. They do not provide recruits for the regiment of soldiers in the province and very rarely engage in military service. A court order was issued in 1728 requiring the departure from the kingdom of all Anabaptists there as a result of increase in their numbers, as well as their children, who could easily have been welcomed to stay until they had reached the age of majority. But this order has not been enforced in this province, and the result here has been an increase in the number of adherents to this sect, the majority of whom were born in Alsace. I think, sir, that the same order should be reinstated and applied to foreigners, but not to native-born sons and daughters whose fathers, by virtue of being tolerated themselves, have created for their offspring a secure place of asylum. And I also think that there ought to be a way to prevent

marriages or to permit marriages only by higher authority as a means of lessening the number of Anabaptists.

Done and concluded by me, the subdelegate, at Sélestat, July 12, 1780.

*Excerpt from "A Fresh Look at the 1780 Census of Anabaptists in Villé, Alsace" by Neil Ann Stuckey Levine, January 2002, Mennonite Family History, p. 13,16 & 17. French document translated into English.