

21. DANNER / DONNER

Donner is the spelling used by the family today, but in the few instances in which the name appeared in Canada, it was spelled Danner. In German, Tanner/Danner derives from Tanne, meaning fir tree. Bernese Heimatort or places of legal origin for this surname include Langnau im Emmental, Schangnau, Trub, and Worb. The Swiss surname register lists "traditional" residences with the *Tanner* spelling, but it does appear in old Langnau Churchbooks as *Danner*.

Peter Danner, his wife Barbara (born Nafziger), and four children sailed from Amsterdam on the Ship *Nimrod*, along with the families of land scout Christian Nafziger, Christian Steinman, and 'Apostle' Peter Nafziger, an ordained Amish Mennonite bishop, and brother of Peter Danner's wife. Also on the ship was Peter Beck, unmarried, who was a brother of 'Apostle' Peter Nafziger's wife Barbara Beck. Since Barbara (Nafziger) Danner was born in Hocheim, Germany, it is assumed that the Danners were also from that part of Germany. Peter and Barbara's oldest children are said to have been born at Mainz, Germany (probably in the area rather than in the town). Since they travelled with a group coming from Bavaria, were they also living in Bavaria at that time?

The Ship *Nimrod* docked in Philadelphia on August 18, 1826. It is presumed that the Danners made their way to Upper Canada in late summer or fall of 1826. Although they were not specifically mentioned, they were probably with the rest of the group who arrived at The Twenty (Vineland) on October 1st and in Waterloo a few days later, as reported by Jacob Moyer in a letter back to his native Bucks County, Pennsylvania. (1) (See Notes below)

Peter Danner claimed Lot 2, North Snyder's Road, and proceeded to clear it. In 1827 he appeared on a Waterloo Township census list, indicating the family was still residing with the Mennonites in Waterloo while their own house was being built. In 1828 his name appeared on a congregational list. In 1829 and in 1830 he was also listed on surveys of the German Block. In 1829, his lot had eight acres cleared and there was a house, but Danner himself was listed as being in the United States. The surveyor, however, assured the government that those who were in the U.S. might well come back again. (2) In the Samuel S. Wilmot 1830 report, Peter qualified to receive his patent (deed) for 50 acres.

The German Block on which the Amish were making their claims was a Crown Reserve. In 1828, it became part of the endowment granted by the government to the newly established King's College (now the University of Toronto). King's College set out to change the rules of settlement considerably -- not in favour of the settlers, of course. Hence, by 1829 Peter Danner and Peter Nafziger were in the United States, looking for another location. No doubt, the change of policy was one of the major causes for their leaving Canada. (3)

Although Peter Danner was recommended to receive the patent to 50 acres, he did not stay around long enough to claim it. He probably sold his improvements to Henry W. Peterson, who did receive the patent in 1836.

The Danners had four sons when they arrived in Canada. Three children are reported to have been born in Canada -- Joseph in 1826, Catherine in 1829, and Magdalena on January 1, 1831. They were likely born in Waterloo Township, because it is doubtful whether Peter and Barbara had moved to Wilmot before leaving for Ohio. In 1831, the Danner family made the move to Butler County, Ohio, where their last two children were born. Hearing that land was cheaper in Illinois and that others from Europe were settling there, the Danners and others in Ohio pulled up stakes once more, and by 1837 the Danners were in Mclean County, Illinois. (4)

PETER AND BARBARA (NAFZIGER) DONNER FAMILY(5)

Peter Danner/Donner, son of Peter Danner and Jacobea Nafziger
grandson of Kaspar Danner and Barbara Rogy

b. 1790, perhaps at Mühlhofen, Germany
d. 18 Feb 1866, bu. Wilson Cemetery, Danvers, Illinois
m. in Germany

Barbara Nafziger, dau. of Valentin Nafziger and Magdalena Spring

b. 13 Nov 1794, Hochheim, Germany
d. 19 Sep 1881, bu. Wilson Cemetery, Danvers, Illinois

1) Peter Donner, b. 4 Dec 1818, Mainz, Germany

d. 8 Oct 1909, Danvers, Illinois
m. 20 Nov 1853, Danvers, Illinois

Catherine Naffsinger, b. 24 Aug 1819, Württemberg, Germany

d. 21 Apr 1909, Danvers, Illinois

2) Jacob Donner, b. 17 Apr 1820, Mainz, Germany

d. 9 Nov 1897, Aurora, Nebraska
1m. _____

Mary Maurer, dau. of Peter and Mary Maurer

b. 18 Sept 1828, Alsace, France
d. 18 June 1849, Danvers, Illinois

2m. 20 Mar 1853, Woodford Co., Illinois

Veronica Schweitzer, b. 23 Oct 1831, Rhodes, France

d. 5 May 1904, Aurora, Nebraska

3) Christian Donner, b. 19 Sep 1823, Mainz, Germany

d. 6 Feb 1911, El Paso, Illinois
m. 28 May 1849, Metamora, Illinois

Catherine Roggy, dau. of Christian Roggy and Catherine Engel

b. 16 Dec 1832, Waderhof, France [in America: Engel Article, p.205] (5)
d. 9 Jan 1929, El Paso, Illinois

