

22. DIENER/DIENNER

The Diener name is not found in the Amish Mennonite community in Ontario. However, three Diener women were brought to Canada by their husbands in the 1840s. Two of them remained and are represented by their numerous descendants.

The meaning of *Diener* in German is "servant," and is the common term used by the Amish Mennonites for minister. In the French records the name usually appeared with a double "n." In America the spelling is Diener.

THE DIENNERS IN FRANCE

Nothing is known of the origin of this family beyond Christian Diener, the grandfather of a family of orphans who came to America in 1838. At the marriage of his son Johannes Georg (usually known as Georg or Jery) to Magdalena Muller, his father Christian Diener was reported as being "absent" since before his birth at Loudrefing, near Chateau Salins in Lorraine, France.(1) (See Notes below) His mother was Barbara Risser who had died in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines in Alsace. The marriage of Georg Diener and Magdalena Muller took place in 1808 in Saulxures, Lower Alsace.

Another interesting record concerning "Johannes Georg," son of Christian has recently been found, and that is the record of his baptism in the Roman Catholic Church in Loudrefing. The English of the French is as follows: "On March 11, 1780, at 11 a.m., Jeremias Diener was born and was baptized the following day. Jeremias Diener is the son of Barbara Risser, Anabaptist by religion, who has sought refuge in this location for some time. She has said that she is married to Christian Diener who has abandoned her without any information as to his destination. The baby's godfather is Jeremias Houtton, laborer. Godmother is Christina Foller, unmarried, legitimate daughter of late Jean (John) Adam Foller, labourer in this location..." (2)



This story may be a clue as to why Georg Diener was sometimes called Jery. At the baptism he was obviously given the name Jeremias, probably after the godfather, who may not have been related or the record would have said so.

◀ *St. Leger's Church in Loudrefing, Chateau Salins, Moselle, Lorraine. This is the probable place of the baptism of Johannes Georg Diener in 1780, Loudrefing is a small village with several hundred inhabitants*

Credit: Aimelaime – commonswiki; creative commons

The lineage of Magdalena Muller is better known -- at least her mother's. Her parents were Ludwig (Louis) Muller and Marie Anne Sommer. Marie Anne (also known as Maria) belonged to a large extended Anabaptist Sommer family with roots in Switzerland. More details on the extended Sommer family will be found in the SOMMER Family Genealogical Introduction.

Georg and Magdalena set up housekeeping near Badonviller. During the later years of their residence there, and perhaps even from the beginning, they lived on a remote farm called les

Bordes, south of Badonviller. At first Georg was a miller but later turned to weaving, an occupation followed by his children as well. Nine children were born at this location.

For a few years between 1822 and 1830, the Dienner family was living at a farm called Thiaville, and the next two children were registered at Angomont in the Department of Meurthe-et-Moselle. This location was east of Badonviller. The last Old World home of the Dienners was St. Benoit-la-Chipotte in the Department of Vosges, southeast of Angomont. Here the youngest, Anna Diener, was born in November of 1830.

No doubt the family had been poor most of the time, but at St. Benoit things began to get worse. In February of 1833, 17-year-old Johannes Peter died. The story of his death as recorded by Menno A. Diener is that he was instructed to shoot the birds in a cherry tree -- the birds to be used for food as well as the cherries. He began playing with the gun, tripping the trigger and shot himself. (3) Less than two weeks later Georg, the father of the family also died.

LOOKING TOWARD AMERICA

After 1813, several of Magdalena Muller's siblings had made their way to America. They had kept in touch with their extended family in France, and after hearing of Georg's death, they tried to communicate to their sister Magdalena their willingness to sponsor the family's move to America. Before these plans could be carried out, however, Magdalena also died -- in March of 1837. Christian Diener, the second son of Georg and Magdalena, carried on the correspondence with his uncles in Pennsylvania.

