

# Roger Miller

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SEBASTIAN GERIG FAMILY by Olive G Wyse. Just found this online. It was published in the Mennonite Historical Bulletin in 1954.

According to the article, Sebastian Gerig came to America in 1856 when he was 17 years old via Montreal, Canada. This is likely not correct as I have found the passport information extracts for Alsace, France. I included the excerpt concerning Sebastian in the images below, so have a look. He actually came over at the age of 18 in 1857. He was already old enough to be conscripted into the French army, so I suppose he was feeling anxious about leaving. The author of this piece also states he came first to Canada via Montreal, but the passport info states his destination was New York? The joys of genealogy - conflicting information.

It is a good read in spite of these inconsistencies.

grandson of Johannes Lantz who was about to endure the terrible privations and hardships as a German refugee in England and also at his first abode in America in the Schoblar region in the Mohawk Valley.

In reference to Samuel Lantz, he was talented in rendering his services in the pulpit in both German and English although he had not preached in the English language in his home congregation at the Millwood Church near Gap in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Sadly he met with objections to certain features in the conducting of the regular Sunday service. The first outstanding grievance that Bro. Lantz caused in the congregation was the omitting of reading the annual seasonal chapter in connection with the sermon. There was also a variation in the nature of his discourse as practiced by the Amish ministers of that day. He read his text from the Bible, then spoke from an outline in harmony with the theme of the text and finally read the second chapter from Psalms or portions throughout the Bible that bore upon his sermon, which was contrary to the rule. He was rebuked for this violation and for some other practices not worthy of mention.

However, in the course of time Bro. Lantz was called to appear before an appointed hearing in the presence of the distant ministerial council. He however, did not appear before the committee.

Upon this action Bro. Lantz withdrew from the Millwood congregation with about a half dozen or more families. Bishop Stucky, an Anabaptist in Illinois who became independent from all other groups, having one of the most prominent leaders in the Amish *Dieser Verewandlung*, was called upon to come and organize a church for Lantz and his followers. Bishop Stucky introduced his platform in discipline by saying in German, "A feather on the hat and a bustle on the back we do not tolerate." The married couples had never discarded their plain garb but a few of the unmarried among the sisters wore a plain hat. Bishop Stucky's statement, considered rude in its German form because of the word he used for "back" was broadcast throughout various communities and on one occasion a member of the mother congregation pierced a chicken feather into the straw hat of his employee who was one of Bro. Lantz's followers. This, with Stucky's statement as a taunt, caused insult which the employee immediately reported to his own home.

In regard to Bro. Lantz's reading of the seasonal chapters, the writer shall herewith cite an incident in the life of his father, Bishop John S. Mast, which happened during the early period of his ministry. His elder associate pastor said, "John, in our next services we shall omit the reading of the parable of the sower. There is a Hessian fly about and probably I shall not sow my

seed for two weeks." Hence from this time forth without any serious objection Bro. Mast read a chapter in harmony with his discourse.

The Lantz congregation in a few years became affiliated with the General Conference Mennonites at Germantown, Pennsylvania, where Bro. Lantz remained a member until his death. The mother church in later years instituted what Bro. Lantz and his followers had contended should be brought into practice, such as Sunday schools and the assigning of work to the young people.

Bro. Lantz always manifested a very kind interest in the life of the writer's father, who had some academic training in a private school at the age of seventeen. But at that time he with others of his age did not have the facilities for Bible study, as there was neither a Sunday school nor a young people's meeting in the home congregation.

The writer can vividly recall the visit of these two brethren in 1894, which was about four years after Bro. Lantz had withdrawn from the home church. Amish ministers to this time had not selected a text and frequently started out in their discourse with the story of the creation in Genesis, touching here and there from Genesis to Revelation. Bro. Lantz stated on the first visit as the horse was being hitched to the platoon, "Now, John, when you prepare your sermon, then select a text suitable for your theme. While compiling your outline you need helpful books to prepare your sermon with ease and in less time. You write to Bro. John F. Funk." This brought them back and Mast a warm personal acquaintance in later years. Bro. Funk shipped a goodly number of German books, among which were Dextel's *Commentary*, written by German theologians and printed in Germany, and sermons of D. L. Moody in German. Evidently Bro. Mast was the first Amishman to preach on "Assurance." For more than

ten years to follow, Bro. Lantz and Bro. Mast would visit each other in their respective homes where they would engage in the study of the Word until late hours in the night. Indeed the writer's great esteem for Bro. Lantz as his great-uncle is not alone on kinship but after much prayerful consideration since the decease of his father he was truly convinced to attribute this article to the memory of Bro. Lantz, who was so instrumental in giving his counsel to a young man who in his career rendered almost fifty-five years of active service in the pulpit. Truly can we bear testimony to the life of Bro. Lantz as recorded of Barnabas, "He was a good man."