4) John Donner, b. 4 May 1825, Mainz, Germany

d. 23 May 1917, Walnut Creek, California
m. 5 Aug 1850, Tazewell Co., Illinois

Sarah Burwell, b. ___ Sept 1833, Tazewell Co., Illinois

d. 12 May 1911, Walnut Creek, California

5) Joseph Donner, b. ____ 1826, Waterloo Township? Canada

d. 11 Mar 1862, Bowling Green, Kentucky
m. 20 May 1849, Metamora, Illinois

Mary Gingrich, dau. of Johannes Gingrich and Magdalena Gerber

b. 16 Apr 1828, Salm, France
d. 7 Sept 1865, Peoria, Illinois

DANNER

- 6) Catherine Donner, b. 23 Oct 1829, Wilmot Township, Canada
d. 20 Sept 1864, Carlock, Illinois
m. 18 July 1852, Danvers, Illinois
Amos Yoder, son of Bishop Jonathan Yoder
b. 17 Dec 1828, Centre/Mifflin Co., Pennsylvania
d. 25 May 1912, Carlock, Illinois
2m. to Catherine Kistler Lantz
- 7) Magdalena Donner, b. 1 Jan 1831, Wilmot, Canada [1829: Engel Article, p.204]
d. 23 Nov 1920, Panola, Illinois
m. 6 Dec 1852, Woodford Co., Illinois
Christian Engel, son of Bishop Joseph Engel and Barbara Roggy
b. 11 Aug 1830, Singling, Lorraine, France
d. 6 Dec 1907, Panola, Illinois
- 8) Barbara Donner, b. 13 Mar 1833, Butler Co., Ohio
d. 3 June 1912, Stanford, Illinois
1m. 21 Oct 1855, Danvers, Illinois
Christian Erisman, b. 14 Nov 1819, Edertal, Germany
d. 14 Mar 1870, Stanford, Illinois
2m. 3 Aug 1872, Stanford, Illinois
Jacob Erisman, b. 26 May 1828, Wetzlar, Germany
d. 14 Sept 1898, Stanford, Illinois
- 9) Frederick Donner, b. 25 Mar 1835, Butler Co., Ohio
d. 13 Feb 1927, Gridley, Illinois
m. 31 Dec 1859, Woodford Co., Illinois
Barbara Gingrich, dau. of Johannes Gingrich and Magdalena Gerber
b. 14/16 May 1840, Atlantic Ocean(6) [25 July 1840: family record]
d. 9 Mar 1924, Gridley, Illinois

DANNER / DONNER FAMILY BACKGROUND (7)

Christian Danner – Twin brothers, Christian and Matthys Danner was baptized at Langnau im Emmental Feb. 7, 1647. The parents were named as Jacob Danner and Anna Griesbrunner. On Jan. 24, 1673, Christian Danner married Elsbeth Fischer, a daughter of Ulrich Fischer and Elisabeth Äschliman. Their children were baptized in the Reformed Church at Langnau im Emmental in accordance with civil law. In 1692 the Reformed Church minister Frantz Ludwig Moschard identified Elsbeth as an Anabaptist. In 1693 all known Anabaptists were physically forced to leave the village. Müller's *Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer* (1895) states that Elsbeth and her sister Magdalena "were persuaded to the Mennonite faith by their brother Ully Fischer, a very dangerous Anabaptist of Signau — in fact one of the worst of them."

A Christian Danner appears on a list of Anabaptists created at Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, Upper Alsace in 1697 as 'Christe Tanne' and in 1703 as 'Christen Doner'. A Christian Tanner and his wife Catharina rented the Neuhoef estate near Kirchheimbolanden in the Pfalz in 1755. Whether these two Christian Danners are one and the same, and whether their bloodlines connect back to the Christian Danner of Langnau and forward to Kaspar Danner of Mühlhofen, whose descendants emigrated to the United States and Canada, we can only speculate.

Kaspar Danner, possible son of Abraham Danner

Listed on the 1775 lit of Anabaptists in Pfalz-Zweibrücken. The list stated that his home was Bergzabern (which district encompasses Mühlhofen).

m. **Barbara Rogy** (see below for details of Barbara's first marriage to Johannes Miller)

Children:

1. **Peter Danner**, b. between 1763 and 1767

m. March 7, 1787 near Fränkisch Crumbach in the Odenwald of Hesse-Darmstadt

Jacobea Nafziger, dau. of Peter Nafziger.

In 1787 the newly-married Peter Danner took up the lease at Mühlhofen with Daniel Holly as co-signer. In December of 1792 French troops burned the homes and destroyed the crops at Mühlhofen.