In his letter of May 4, 1837, Christian advised his uncle Christian Miller of the death of his mother, Christian Miller's sister, in March. She had been anxiously waiting to hear from her brother, asking her children to go and look for the mail, but her brother's letter did not come until fourteen days after her death. Christian promised that if his uncle would send them money to come to America, they would work for him to repay it. All nine children wanted to go, and none wanted to go without the others. All of the children old enough to work were weavers. Joseph was also a miller, and Christian was also a wheelwright, and they could all farm. (4)

Christian described the work situation as follows: "One has to pay too much for everything and work too much for too little. The factories are going very badly -- the pieces [i.e. lengths of cloth] are very long, and [there is] little pay. And linen weaving is also overdone so that there is no profit." The Dienner family was experiencing the effects of the Industrial Revolution.

Evidently, Christian was told at the post office that it was not necessary to pay postage. In those days the recipient was expected to pay it. However, when it got to Paris, the letter was returned for postage; so Christian added a postscript, saying the factories were shut down and they had received notice to stop working. This time the letter was forwarded, and Christian Miller sent a bank draft for 1537 francs and 50 centimes, dated December 15, 1837. On December 26, 1837, Christian Miller died, leaving further negotiations with his brother Andreas/Andrew.

In preparation for their journey to America, the older Dienners who were already members of the church (Joseph, Christian, Elisabeth, Magdalena, Andrew, and George) asked the ministers for a "Church Letter." This was granted on March 3, 1838 and signed by Jacob Baechler, George Zehr, Peter Sommer, Jacob Gingrich, Joseph Goldschmidt and Hans Schartz. (5) The older Dienner brothers secured two passports. Joseph's contained the names of "Andreas, George, Maria, Barbara, and Anna," and Christian's the names of "Elisabeth and Magdalena." No doubt, the Dienners had given Lancaster as their destination -- the passports were returned with "Lancaster, England" as the destination. (6)

The nine orphans then made their way to Le Havre on the French coast and boarded the Ship *Erie*, which set sail on April 23, 1838, arriving in New York on May 25, 1838, a month later. (7) Evidently the Ship *Erie* had the reputation of being a slow boat, sometimes taking more than 80 days to make the crossing. (8) They must have had favourable weather conditions to make it in 32 days.

A list of the Diener children and their spouses follows. Those who lived or spent some time in Canada are highlighted and listed to the next generation.

THE GEORG DIENNER AND MAGDALENA MULLER FAMILY

Johannes Georg Diener, son of Christian Diener and Barbara Risser

b. 11 Mar 1780 at Loudrefing, Chateau Salins, Moselle (Lorraine) France

d. 5 Mar 1833 at St. Benoit-la-Chipotte, Vosges

m. 8 Nov 1808, Saulxures, Bas-Rhin (Alsace)

Madeleine Muller (Magdalena), dau. of Ludwig/Louis Muller and Marie Anne Sommer

b. 9 Nov 1788, Salm, Bas-Rhin (Alsace)

d. 17 Mar 1837, St. Benoit-la-Chipotte

Children:

1) Joseph Diener

b. 31 Dec 1809 at Badonviller, Canton Baccarat, Meurthe-et-Moselle

d. 30 Mar 1883, bu. Groffdale Cemetery (Gordonville Cemetery: Nancy Burkhard

1m. 29 Jan 1843;

Barbara Beiler, dau. of Pre. Joseph Beiler and Mary Lapp

b. 4 Feb 1808; d. 23 Jul 1851

2m. Sep 1854

Susan Warry, b. 3 Sep 1822; d. 15 Feb 1911

2) Christian Diener

b. 9 Feb 1811 at Badonviller, Meurthe-et-Moselle (Lorraine)

d. 9 Nov 1859, bu. Hertzler Cemetery, Morgantown, Pa.

m. 1840

Catherine King, dau. of Abraham King and Mattie Nisley

b. 23 Dec 1819; d. 12 Jul 1887, bu. Hertzler Cemetery

2m. to John Lapp

3) **ELIZABETH DIENER**

b. 12 Apr 1812 at Badonviller

d. 31 Jul 1880, bu. 19th Line Cemetery, East Zorra Twp., Ontario

m. 1847, Pennsylvania

Joseph Schrag, son of Jacob Schrag and Magdalena Holly

b. 12 Jan 1804 at Zweibrucken, Germany

d. 11 Mar 1880, bu. 19th Line Cemetery

Joseph was previously married to Catherine Schwartzentruber. After marrying Joseph and her arrival in Canada, Elizabeth wrote back to her brother Andrew Diener. (9) Elizabeth and Joseph farmed in South Easthope Township, Perth County. The cemetery where they are buried is a short distance from their farm, but across the road in Oxford County.

