

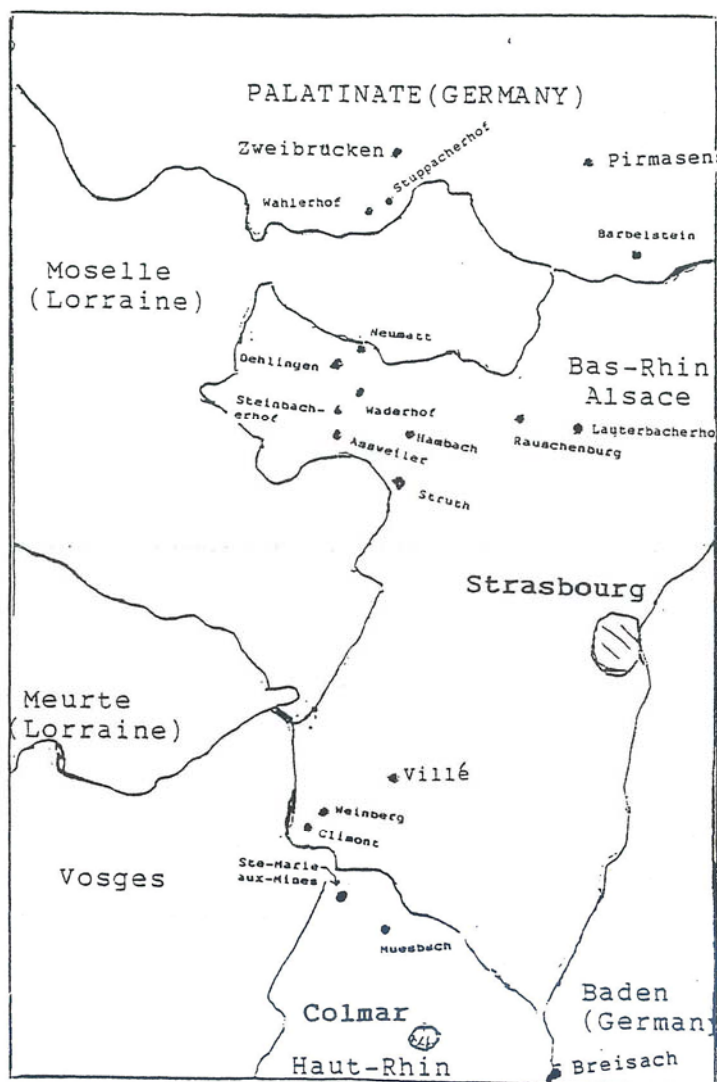
Who Was Jacob Hochstetler's Wife?

By J. Virgil Miller, DJH 5684

Let us now consider the possible movements of the American immigrant Jacob Hochstetler. He was presumably born at Liepvre near Ste. Marie-aux-Mines in 1712, if we accept the premise that he was the son of Jacob Hostettler, the refugee preacher from Winterkraut, Canton Bern, Switzerland. His father prepared to leave Alsace in 1713, when the French edict of toleration was revoked.

Erwin Hochstättler has uncovered some notarial records from the Colmar archives, in which Jacob Hochstettler [Sr., the Täuferlehrer] of Ste. Marie-aux-Mines is arranging some kind of transport across the German border to Breisach in Baden. That was in 1713, the year of the decree against the Anabaptists.¹ The person arranging for the transport is Nicholas Blank, a familiar name among the Anabaptists of Ste. Marie-aux-Mines. In 1713 our ancestor Jacob would have been only one year old, and his brother Johannes about three. So it would have been a very young family. The trip to Breisach was not long, perhaps fifty miles. Yet for those days it was a considerable expedition.

We know that some members of the Hochstetler family lived in Baden. They would have been no closer than cousins, since the two children were the oldest. I had long argued that Jacob Hochstättler in the PMCL² at Angelloch south of Heidelberg might be the father of our Jacob. But he was listed only in 1717 and 1724, when Jacob the immigrant was five and twelve years old. According to the notarial records, Jacob Sr., was back at Ste. Marie in 1721, after the initial tension had died down. Or had he too been only as far as Climont or some nearby place to wait until things had



This simplified map of Palatinate and Baden, Germany, and Alsace and Lorraine, France, shows the relative locations of many of the places mentioned in the accompanying article. It was sketched by J. Virgil Miller. All questions should be directed to him at 3217 Vinson Ave., Sarasota, FL 34232.

¹ Notarial records from Colmar Archives, found by Erwin Hochstättler

² *Palatinate Mennonite Census Lists*, Guth and Mast, Morgantown, Pa., Mastof Press, 1967

calmed down? Would his oldest son have gone to Weinberg (Climont) by himself to find a wife? Or rather, like Johannes's sons Christian and Isaac, did not the younger go with the older for the same purpose, to find a safe place, and incidentally, a wife?

Let's go ahead a bit in time, to see which Amish-Mennonites had gone to America before Jacob. In 1736 it was the Melchior Detweiler family. In 1737 it was a large group that included Jacob Beiler, Jacob Mast, Jacob Miller, Christian Hershberger and Christian Burki. In 1750 Jacob Burki came. Of all the families mentioned, the Burki or Birki fits the best. There are no records of emigrants. Those that did emigrate, usually left no records, because, after they were gone, the keeper of the parish book had no obligation to record those no longer there. So there is a kind of elimination game: Johannes, Jacob's brother, married Anna Wagler. Johannes Wagler married Anna Birki. Christian Detweiler of Dehlingen, son of preacher Jacob Detweiler of Stuppacherhof, was married three times: first to a Birki, then to a Wagler, and a third time to a Schertz, another of the Anabaptist families in that area in Struth. Nicolas Schertz, living at Kupfermühle (he was a miller) at the nearby hamlet of Hambach, and André Rogy, born 1782 at Waderhof, also nearby, both had wives named Birky.³ Considering that Christian Burki lived just south of Jacob Hochstetler in Bern Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, and the fact that Burki asked for land next to Jacob Hochstetler, I wonder if Jacob's wife was not also named Burki. Jacob Burki, who came to America in 1850, also lived in the same township. In Europe before emigration, I wonder if our ancestor Jacob may have worked on farms in the Struth area before emigration in 1738. He may have been there before his brother, Weinberg in 1747. Hans Burki of Neumatt may have stayed at Neuman until his son Christian left in 1737 and [presumed] son-in-law Jacob Hochstetler left for America in 1738, then moving to Bärbelsteinerhof, where he died in 1741. Jacob Burki may have remained in Neumatt until he left for America in 1750. I suggest Anna as the name of Jacob's wife, because it is the only female name used in all the families of the immigrant Jacob's children.

This fanciful argument to suggest the family of the wife of the immigrant Jacob cannot be proven at this time, nor can it be disproved. The presence of the Detweilers, Hochstetlers and Burki-Birki-Berkey families in two very narrow areas gives some reason for thinking that this has some underlying validity. There are other facts and factors that could be added, like the presence of members of the Stutzman family at nearby Waderhof, but more facts would make coming to a conclusion even more complicated.

³ Records from the area: Guth, *Amish Mennonites in Germany*, 1995; also J. Virgil Miller's records