

**35. GIESLER / GEISLER / GISLER**

It is uncertain what the spelling of this name should be. It was pronounced "Geesler," and in German was spelled "Giesler." That is the spelling I choose to use except when quoting the documents. It is not a name which has survived in the Amish-Mennonite community in Ontario.

A new gust of Anabaptism swept through the Bernese Oberland in Switzerland like a mighty windstorm between the years 1670 and 1690, appearing to have brought well over 200 family names into the movement. The name **Gisler** appears in a list of Anabaptists from this era from the Steffisberg and Schwartzenegg areas. Though it is probable that Giesler families who settled in the Amish Mennonite settlement of Wilmot Township in Upper Canada in 1800s descended from these Anabaptists from the Bernese Oberland, connections have not been found.

Two men by the name of Giesler settled in Wilmot Township. They appear to be uncle and nephew, but the puzzle in the Geisler family, of how Christian and John Giesler, remains unsolved.

**CHRISTIAN GIESLER** was listed as the occupant of Lot 12, South Snyder's Road, on Wilmot's 1830 report. He had cleared the roadway, built himself a cabin, and had cleared sufficient land to qualify for the patent to the front 50 acres of his lot, but it took until October, 1850, to secure the patent! (1) (see notes below)

According to the 1831 census, Christian had cleared 20 acres, was the only occupant of his cabin, and owned two horned cattle. In March 1839, H. W. Peterson wrote a letter to King's College (the forerunner of the University of Toronto) on behalf of Christian "Gisler," stating that Giesler wanted the front 50 acres but had not had the money to pay the fees. He also wanted to remain the purchaser of the rear 150 acres and is willing to pay the lease with interest, does not have the money now, but hopes to raise it during the summer.(2)

From the 1851 census, we gather Christian Giesler was born about 1783 in Germany. At that time Catherine and Barbara Kipfer were sharing his house as well as John "Geisler," age 30. Christian, Catherine, and John were listed as single, A widow Barbara Kipfer was also listed with the Nicholas Lichti family 1851; so it is likely that Barbara Kipfer living with Christian Giesler was single, as was her sister, Catherine. Barbara Kipfer, the widow, was the sister-in law of the single sisters – Catherine and Barbara.

From the land registry abstract we learn that Christian Giesler had also purchased 50 acres adjacent to his 50-acre frontage from John Brubacher. In 1859, John "Gehsler" purchased the total 100 acres through Sheriff's sale.(3)

