

## Roger Miller

Here is the **new and improved Gerig migration map out of France to New York**. A New York Times article published on Oct. 4, 1864, the day following the Steam Ship Bellona's arrival in New York City, tells us the exact day Bellona left the harbors of London, England and le Havre, France.

I estimated they left Mulhouse on September 10th (give or take a day) via a train leaving from Basel, Switzerland at the French/Swiss border that was heading for Paris. The Gerigs boarded the train as it passed through Mulhouse.

France was lagging behind other countries building its train network. It wasn't until late 1856 that a line connecting Mulhouse to Paris was established. Only a handful of months later in February of 1857 we find Sebastian Gerig, already 18 years old and anxious to avoid being conscripted into the French Army, applying and receiving a passport. The extracted passport information doesn't list the date of his departure but it must have been shortly after the passport's issue date. He listed the reason for his emigration as "pour s'y fixer" (to settle there).

Benjamin left 3 years later in October of 1860 while he was still 17 years old. He was living at Christian's home and working at one of the textile mills earning money for his trips passage. But apparently he hadn't earned enough as he arrived in New York with only 40 cents left. It is assumed he borrowed the remainder of the money he needed to continue his journey to Ohio from his friend Schlonecker he was travelling with. He listed the reason for his emigration as "rejoinder son Frère" (to rejoin his brother). Christian's reason was listed as "pour affaires" (for business/occupation).

All three Gerigs (Sebastian, Benjamin and Christian and his family) would have passed through and likely changed trains in Paris. A city that wouldn't see the Eiffel Tower built until January of 1887. From Paris the train took them to one of France's main ports, Le Havre, that sits at the mouth of the Seine River on the English Channel.

Christian Gerig's family boarded the Steamer Ship Bellona along with 282 other passengers, some of which had boarded the ship previously in London. They sailed from Le Havre, France for New York City on Tuesday, September 13th.

Sailing ships prior to coal fired steam engines took 5 to 6 weeks to cross the Atlantic. With steam power it shortened the journey to less than 2 weeks. But weather was the ultimate determiner of length of passage. The Bellona took 20 days to cross the Atlantic. Perhaps an extra week due to "heavy westerly winds" as reported by the New York Times. They arrived in New York City on Monday, October 3rd.

The Bellona may have had a surgeon on board the passage over. I saw a number of ads in the New York Times that appeared keen on advertizing the safety of their ships to potential customers listing this fact. The mode of transport had improved as well as concern for the passenger's health.



Christian Gerig arrived in New York City while The United States was still in the midst of the Civil War. The war ended in April of the following year.