In conclusion the Word of God is ever immutable. Methods may change. We take a glimpse into congregations that had existed over a half century ago with similar troubles. Especially were the two Amish colonies, the one at Concord, Tennessee, and the other in Union County, Pennsylvania, almost parallel in circumstances with the one in Lancaster County. Only the Millwood congregation flourished in numbers where the others became extinct or rather lost the term "Amish." These dissensions had caused members to migrate elsewhere and today hundreds of descendants are living in various parts of the Union as members in other denominations.

History teaches wise counsel; therefore, my dear reader, may we here notice how in the past the cause of Christ has been made to suffer. We cast no reflection on either the congregation or the minister as both were participants in the picture with little regard for what time would do and for Christian forbearance. Let us exercise patience and Christian forbearance. We do not mean a compromise on false liberalism but let us not like the Gallian fisherman by depending on the Lord's guidance to cast the nets on the right side of the ship.

Elverson, Pa.

### A Brief History of the Sebastian Gerig Family

OLIVE G. WYSE

Jacob Gerig was born in 1794 in Maria-kirch, Alsace, and died in Bursweiler near Mulhouse in 1850. He was married to Elizabeth Zimmermann in 1810. She was born near Strasburg (Lower Alsace) in 1796, died in Pfattatt near Mulhouse in 1848, and is buried there. To them were born Elizabeth, 1817-1905 (Mrs. Johann Jacob Meyer); Christian, 1819-1874; Peter, 1821-died in infancy; Jacob, 1824-1855 (he and his wife died of cholera); Barbara, 1825-1893; Katherine, 1829-1907 (Mrs. Jacob Koebel); Mary, 1834-1894 (Mrs. Joseph Roth); Sebastian, 1838-1924; and Benjamin, 1824-1913.

The oldest child, Elizabeth, married a non-Mennonite Johann Jacob Meyer. By this marriage there were three boys who

were brought up in the Reformed Church. After Elizabeth's husband died and the two sons had grown to manhood, she came to America. In 1872 they followed her and became members of the Mennonite Church in Wayne County, Ohio. These two were Jacob G. Meyer (1846-1930) and Albert M. Meyer (1855-1924).

Sebastian, the next to the youngest child of Jacob and Elizabeth (Zimmerman) Gerig, was born on May 27, 1838, in Pfattatt, near Mulhouse, Alsace-Lorraine, France. His mother died when he was nine. His oldest sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Meyer, referred to in the paragraph above, took him and his younger brother Ben to her home. Sebastian had to do extensive farm school when it dis-

appeared in order to help increase the family income. He delivered bread for a bakery in Mulhouse.

When he was 17 years of age he united with the Mennonite Church. He came to America in April, 1856, before he was 18 to escape compulsory military training. He traveled with the Schlegel family, whose son Joseph was about the same age. His father, particularly Mrs. Elizabeth Meyer and Kathryn (Mrs. Jacob Koebel), helped him to secure money for his passage to Montreal, Canada. He spent a few weeks in Ontario near New Hamburg with the Jacob and Magdalena Bender family.

The Schlegel family stayed in Canada two years before moving to Davis County, Iowa; but it is of interest to those of the descendants who live in the Wayland community that their farm home was one mile south and about one-fourth mile east of the Findley Chapel. When Elizabeth, the fourth child, was a small child the family moved south of Wayland near the Sugar Creek Church, the farm now owned by A. D. Blosser.

The eight youngest children were born on the homestead near Wayland. There the children Samuel and Helena, died. It was there also that Magdalena's father, Joseph Goldsmith, passed away. Elizabeth was five years old at that time but remembers how the casket was carried by the pallbearers across the fields to the cemetery.

