

Selected Garber Family Branches of Augusta and Shenandoah Counties, Virginia – Their Pennsylvania & European Origins

The origins and descendants of Johannes (Elder John. H.) Garber, ?1717 – 1787, of Shenandoah County, Virginia have been well researched and documented by a number of writers. The objective of this article is to modestly supplement their works with aerial plats of the farms on which some of these Garber ancestors lived along with photographs of the associated houses and land. In addition, it provides more detail regarding the timelines of their settlement in different areas of Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia.

Following is a bibliography of previously published books and articles relating to Elder John (H.) Garber, ?1717-1787 which were important sources for this article.

A) *Emigrants, Refugees and Prisoners* by Richard Warren Davis, Volumes I and III, self-published by the author, 1995 and 1999. Davis did prodigious research on the European origins of many Mennonite and Brethren families and their first generation descendants in America

B) *Johannes “John H.” Garber (1732-1787) – His Descendants in the Shenandoah Valley* by Wayne E. Garber, Wish Book Press, Studley, VA, 2007. This comprehensive book narrates the passage of the Garbers from Switzerland through Pennsylvania, Maryland and into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It features many interesting photographs of Garbers, their homes and possessions.

C) *Family Tree of Jacob Garber (1797-1876) of Augusta County, Virginia and His Descendants* by S. W. Garber, 1919. This short book is helpful for its early date and short biographies. Solomon W. Garber, 1849-1934, was a grandson of Jacob Garber and lived in Virginia until 1894. He moved to Iowa, but acknowledged assistance from Garber cousins in Virginia including Saloma Cline, Ira Garber and Ruth Williams, all of whom lived in Rockingham or Augusta Counties.

D) *Descendants of Jacob Garber (1797-1876) of Augusta County, Virginia*, by Blaine Ryman, self-published, 1998. Ryman continued the work of S. W. Garber, in letter D, above, and did a very

thorough job of including descendants to the 1990's. The book also includes many Garber related vignettes and biographies. It is important for the discovery and inclusion of the only known photograph of Jacob Garber, 1797-1876, of Augusta County, VA.

E) *A Tour of Ten Important Anabaptist and Reformed Sites in Rural Switzerland* by Samuel E. Wenger, Mastof Press, Morgantown, PA, 2007. Wenger visited Steffisburg, Canton of Bern, Switzerland, the home of the Garbers/Gerbers of the seventeenth century and included many interesting photographs in the book.

F) *Brethren Roots*, Spring 2011, published by the Fellowship of Brethren Genealogists. Article by Dr. Emmert Bittinger titled, "Elder John Garber (1732-1787) Minister of Flat Rock Congregation in Virginia". The primary contribution of this carefully researched article is establishment of the date of Elder John H. Garber's immigration to America.

G) *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, July, 1999. "Gerber, Garber and Garver Progenitors in Pennsylvania: Part One" by Steven R. Garver and Jerry R. Masters. Meticulously researched and foot-noted, this article carefully documents the immigration and settlement of a number of early Gerber/Garber families and maps where they lived in Pennsylvania. It is an invaluable resource for sorting the various Gerber/Garber/Garver immigrants to Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century.

Note- italics used for text from other sources in the body of this article, as well as footnotes from those sources.

Terms

A) Dunkers – the informal name attached to a German sect founded in 1708 and led by Alexander Mack. They were called "Dunkers" because of their baptism by immersion. Many of the Dunkers migrated to America in the 1720's and 1730's. The group formally adopted the title of Fraternity of German Baptists in 1836, and the name was changed in 1871 to German Baptist Brethren.¹ Several divisions within the church followed, but most of the Virginia congregations affiliated with the Church of the Brethren branch, established in 1908.

The earliest Swiss Gerbers were members of the Mennonite sect which had much in common with the Dunkers. Soon after arriving in America, the Garbers in this article became members of Dunker congregations.

For purposes of simplicity and convenience, the church will be referred to as "Brethren" or "Church of the Brethren" throughout the article, unless being quoted from another source that uses one of the other terms.

B) Elder: The Brethren did not have paid, professional clergy. Their leaders were elevated within the congregation through several levels. After a period of years, the highest esteemed were elected as Elders.² Most were farmers with little formal education. It is instructive to understand what the role of Elder was in the early Brethren Church. *"As was customary with other congregations, the Elder was elected for life. The seniority in the ministry was very much in evidence, even to the seating behind the*

1 Honeyman, Gale, personal correspondence, 2018.

2 Honeyman, op cit.

*table. The Church was democratic in form but when the Elder, after consultation with the other ministers and deacons, made any declaration, it was usually accepted by the Congregation.”*³

C) Carver – Garver – Gerber – Garber: Spelling of names was often phonetic in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The most common Swiss spelling in the 17th and 18th centuries was Gerber. When spoken with a German accent, it often sounded like Garver or Carver to an English hearer, and, thus, the variations.

