

5. BECKER

According to Jacob R. Bender in *A Brief History of the Mennonites of Ontario*, Joseph Becker was among the early settlers of Wilmot. His name appears here and there, but not much is known about him.

According to his death record he was born in "Schlettstatt," Alsace, which may be Selestat -- probably referring to the district rather than the town. He died in 1877 at the age of 87; so that places his birth about 1790.

In 1834, Joseph Becker bought the north quarter (50 acres) of Lot 19, South Bleam's Road from Michael Kurtz. He registered to purchase the rear 150 acres from King's College (later the University of Toronto) in 1835. He transferred the south part to Daniel Weber, but acquired a deed for the north 50 acres from the University in 1854, having paid 31 pounds and five shillings.

In 1838 Joseph married Catherine Schrag, recently arrived from Bavaria with her father Jacob and several siblings. The marriage was recorded in the *Canada Museum*, the German weekly newspaper published in Berlin (now Kitchener).

Although we have not found her death date, Catherine must have died before 1851 since Joseph was listed as a widower in the 1851 census. Apparently they had no surviving children. In the 1851 census Joseph Becker and Magdalena Schrag were listed as living with the Peter Miller family. Magdalena was his sister-in-law. In the 1861 census they were living in a one-storey log house built in 1830. Henry Kotha, age 19, listed as Methodist, was living with them.

Joseph advertised the sale of his property in the *Deutsche Canadier* (the newspaper that replaced the *Canada Museum*) to be held on March 27, 1852. He must not have been able to sell it, for it was not until 1861 that he sold it to Daniel Schrag, his brother-in-law. Daniel's son Christian operated a cheese-making business here. It became known as the Oak Grove Cheese factory. The name was later used for the cheese factory established in the town of New Hamburg.

At the time of his death, Joseph was living in New Hamburg. No doubt, he was buried in the New Hamburg cemetery, which was moved to Riverside in the 1930s. Whether the Schrag women, Catherine his wife and Magdalena his housekeeper were buried in New Hamburg or at Wilmot Centre is not known.

Joseph Becker, b. ca.1790 at "Schlettstatt" Alsace (*date derived from death record which states he died at age 87*)
probably Selestat

d. 18 Feb 1877 at New Hamburg, Ontario

m. 24 June 1838 by Bishop John Oesch in Wilmot

Catherine Schrag, dau. of Jacob Schrag and Magdalena Holly

b. 7 May 1802 on the Kaplaneihof, Zweibrucken, Germany

d. before 1851

No surviving children

For more information on Catherine Schrag, see the SHRAG Family Genealogical Introduction

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1) Burkholder, L. J. *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario*. . . Published by Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935. Chapter X: "The Amish Mennonites in Canada" by Jacob R. Bender, p. 220.

2) *The Daniel Schrag Family History & Genealogy*, by Keith G. Schrag et al. (Kitchener, Ontario: published privately, 1981) 1986 Revisions (inside back cover)

3) University of Toronto Archives: Correspondence with Settlers No A68-0010, Box -47, Wilmot, Lot 19, SBR

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