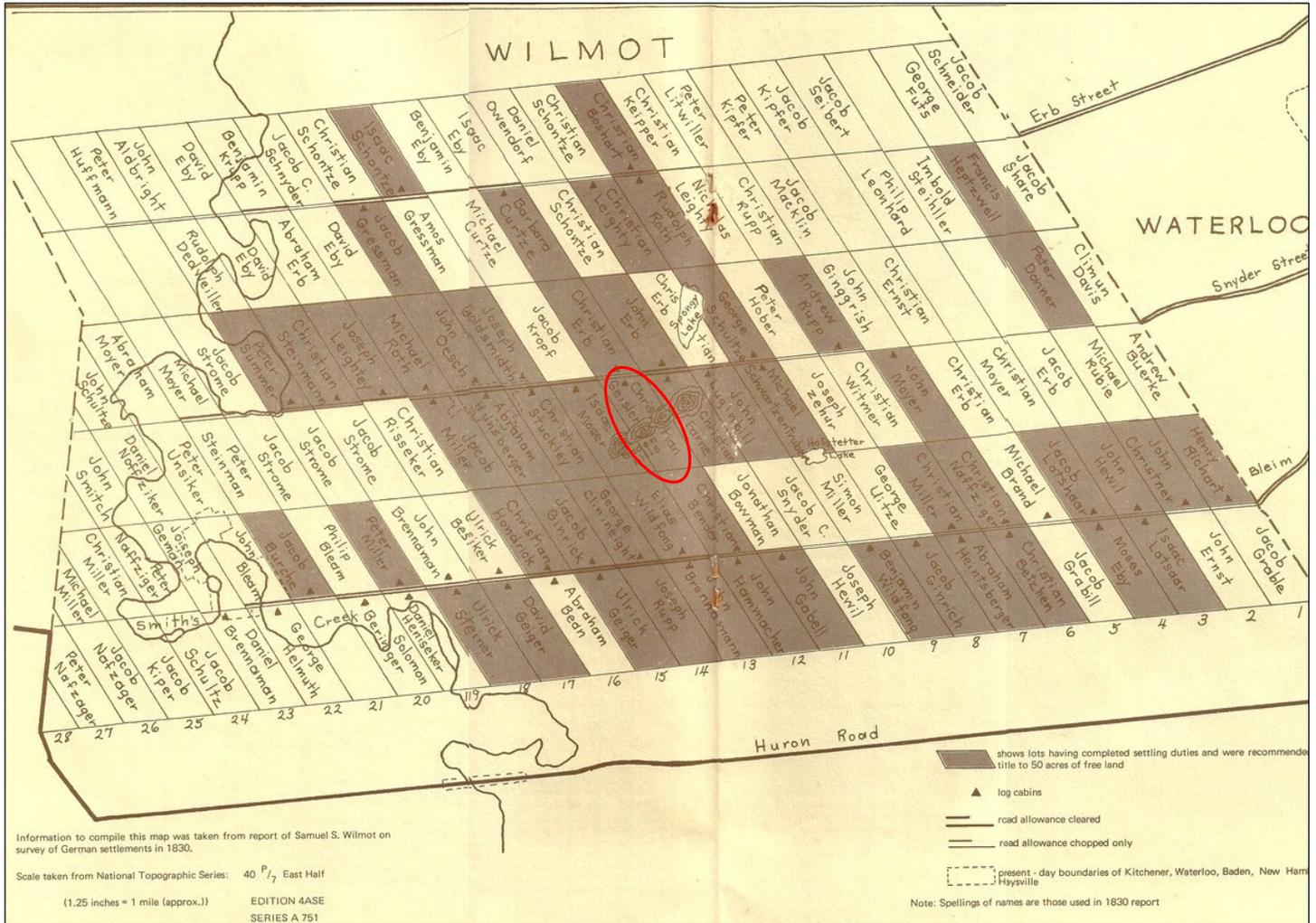
A Christian Giesler owned Lot 11, Concession IV, Block A, Wilmot Township from 1855 to 1862. At the time of sale his wife was Christiana.(4) This couple has not been found in the 1861 census. Was this the Christian of the German Block or another?

**JOHN GEISLER** was married in 1860, to Elizabeth Zehr, daughter of Joseph Zehr and Barbara Kennel. John's parents names were John and Catherine Geisler. A Barbara "Gisler" was married in 1862 to Christian Ingold. She was said to be a resident of the United States, and her parents were also John and Catherine. It

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seems that John Geisler, perhaps because his parents had died, came to live with Christian who may have been an uncle or some other relative.

John's death record gives his place of birth as Mulheim, Canton Baden, Germany. One finds a Mullheim, several kilometres north of Basel, Switzerland, and about four kilometres from the Rhine River in Baden. John died of consumption, from which he had suffered for five or six years, at age 50. Dr. P. Zehr was listed as his physician.



## Scan of the German Block, central Wilmot Township, Waterloo County, Upper Canada

Showing by whom the farm lots were claimed/settled in 1830.