D) Generations: In reading various Garber histories and historical documents the same person is often referred to by variations of his name. For clarity's sake the successive generations under consideration in this article will be referred to as follows -

Generation 1 – will be referred to as “Johannes Gerber” He was born in 1694 and died in 1748. In some sources he is referred to as “Johannes (Hans) Gerber or Johannes Garver. When quoting another source, this article will retain the name from that document.

Generation 2 – will be referred to as “Elder John Garber.” He was born ?1717 and died in Shenandoah County, VA in 1787. Again, when quoting from another source, the name will be unchanged.

Generation 3 – will be referred to as “Elder Abraham Garber.” He was born in Pennsylvania or Maryland in 1760 and died in Augusta County, VA in 1848.

Generation 4 – will be referred to as “Jacob Garber.” Jacob was born in Augusta County, VA in 1797 and died there in 1876.

³ Eisenberg, John Linwood, *The History of the Church of the Brethren in the Southern District of Pennsylvania*, Quincy Orphanage Press, 1941, pages 7-9.

Generation 1 - Johannes Gerber, 1694-1748

Johannes Gerber was born Oct., 1694, Schwarzenegg, Bern, Switzerland and died in Heidelberg Township, York, County, PA in 1748⁴. According to Garver and Masters (source G, above), “*Hans Gerber/Garber possibly immigrated in 1726; signed petition on May 10, 1728 of settlers in Colebrook Valley for protection from Indian attacks near Falckner's Swamp and Goschenhoppen;*⁵ *in Coventry Twp., Chester Co., PA, by 1729; in 1744 apparently moved to Mennonite settlement in Heidelberg Twp., York Co., PA, along with brother, Nicholas, on whose 100-acre farm he probably lived; inventories (dated Apr. 26, 1748) of Nicholas owning farm worth 150 pounds and Hans owning improvements worth 115 pounds; will*⁶ *of Hans dated Mar. 5, 1748, and proved June 6, 1748.*”⁷

Below: Village of Schwarzenegg, Bern Switzerland, birthplace of Johannes Gerber in 1694. Schwarzenegg is five miles east of Steffisburg.



4 Davis, Richard Warren, “Emigrants, Refugees and Prisoners”, Vol. III, p.85

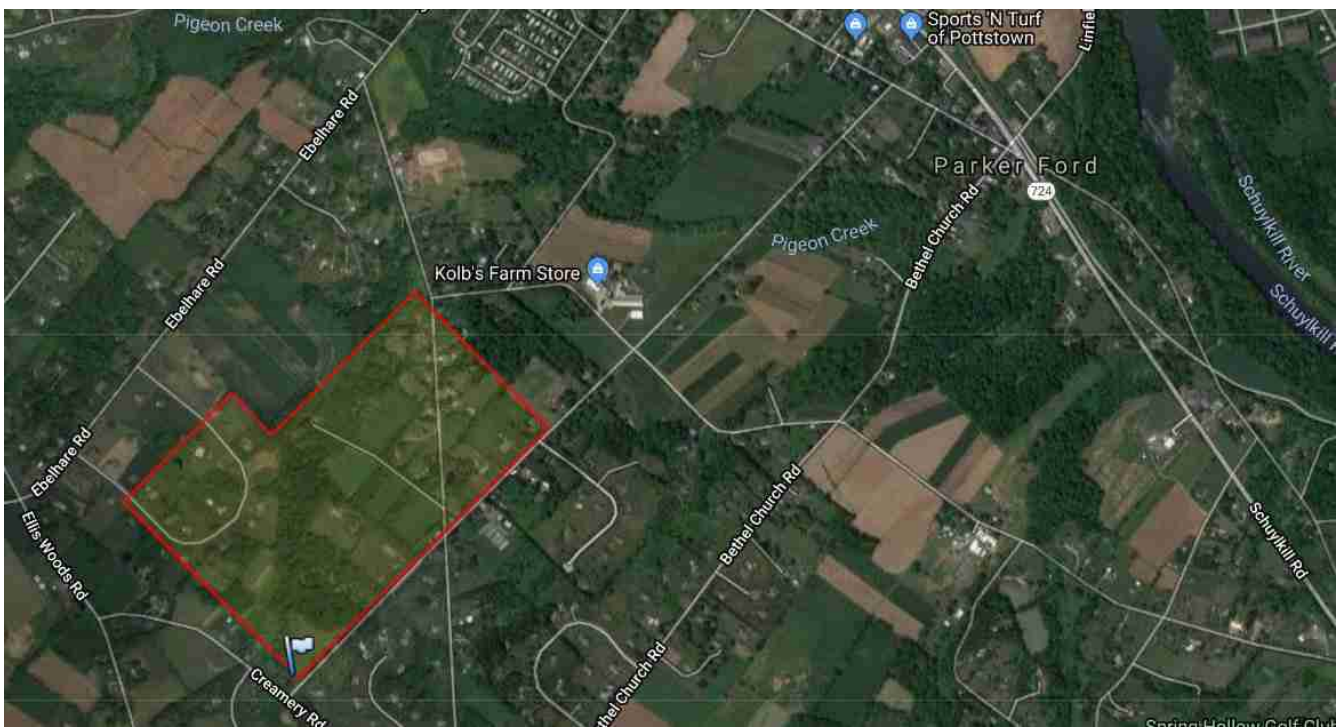
5 *Daniel Wunderlich Nead, Pennsylvania Germans in Settlement of Maryland (Lancaster, PA; New Era Printing Co., 1914), p. 40, and J. M. Henry, History of the Church of the Brethren in Maryland (Elgin, IL; Brethren Pub. House, 1936), p. 42. The signature of Johannes Garber on the petition is identical to the signature on his will in 1748. Johannes Garber and Christian Stoner, the German Baptist Minister, signed together.*