Child:

a) **Peter Danner**

b. 1790, perhaps at Mühlhofen, Germany

d. 18 Feb 1866, bu. Wilson Cemetery, Danvers, Illinois

m. 1815, Germany

Barbara Naffziger, daughter of Valentine Nafziger and Magdalena Spring

b. Dec. 14, 1794 on Obertraisa estate near Fränkisch Crumbach, Hesse-Darmstadt

d. 19 Sep 1881, bu. Wilson Cemetery, Danvers, Illinois

Barbara was a sister to 'Apostle Peter' Naffziger

9 Children; see chart above

2. Anna Elizabeth Danner, b. ca.1768

1m. Peter Nafziger, son of Peter Nafziger and Elizabeth Ehresman

b. ca. 1766 at Illbach, d. 1797

2m. Johann Peter Nafziger, (his first wife had been Anna Barbara Unsicker)

b. 1855 at Uberau

d. May 19, 1805 at Eberstadt,

some descendants emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1827

3. Barbara Danner

m. 1790

Christian Beck, b. ca. 1760, d. Jan __ 1821, on the Wolferhof estate in

Christian Beck 1m. in 1784 to Katharina _____

In 1788 Christian Beck leased the Wolferhof estate at Neustadt im Odenwald.

Children:

a) Barbara Beck (1790-1865) m. 1812 to 'Apostle' Peter Nafziger (*in Wilmot, Canada for a few years*)

son of Valentine Nafziger and Magdalena Spring

b) Peter Beck (1792-1850) m. 1831 to Catherine Gingery/Güngerich (*in Wilmot, Canada for a few years*)

dau. of Johannes and Magdalena (Eckhard) Güngerich

c) Johannes Beck (1795-1865) m. Magdalena Rocke

d) Magdalena Beck (1806-before 1850) m. Johannes/John Steiger

e) Elisabeth Beck (b. 1811) m. Johann Peter Schantz.

Barbara Rogy first marriage to

Johannes Müller, d. 1763; co-leaser of Mühlhofen

Found in records: Widow Barbara Rogy asked a civil administrator to approve the assignment of guardians for their three children.

Children:

Guardian

1. Johannes Müller — Velten Güngerich

2. Magdalena Müller — Jacob Holly

3. Catharina Müller — Jacob Müller

Mühlhofen is a farming village in the Pfalz. It is located only two miles below the city of Landau, six miles southeast of Bewartstein castle, and eight miles above the Pfalz border with Lower Alsace. Mühlhofen was part of an enclave of land administered by the counts of Pfalz-Zweibrücken, though the bishop-prince of Speyer, who owned estates there. Mennonites were first brought in to improve the rundown properties in this area. In 1713 Adam Kurtz became the first Amish Mennonite leaseholder. Other Amish Mennonite families living at Mühlhofen and on nearby estates included names such as Holly, Müller, Nafziger, and Danner.

NOTES:

- 1) Jacob Meyer/Moyer to Christian Gross or Henrich Honsberger, October 9, 1826, quoted in *Maintaining the Right Fellowship* . . . by John L. Ruth. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1984), page 205. The original letter is located in the Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana, in the Hist. Mss. 1-10, Early Mennonite Correspondence and Papers Collection, Box 1, File 12.
- 2) John Goessman's 1829 report of his survey of the German Block in Wilmot Township (National Archives of Canada, RG1, L3, Vol.208(a), G/15, No.42pp-vv, Film #C-2032)
- 3) The story of this early settlement of Amish Mennonites in Canada is told in *The Amish and Their Neighbours, The German Block, Wilmot Township, 1822-1860* by Lorraine Roth. Waterloo, Ont.: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1996.
- 4) The Danners and their fellow Canadians who left for Ohio are mentioned in "Autobiography of a Pioneer" by Christian Ropp, published in *Centennial History of the Mennonites of Illinois, 1829-1929* by Harry F. Weber. Published by the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. Printed by Mennonite Publishing House, Scottsdale, Pa., 1931, pages 85, 89.
- 5) The outline and European information concerning the Danner/Donner family was taken from *The Peter Donner and Barbara Naffziger Donner Family* by Russel Gingrich Harris, 1990 with corrections and 1991 update, also by R. G. Harris. The article "Notebook-Keeper Christian Engel (1764-1838), Anabaptist Advocate in Napoleonic France , Part II: Engel Genealogy" by Neil Ann Stuckey Levine in *Mennonite Family History*, Volume XXVII, No. 4, October 2008, adds some details to the Donner outline, but also indicates some discrepancies.
- 6) In a letter written to his relatives in France, Johannes Gingrich had reported Barbara's birth "during a storm" on May 16. The ship manifest indicated it was the 14th. The family had always celebrated her birthday on July 25. *The Peter Donner and Barbara Naffziger Donner Family*, page 24.
- 7) Information for The Danner/Donner Family Background section was gleaned from *Amish Mennonites in Tazewell County, Illinois* by Joseph Staker, with some additional information given by Helmut Gingerich, Bavaria, Germany. [BWJ]

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~ Updated with new research information and reformatted by Bruce W. Jantzi, 2017