The red ovals show the farm of:  
 Christian Giesler on Lot 12, South Snyder's Road

150 Years - Sesquicentennial of the Amish Mennonites of Ontario  
 Lorraine Roth & Dorothy Sauder  
 Published by Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario and the Western Ontario Mennonite Conference, 1972

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JOHN AND CATHERINE GIESLER/GISLER FAMILY

I. JOHN GEISLER

m. Catherine \_\_\_\_\_

Children: (2 known)

1) John Geisler, son of John and Catherine Geisler

- b. ca.1820, Mulheim, Baden, Germany (civil death record)
- d. 26 Jan 1870, bu. Kropf Family Cemetery, east end of Baden (5)
- m. 10 Apr 1860, Wilmot, Township, Canada (church record)

Elizabeth Zehr, dau. of Joseph Zehr and Barbara Kennel

- b. 17 Jan 1828, Woolwich Township, Canada
- d. 21 Apr 1909, bu. Steinmann Mennonite Cemetery

Elizabeth's widowed mother was living with John and Elizabeth in the 1861 census and with Elizabeth in 1871.

Children:

- a. Barbara Geisler, b. 2 Jun 1862, Wilmot
  - d. 3 Aug 1885, bu. Steinmann Menn. Cem.
  - m. 6 Dec 1881, Wilmot

Rudolph Miller, son of Christian S. Miller and Maria Roth

- b. 23 Apr 1859, Wilmot
- d. 27 Nov 1909, bu. Steinmann Menn. Cem.

Children:

- (1) Mary G. Miller (1862-1945) m. Moses Schultz (5)
- (2) Gideon G. Miller (1885)

2) Barbara Gisler, dau. of John and Catherine Gisler

- b. ca.1822 \_\_\_\_\_ Germany; d. ?
- m. 25 Mar 1862 South Easthope/East Zorra by Bishop Joseph Ruby

Christian Ingold, son of Jacob Ingold and Elisabeth Bauman

- b. ca.1808 Bavaria, Germany; d. Hay Township?

This may be the "old Ingold"(6) who is buried in the United Church Cemetery on the Bronsen Line, Hay Township

Note: How Christian Giesler b. ca.1783 in Germany is connected to this family is unknown at this time.

Deed Poll/Sheriff of Waterloo to John Gehsiler/ July 25, 1859

". . . suit of John Gehsler to sell certain of the lands and tenements of John Schott administrator of all and singular the good . . . which were of Christian Gehsler deceased at the time at the time of his death, who died intestate and in consideration of the sum of one thousand three hundred and twenty eight pounds eight shillings and five pence . . . truly paid by John Gehsler . . . tract of land and premises situate lying and being in the Township of Wilmot in the County of Waterloo, and Province of Canada, containing by admeasurement one hundred acres . . . composed of the front quarter of Lot number Twelve on the south side of Sniders road in the said township of Wilmot . . . and the south half of the north one hundred acres of Lot number Twelve, on the south side of Sniders road . . ."

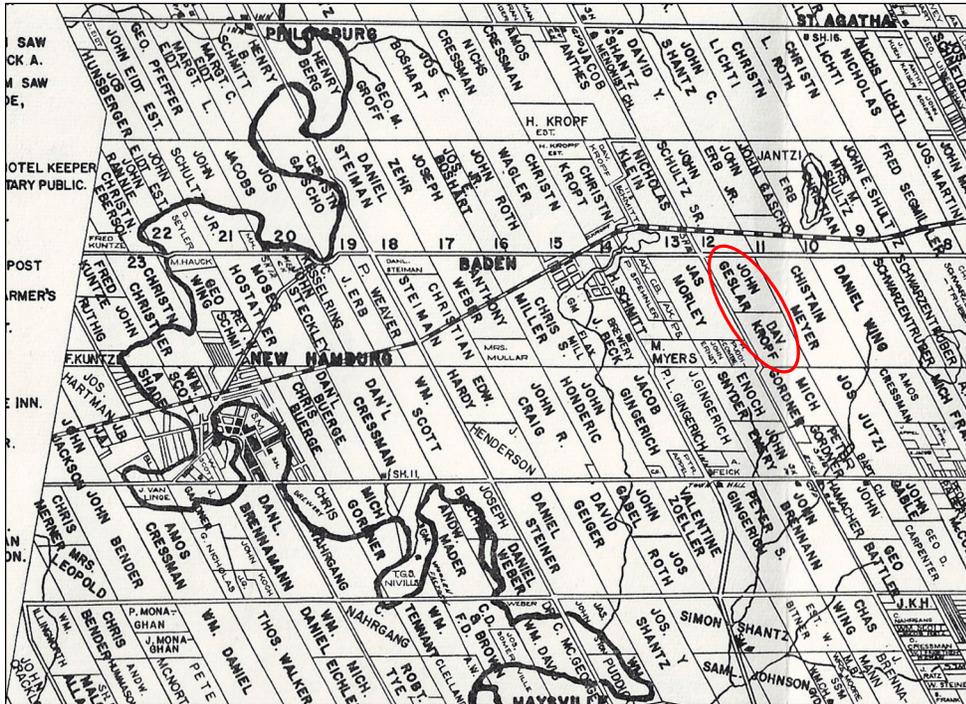
[signed] Geo. D. Anderson  
Sheriff County of Waterloo