Children: (to Joseph's first marriage)

a) Michael Schrag (ca.1841-1899) m. Anna Maria Eicher

b) Christian Schrag (1846-1912)

(to Elizabeth and Joseph)

c) Andrew Schrag (1848-1927) m. Wilhelmina (Mina) Grube

d) Magdalena Schrag (ca.1852-1910) m. Jacob Linger/Lingner

e) David Schrag (ca.1854-) m. Harriet Ann _____

Andrew and Mina had 13 children and eventually moved to Saskatchewan. Magdalena married Jacob Linger in 1884 at Sebastopol. She died in 1910 and is buried in Grace United Cemetery (formerly Zion Evangelical), Tavistock. On the tombstone the name is spelled Lingner. David was married to Harriet Holland in 1879 - probably in Paris, Ontario. David was a machinist in Hamilton (10), but his place and date of death have not yet been found.

DIENER

4) Pierre/Peter Diener

b. 12 June 1813 at Badonviller

d. 8 July 1827, Thiaville, Angomont, Meurthe-et-Moselle

5) Jean/Johannes Peter Diener

b. 27 Mar 1815 at Badonviller

d. 22 Feb 1833, St. Benoit

6) **MAGDALENA DIENER**

b. 5 Jan 1817 at Badonviller

d. 30 Nov 1880, bu. German Cemetery, Concord, Tennessee

m. before 1843

Jacob Waltz, b. 3 Oct 1818, Germany

d. 29 Feb 1880, bu. German Cemetery, Tennessee

Jacob wrote a letter to his brother-in-law, George Diener on November 12, 1843. He reported that he had taken up a lot at the west end of Wilmot Township. He described life in Canada and did not encourage anyone to move there. He complained about the poor markets, the cold weather and the problems in the church.(11) They spent some years in Long Green, Baltimore County, Maryland, but eventually migrated to Concord, Tennessee.

Children:

a) Christian Waltz, b. ca.27 Aug 1843, Wilmot, Canada

d. 1863, bu. Long Green, Baltimore Co. Md. (12)

This son's name & birth were reported in Jacob Waltz's letter mentioned above. He was described as a healthy child, but was not listed in Menno Diener's history.

b) Jacob Waltz (1845-1866) bu. Long Green, Md.

c) Elizabeth Waltz (1847-1884) m. George Lintz

d) Barbara Waltz (1849-1910) m. Adam Lintz

e) Andrew D. Waltz (1850-1904) m. Beulah B. Walker

f) Anna Waltz (1854) bu. Long Green, Md.

g) Magdalene Waltz (1856-1857) bu. Long Green, Md.

f) John C. Waltz (1857-) m. Lena Hertzler

(Lived in Tennessee when daughter Pearl was born in 1891)

7) Andre Diener, b. 4 Sept 1818;

d. 18 Mar 1820 at Badonviller

8) Andrew Diener

b. 19 Sept 1820 at Badonviller

d. 1 Mar 1897, bu. Beiler Cemetery, Ronks, Pa.

m. 20 Feb 1848

Veronica King, dau. of Abraham King and Mattie Nisley

b. 30 July 1818; d. 7 Mar 1877, bu. Beiler Cemetery

9) George Diener (13)

b. 23 Apr 1822 at Badonviller

d. 13 Jan 1891, bu. Lehman Cemetery, Elkton, Hickory Co., Mo.

m. 16 Jun 1863, Berlin, Somerset Co., Pa.

Mary Ann Mossholder, dau. of Elias and Isabella Mossholder

b. 5 Dec 1839, Berlin, Pa.

d. 15 Jun 1824, bu. Clearfork, Cass Co., Mo.

