

Mennonites on the Way from Markirch (Alsace) to the Münsterhof (Palatinate)

By Erwin Hochstättler, Descendant of Isaac Hochstettler, DJH 9000

Among the faint memories of the Hochstättlers of the Münsterhof is that they came from Switzerland. They left their country for religious reasons, migrating to Alsace. About 100 years ago my grandfather, Friedrich Wilhelm Hochstättler, sometimes talked of Markirch, which his daughter Barbara remembered as she had lived at Münsterhof, until her marriage about 1920. Another memory from my grandfather was that the Hochstettlers had returned to Switzerland for a short time, before they emigrated to Northern Alsace. The background of this is perhaps the return of Jacob Hochstetler sr. on a document of 1720 telling of his intention to help some Anabaptist women to emigrate from their country. This attempt ended in his arrest in Switzerland shortly afterwards.¹

This is surely weak evidence for the emigration from Markirch to Münsterhof but the record in official documents is sometimes not much more reliable, however, it confirms, on the whole, their migration. In 1857 the death record of Jacob Hochstättler, son of Isaac Hochstättler [DJH 9000] and his wife Maria Siegel, in Dreisen near Münsterhof says he reached the age of 92 years, and was born at Lauterbacherhof near Strassburg.² His tombstone, made of red sandstone, was barely readable in 1950, but bore (contained) the same dates. Today Wilhelm Hochstättler with his wife Maria, Otto Hochstättler his brother, with his wife Helene and Marga Hamm, Wilhelm Hochstättler's daughter, are today buried at the same place in the cemetery in Dreisen [See Newsletter, June 1999 for pictures]. Jacob Hochstättler was "Völliger Diener" [bishop, i.e. senior pastor] since 1815. At first researchers in Strassburg could not find Lauterbacherhof nr. Strassburg, but there is one near Reichshofen and a Lutterbacherhof near Saarunion.

At the beginning of the last century Christian Neff, editor of the *Mennonitisches Lexikon* (German edition of the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*), asked Friedrich Wilhelm Hochstättler, Münsterhof, to give him information about the Amish community of Münsterhof, which merged with the Mennonite community of Weierhof about 1860. His letter was translated by Virgil Miller and published in the *H/H/H Newsletter* [See *Newsletter*, June 1999]. F. W. Hochstättler wrote at that time, his great-grandfather Jacob Hochstättler, was

¹ Staastarchiv Bern, RM 83

² Gemeinde Dreisen

Erwin Hochstättler, family historian from Cologne, Germany is a retired director of studies at an evening Gymnasium or secondary school in Cologne. He is married to Helene, and they have three children and several grandchildren. Since the 1970s Erwin, whose father Jakob was born at Münsterhof in the Palatinate, has thoroughly researched his family history in Switzerland, Alsace, and the Palatinate. His discoveries help to shed light on the European background of our American immigrant ancestor Jacob Hochstetler, for which his American cousins are very grateful. He has worked closely with Virgil Miller and other historians.



Photo from Erwin Hochstättler

born on the Lautenbacherhof or Luttenbacherhof nr. Niederrödern. But near Niederrödern there exists no Lautenbacherhof or Luttenbacherhof. There was never an Amish community at Niederrödern (Northern Alsace) but there was a Mennonite church.

In the records of Lauterbacherhof near Reichshofen, however, one can find several birth records of Isaac Hochstettler's children with his signature and that of his brother Christian after 1783,³ but no traces of him before 1783.

In 1768 the Anabaptist Christian Hostettler (so he signed the documents), Isaac Hochstettler's brother, is mentioned at Ingelhof in the neighborhood of Lauterbacherhof near Reichshofen, He married Barbara Nafziger and later Madelaine Nafziger from Steinbacherhof,⁴ which is less than 2 km from Assweiler nr. Drulingen (Alsace). Christian died in Gumbrechtshofen nr. Lauterbacherhof in 1811. Christian Naffziger, who was married to Christian Hostettler's daughter, Catherine, signed this death record, in which his wife's father's name is spelled "Chretien Hoffstettler." He did obviously not know the name of his wife's



Year 2000 photo by DEH

Your editor, left, as well as many of you Newsletter readers, and Erwin Hochstättler from Cologne, Germany are seventh cousins as our ancestors Jacob and Johannes were brothers. Arianne and I spent several enjoyable days with Erwin and Helene in their home in September 2000, reminiscing over our time spent together on the 1989 Heritage Tour. Erwin and I also reviewed some of the activity and progress made in the research of our mutual family history since then.

grandfather and had no correct knowledge of her father's birthplace; for the entry says: Christian Hostettler was born in "Markirchthal dit Wingarten."⁵ Several researchers tried in vain for many years to find a place with this name, without result. But after a long time other sources turned out to be successful.