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Note for above text of Property Sale to John Gihiler/Geisler by Sheriff's sale:

*\*This odd way of simply saying that John was purchasing the north half of the lot is probably because the "front quarter" was the part which would have been the Crown Patent granted to Christian Geisler. The rest of the north half had been purchased by Christian Geisler from John Brubacher.*

*A John Schott was married to Catherine Gingerich, daughter of Jacob S. Gingerich. It would be a bit surprising if this young immigrant would have been an administrator for the estate, but I do not know of any other John Schott.*



*The red oval marks the farm on Lot 12 on South Snyder's Road with John Giesler (Geslar) as the owner in 1861*

Map: Wilmot Township of the County of Waterloo, Canada West 1861

Credit: Geo. R. and G. M. Tremaines

## NOTES:

The files referred to in these notes are kept in Lorraine Roth's Collection in the Archives at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario. Digital copies of some of the transliterations and translations of records in Bibles or other old books can be obtained from Bruce W. Jantzi at [bwjantzi@gmail.com](mailto:bwjantzi@gmail.com)

- 1) The story of the early Amish-Mennonite settlement in Wilmot Township is told in *The Amish and Their Neighbours, The German Block, Wilmot Township, 1822-1860* by Lorraine Roth. Waterloo, Ontario: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1998.
- 2) This letter, dated 19 Mar 1839, is found in the University of Toronto Archives collection, File No. A68-0010, Box 50 Wilmot, File Unit 2. (Copy of notes in the GIESLER file)
- 3) A photocopy of the document, partial transcription and comments are found in the GIESLER file.
- 4) The document is found on microfilm Roll #C-5 (Wilmot), item #2352, at the Resgistry Office in Kitchener.
- 5) There is a stone for John on the Baden cemetery and one for Elizabeth at the Steinmann Mennonite Cemetery. (Row J #3)

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- 6) *Peter Litwiller and Elizabeth Lichti Family History and Genealogy* by Mary and Earl Litwiller, Petersburg, Ontario, 2nd Edition, 1998. The Schultz family is found on page 148.
- 7) Statement made by Clarence Gascho, Zurich, Ontario. Clarence's great-grand-mother was an Ingold -- hence his interest in anyone with the Ingold name.
- 8) Notes on H.W. Peterson correspondence with the University of Toronto
- 9) a) 1851 Wilmot Census: Christian Geisler/Gisler, b. ca.1783 \_\_\_\_\_ Germany  
(living with him were John Geisler, age 30, and two Kipfer women in 1851 census in Wilmot)
- b) Death record:  
John Giesler, d. 26 Jan. 1870, consumption 5-6 years, Dr. Peter Zehr 186465  
(Wilmot) 50, farmer, b. Mulheim, Canton Baden, Germany 010648  
info: John Gascho, farmer Mennonite

Lorraine Roth  
Tavistock Ontario  
January, 2010

~ Updated and Reformatted by Bruce W. Jantzi, October 2020