2m. to John B. Nofziger

DIENER

10) Maria/Marie Diener (14)

- b. 1 May 1824 at Thiaville, Angomont, Meurthe-et-Moselle
- d. 17 Dec 1859, probably bu. in Ronks (Pa.) Cemetery

11) Maria Barbara Diener

- b. 7 May 1826 at Thiaville
- d. 28 Aug 1887, bu. Beiler Cemetery, Ronks, Pa.
- m. 23 Nov 1851

David Riehl, son of Lewis Riehl and Francis Fisher

- b. 31 Aug 1816, Chester County, Pa.
- d. 24 Mar 1890, bu. Beiler Cemetery

12) **ANNA DIENER**

- b. 6 Nov 1830 at St. Benoit-la-Chipotte, Vosges
- d. 29* June 1914, bu. East Zorra Menn. Cem., 16th Line, Tavistock, Ont.
- m. 25 Mar 1856, Berks Co., Pa.

Nicholas L. Roth, son of Michael Roth and Magdalena Lichti

- b. 21 Aug 1832, Wilmot Township, Upper Canada (Ontario)
- d. 20 Dec 1919, bu. East Zorra Mennonite Cemetery

Nicholas and Anna (Diener) Roth farmed in East Zorra Township, Oxford Co. A genealogy of this family was published in 2002.

Children:

- a) Daniel D. Roth (1857-1932) m. Catherine Jantzi
- b) Magdalena Roth (1859-1949) 1m. Joseph Schwartzentruber
2m. John Gascho
- c) Jacob D. Roth (1862-1892) m. Elizabeth Beck
- d) Nicholas D. Roth (1864-1937) m. Mary Wagler
- e) Barbara Roth (1865-1950) m. David Roes
- f) Christian Roth (1867-1954) m. Nancy Kropf
- g) Anna Roth (1869-1936) m. Eli King
- h) Elizabeth Roth (1870-1953) m. Joseph Kropf
- i) Veronica Roth (1874-1951) m. Daniel S. Iutzi

*According to the civil death record, Anna (Diener) Roth died June 29. Other sources give June 24.

NOTES:

- 1) Letters and written sources by the Diener children contained the names and places where the Dieners lived. These, however, were frequently misspelled and then misinterpreted by their English-speaking descendants. Through research in the records, the modern names and spellings of these places have been found and are used in this summary. One will find the old versions in Menno A. Diener's *History of the Diener Family*. Arthur, Illinois, 1964, Pathway Publishing Corp., Aylmer, Ontario. The old spellings are also found in later histories whose authors used Menno's book.
- 2) This baptismal record was found by Nancy Burkhard on the LZDS film 1331543, 1780, p. 491 and 2084253, item 3, 1780 fol. 3v.
- 3) This story is found on page 8 of Menno Diener's 1964 history.

DIENER

- 4) This letter has been introduced and annotated by Neil Ann Stuckey Levine and translated by Anne Augspurger Schmidt-Lange in "An 1837 Letter from the Nine Diener Orphans in France" in *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, July 1994.
- 5) This letter is reproduced, discussed, and translated by Elmer F. Kennel in "The 1838 Diener Church Letter From France" in *Mennonite Family History*, Vol. VI, No. 2, April 1987
- 6) The passports were reproduced in *History of the Diener Family* – Joseph's on page 27 and Christian's on page 41. A translation of Joseph's is also found on page 249 of the Nicholas L. Roth and Anna Diener genealogy.
- 7) National Archives, Washington D.C., Microfilm Series M-237, Roll #36.
- 8) *Descendants of Moses M. Diener & Sarah Arlena (Raber) Diener* by Ronald G. Diener, Woodburn, Oregon, 2003. In his section "Family History Photograph Album," Ron includes some interesting facts about the *Erie*, taken from "Merchant Sail," pages 1114-1115, by William A. Fairburn.
- 9) The letter was published in *The Daniel Schrag Family History & Genealogy* by Keith G. Schrag et al, Kitchener, Ontario, 1981, page 14. A second letter, dated January 27, 1848, has also been preserved but not published.
- 10) Joseph Schrag had purchased some land in Ellice Township. When the family sold it after his death, the document of sale gave David's occupation, residence, and his wife's given name.
- 11) Comments and a translation of this letter are found in "A Glimpse of the Amish Settlement in Wilmot in 1843" by Lorraine Roth in *Mennogeschicht*, Vol. 6, No. 2, September, 1988
- 12) The burials at Long Green, Md., are listed in *The Amish in America: Settlements That Failed, 1840-1960* by David Luthy. Aylmer, Ontario: Pathway Publishers, 1986, page 173.
- 13) We are indebted to Ronald G. Diener (Note #8) for the details concerning son George Diener.
- 14) Menno A. Diener had listed Marie, born about 1830 or 1832, as the youngest of the family. Her birth record in 1824 places her between George Jr. and Barbara. A tombstone in the Ronks Cemetery bears the initials "M. D." and is believed to be hers.