In 1769 Christian and Isaac Hochstettler's sister Maria Anna, daughter of the Anabaptist Joannis Hochstättler, married in Niederschlettenbach nr. Bärbelsteinerhof (Palatinate), where her brother Isaac lived after 1766 and was minister. She knew the correct name of her birthplace, which one can read in the churchbook of Niederschlettenbach: WEINBERG. Weinberg, is the solution for "Markirchthal dit Wingarten". The French name for Weinberg is Climont and is situated ca. 10 km north of Markirch (Ste. Marieaux-Mines). She also knew the names of her parents: The Anabaptists Joannis Hochstättler and Anna Wagler, who were of course also the parents of Christian and Isaac Hochstettler.

³ ABR Strasbourg

⁴ Otto Showalter, Kaplaneihof

⁵ Commune de Gumprechtshoffen

In addition to this information, the churchbook of Weinberg contains these names in 1747: The death of Anna, a six-months old child of the Anabaptists Johannis Hochstetler and Anna Wagler, who had possibly lived in her youth in Muesberg, only 2 km southeast of Markirch, where she possibly got acquainted with Johannis Hochstetler.

Another piece of information, which we have from Anna Maria Hochstettler, Niederschlettenbach, is very interesting: She declared in 1769 that she was baptized by an Anabaptist minister in Asswiller nr. Drulingen (Alsace), when she was 13 years old.⁶ As she was 25 years old at the time of her marriage in 1769, she was born in 1744 and lived in Asswiller near Drulingen in 1757 at 13 years of age. Probably a few years after 1747 her family emigrated from Weinberg to Asswiller nr. Drulingen in the vicinity of Steinbacherhof in Northern Alsace, where the wives of Christian Hochstettler, Madelaine and Barbara Nafziger, had lived before⁷ and so got acquainted with their later husband.

In Luttenbacherhof nr. Saarunion, there are traces of several Mennonites in the records between 1740 and 1780, such as Johann Bürcky and Hans Bürcki.⁸ Ulrich Siegel, Elschbacherhof, lived also in the region of Saarunion and might have been the father of Isaac Hochstettler's first wife, Maria Siegel.⁹ Perhaps Isaac H. lived at Luttenbacherhof only for a short time. In 1765, when his son Jacob, the first of the Münsterhof Hochstättlers, was born, Isaac H. was only 25 years old. Probably Maria Siegel died immediately after her son's birth. Isaac H. married shortly afterwards Anna Rupp, the widow of Hans Rinckenburger, who lived on the Bärbelsteiner Hof nr. Erlenbach/Niederschlettenbach in the Palatinate. She was already mother of three children.¹⁰

About 1765 Luttenbacherhof nr. Saarunion (Alsace) was managed by the family "von Geispitzheim" and leased to Mennonites just as the Münsterhof, where David Holly, Jacob Müller and Jacob Kennel were mentioned as renters until 1790,¹¹ when the property of the German nobility was confiscated by French officers. This might also explain the relationship between Luttenbacherhof and Münsterhof.

At Markirch the Anabaptist preacher Jacob Hochstettler (father of Johann and Jacob, the immigrant of 1738) lived again in 1721 after returning from Switzerland, where he had been arrested the year before. In 1721 he transferred an obligation of 600 Livres Tournois to the Anabaptist Nigi Blanck,¹² who also had signed together with him a petition for the Anabaptist community in 1719.¹³ In this petition they applied to Herzog Pfalzgraph Christian III to get a reduced rate for the protection money ("Schutzgeldermässigung") for the past six years, when only six Anabaptists had stayed in Markirch, who had not left Markirch in 1713. They had even to flee several times to Montbeliard or Lorraine during these six years. In 1719 however, the number of Anabaptists in Markirch had again risen to 14.¹⁴ But