Grandmother Goldsmith, who survived her husband by twenty-four years, lived with her crippled daughter, Lydia, in Wayland, after her husband's death in August, 1900. Lydia, who was 72 years old, made her home with her youngest sister Magdalena. Sebastian and Magdalena built a large home in Wayland, the present Mimie Gerig Sutter residence, when they retired from farming. To the north of the house they built a small house for Lydia. After Lydia was called by death in 1910, her house was attached to the north side of the Gerig residence.

In 1919 when the youngest daughter, Mimie, married Sam Sutter and moved to Nebraska, her parents moved to the small house built east of their home by their daughter, Eva Leichty after her husband Dan Leichty died. Although Magdalena was confined to a wheel chair, she managed to do the cooking. Sebastian was very active and was able to get the things she could not reach.

In the spring of 1924, Sebastian's health began to fail. He was confined to his bed about ten weeks before he passed away on April 3, 1924, at the age of 85 years, 10 months, and 6 days. He had selected the text for his funeral service, Luke 2:29: "Lord, now leave that thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word."

After Sebastian's death, Magdalena lived with her daughter Eva Leichty until Mimie's husband died in August, 1925. Mimie and her family were then liv-

ing in the Wayland residence her parents had built when they retired from the farm. Again "Grandma" was back in the house the oldest grandchildren remember as Grandma's house. Her eyesight began to fail three years before her death. She had always enjoyed music and sermons over the radio in these years. During the final five months of her life she was confined to her bed and was cared for by her daughter living in Wayland. She passed away September 8, 1931, aged 84 years, 7 months and 16 days.

Sebastian Gerig as a leader of his local congregation showed sound judgment and keen insight. Progressive in his approach to church work, he led his congregation with a minimum of tension through the changes brought about by the introduction of Sunday schools, young people's meetings, Bible study conferences, and evangelistic services. When he recognized the need for a change of language in the worship service he advised that a young man who was educated in the English language be ordained to the ministry. Accordingly the congregation chose Simon Ginchich by majority vote in 1908. He was also a leader in the Western District Amish Mennonite Conference, serving either as moderator or assistant moderator in 1897, 1900, 1904, 1905, 1908, 1909, and 1909.

All of Gerig's children became members of his congregation and a number of grandchildren now occupy positions of responsibility in the church. Three of his grandsons are in the ministry of the Mennonite Church: Bishop Vernon Gerig, Wayland, Iowa; Minister Willard Gerig, Wayland, Iowa; and Deacon Maynard Wyse, Areshold, Ohio.

1. Sebastian Gerig's children say that he always said that he was of a family of thirteen children. Evidently four others of whom there is no record died in infancy.

2. Jacob G. Meyer is the father of Jacob C. Meyer (1888- ), professor of history, Western Reserve University, and prominent layman in the Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Smithville, Ohio.

3. Elizabeth Gerig Roth, oldest daughter of Sebastian Gerig, met Jacob Bender's youngest daughter, Barbara, in Canada, who told her that Sebastian had spent his first days in Canada in the Bender home. (See *Genealogy of Jacob and Magdalena Bender*, 66.)

Goshen, Indiana.

.....

Mennonite Encyclopaedia Page proofs are now being read for Volume I of the Mennonite Encyclopaedia, which will cover letters A-C. The editors spent much time during the past months preparing part of the more than ninety maps which will appear in the four volumes.

Name	age	occupation	place of birth/residence	person accompanying applicant	passport issue date	destination	departure date	observations
GÉANT Françoise	27	servante	Bitschwiller-lès-Thann			NY	oct. 1857	
GERBER Thérèse née Benoît	24	néant	Ste-Marie-aux-Mines / S.	ses enf. Thérèse et Henri	15 oct. 1857	Buffalo		pour rejoindre son mari
GERIG Sébastien	18	cultivateur	Pfattatt / Mulhouse					
GERST Cérestien	28	boulangier	Schiltigheim / Neuf-Brisach (Bas-Rhin)	sa femme Schoen Madelaine 29a, ses enf. Charles Henri 5a et Marie la	18 fév. 1857	Pittsburg		pour s'y fixer to settle there pour s'y fixer