Additional Sources of Information:

Much information concerning the Diener family in France was initially received in correspondence with William Diener between Verna Schwartzentruber and Lorraine Roth. Much of the recent Diener research in the French records was done by Neil Ann Stuckey Levine. Researcher Wendy Wild has found a few additional dates, etc.

Additional Published Articles not mentioned in the Notes:

- 1) "Christian Miller to the Rescue" by Neil Ann Stuckey Levine, in *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4, 2001.
- 2) "George Diener" by Gloria J. Autry in *Mennonite Family History*, Vol. IX, No. 2, April 1990
- 3) "Moses Schallenberger's Journey to California in 1844" by Gloria Diener Autry in *Mennonite Family History*, Vol. IX, No. 4, October 1990
- 4) "Catherine (Miller) Verly's Lament" by Neil Ann Stuckey Levine in *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, January 1995

Additional Genealogies not referenced in the notes:

- 1) *Descendants of John Riehl and Sarah Diener Kennel* [by Elmer Fisher Kennel and John R. Kennel], 1984, revised 1985 (Sarah Diener was the daughter of Christian Diener and Catherine King)
- 2) *Nicholas L. Roth and Anna Diener Family History and Genealogy*, by Edna Yantzi et al. Tavistock, Ontario, 2002

List of Documents, etc. in DIENER Document and Correspondence File:

(kept in the archives at Conrad Grebel University College, Waterloo, Ontario)

- 1) Copy of stamp and signature of mayor of Saint-Benoit-la-Chipotte on birth certificate of Anna Diener (6 Nov 1830), acquired by William Diener on May 26, 1970. English translation of birth record and seal of certificate reproduced in *Nicholas L. Roth and Anna Diener Family History and Genealogy*, page 248.
- 2) Master copy of translation of Joseph Diener and siblings Andre, Georges, Marie, Barbe and Anne passport, dated 21 March 1838. Reproduced in the Nicholas L. Roth and Anna Diener genealogy, page 249.
- 3) Transcribed copy of ship passenger list (Ship *Erie*, arrived in New York, May 25, 1838) (photocopy of original and transcription on pages 250, 251 in the Nicholas L. Roth and Anna Diener genealogy)
- 4) Copies of original letter of Jacob Waltz of Wilmot Township, Canada, to George Diener of Pennsylvania, dated 12 Nov 1843, transcription and translation, received from Elmer Kennel, Lancaster, PA. An annotated translation was printed in *Mennogesprach*, newsletter of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, September, 1988.
- 5) Photocopy of original letter of Elisabeth "Dinner" to her brothers and sisters and in-laws in Pennsylvania, dated 27 January 1848, with translation and comments.
- 6) Select views of Badonviller (a photocopy) following World War I, received from William Diener.
- 7) Photopies of documents (birth and death records) received from Nancy Burkard, with translation of significant data
- 8) Extra copy of "Our Ancestors in Europe" from Menno A. Diener's *History of the Diener Family*
- 9) A complete photocopy of the *History of the Diener Family* is found in a separate file "DIENER BOOK."

Lorraine Roth
Tavistock Ontario
June 2010

~ Reformatted and Updated by Bruce W. Jantzi, 2020