⁶ LA Speyer, Best. Nr. D 2, Nr. 312b, Fol 485 - 492

⁷ Otto Showalter, Kaplaneihof

⁸ ABR Strasbourg, 8 J 281 Luttenbacher Hof

⁹ Virgil Miller, *Both Sides of the Ocean*, p. 221

¹⁰ LA Speyer Nr. 27, Nr. 5a u. 20, L Kampfmann, Amt Bertwartstein C 19, C 53, C 58

¹¹ LA Speyer (35)

¹² AHR Colmar, 4 E Not Ste Marie-aux Mines, carton 83, Verschiedene Acten

¹³ AHR Colmar, E 2018

¹⁴ AHR Colmar, E 2018

four years later, in 1723, their number had declined to 13 according to a document signed by Nigi Blanck and David Schärtz.¹⁵ After 1721 no traces of Täuferlehrer Jacob Hochstettler have turned up.¹⁶ Perhaps Täuferlehrer Jacob Hochstättler had died between 1721 and 1723 and David Schärtz had followed him as Täuferlehrer. For, on the 9th of October 1723 Nigi Blanck and David Schärtz (and not Jacob Hochstettler) signed the document in Markirch, in which they assured, that in 1723 not more than 13 families of the Anabaptist community had been in "Maria Kircher Thal" (one less than in 1719).

In 1730 the "Anabaptist Pierre Hohstette" is mentioned in Markirch, when he intended to emigrate in the direction of Breisach ("vers Brisach").¹⁷ This might mean he had just become 21 years of age and therefore had to leave his home, as the number of Anabaptists was not allowed to increase in Markirch. If this age 21 was the reason for his emigration, he was born in 1709.

Michel Blanc and his wife (Anna Hochstettler) lived in Markirch (Landhaus) among 22 other Anabaptists in the "Communité des Anabaptistes" according to a list of 1732.¹⁸ Probably this couple had married just before, as they had no children in 1732. Several births of them, however, are registered in the Anabaptist deathlist of Markirch until Michel Blanc's death in 1756.¹⁹ Among the other persons, who are registered in Markirch in 1732, is a "veuve Hostette".²⁰ There is no indication, whether she was related to Jacob Hochstetler, sr. or not, but she could have been his widow.

In 1741 Vrena Hochstättler, 25 years of age, so born in 1716, died after several weeks of sickness in the home of her brother-in-law, Michael Blanck, and her sister Anna Hochstättler in Markirch.²¹ So there lived at least four Anabaptists with the name of Hochstättler in the region between Markirch and Weinberg, which are only about 10 km apart, who could have been the children of Jacob Hochstettler, sr. and siblings of Jacob Hochstetler the emigrant of 1738 to America. Joannis, who lived at Weinberg, married to Anna Wagler, Pierre emigrating in the direction of Breisach (vers Brisach),²² Anna, married to Michel Blanc and Vrena, single, born 1716. Their father, the Anabaptist preacher Jacob Hochstettler sr., lived at Markirch (Ste Marie-aux Mines) at least from 1697 until 1721. Jacob Hochstetler the immigrant was possibly their brother, and also lived in this region before 1738. After all, this is not exact proof that the route from Markirch ("Markirchthal dit Wingarten") to Weinberg, Asswiller, Luttenbacherhof, Bärbelsteinerhof, Lauterbacherhof went to Münsterhof, but there are a number of indications, that the report of this migration might be correct.

¹⁵ AHR Colmar, (see the copy)

¹⁶ Letter of Robert Baecher, Phastatt, of Mai, 20. 2003

¹⁷ Collection Degermann 3566, Hotel de Ville, Ste Marie, Madelaine Balland

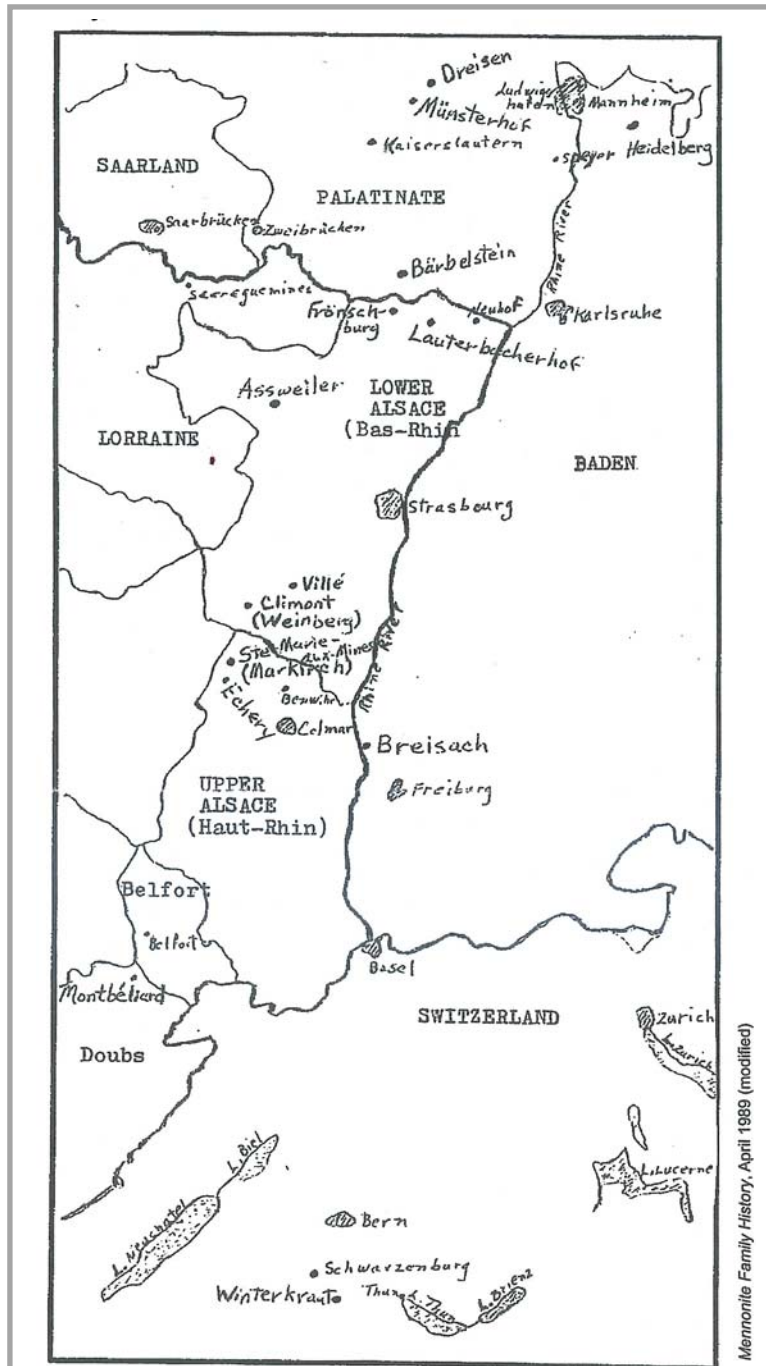
¹⁸ AHR Colmar, Baillage de Ste Marie-aux-Mines 1732, E 2089, Communauté des Anabaptistes

¹⁹ AHR Colmar, 201 J-dep'òt 28 Affaires diverses, Anabaptistarum Liber martuarius 1737 inceptus

²⁰ AHR Colmar E 2089, Eschery et Petite Lièpvre, 1732

²¹ AHR Colmar, 201 J-dep'òt 28 Affaires diverses, Anabaptistarum Liber martuarius 1737 inceptus

²² Collection Degermann 3566, Hotel de Ville, Ste Marie, Madelaine Balland



Mennonite Family History, April 1989 (modified)

This map highlights many of the places named in Erwin Hochstättler's article that are related to the history and migration of the European Hochstettlers. Note especially 1) WINTERKRAUT the farming hamlet near Schwarzenburg in Switzerland, where the Thurerlehrer Jacob Hostettler was born; 2) Echety near STE. MARIE-AUX-MINES (in German, Markkirch) in Upper Alsace where the Täuferlehrer and Jakob Amman came about 1697; and 3) MÜNSTERHOF near Dreisen in Palatinate where Erwin's ancestors came about 1800. The movements of the 26-year-old Jacob Hochstetler and his unnamed wife who came to America in 1738 with two young children are less clear. Map adapted by J. Virgil Miller, first used in April 1989 Mennonite Family History, page 59.