6 *Will Y-2-192, Lancaster. Executors were Samuel Bechtly and Andrew Hershy; witnesses were Frederick Gelwick and Martin Beyer.*

7 Garver and Masters, “Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage,” July, 1999, p. 25.

As noted by Garver and Masters, above, Johannes Gerber owned 366 acres with Jacob Enger in Coventry Township, Chester Co., PA in 1735.⁸ The writer has not been able to locate a survey of this property. Jacob Enger, however, patented 120 acres in Coventry Township on the west side of Schuylkill River in 1735.⁹ It was described as “situate on a Branch of Schuylkill in Chester County.” Adjacent property owners were noted on the survey, and a tract belonging to “John Garber & Jacob Enger” was on the north side. The 366 acre tract, above, was bordered by “Jacop Casdrop and Casper Mengle.” These two men also bordered the 120 acre Jacob Enger tract. It is reasonable to conclude that the “John Garber and Jacob Enger” tract on the north side of the 120 acre Jacob Enger tract is, in fact, the 366 acre Garber/Enger tract.

Below: Possible location of Jacob Enger tract of 120 acres on Pigeon Creek, a branch of the Schuylkill River in Coventry Township. The 366 acre tract was in the “notch” on the north side and would have extended to and beyond Ebelhare Road.¹⁰ Much of Coventry Township has been developed, and many old property lines have been erased, making correct placement of the plat uncertain.



It is possible that the Mennonite Garbers first came in contact with the Church of the Brethren while in Coventry Township. This second oldest Brethren congregation in America was established in 1724 by Martin Urner and was less than three miles from the Johannes Garber plat, directly above. “Elder Urner was assisted in his ministry by Caspar Ingles (Mengle)” whose property bordered Johannes Gerber. “The Coventry church prospered from the beginning, and was soon a much larger congregation than the mother congregation in Germantown.”¹¹

⁸ Garver and Masters, op cit, p. 31, footnote number 20.

⁹ Survey Copy Book A47, page 70.

¹⁰ Plat and satellite overlay from PlatPlotter program by Jason Rushton.

¹¹ Brumbaugh, Martin Grove, “A History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America,” Brethren Publishing House, Mount Morris, IL, 1899, p. 275.

Nicholas Carver, brother to Johannes Gerber, patented 150 acres in Coventry Township in 1734, and Michael Miller did likewise in 1737.¹² Michael Miller's family was closely connected with the Gerbers over the next three generations with a number of intermarriages. Nicolas Gerber, Johannes Gerber and Michael Miller later lived on adjacent properties near Hanover, PA in 1744. This was a move of some seventy-five miles to the southwest. Obviously the families were closely connected, and the migration of these families together is evidence that the Johannes Gerber of 1728 in Coventry is the same John Garber who died in York Co. in 1748.

Carver and Masters concluded that Johannes Gerber was living on the same property with his brother, Nicholas, because the inventories from both men's estates in 1748 showed Nicholas owning the farm, worth 150 pounds, and Johannes owning improvements worth 115 pounds.¹³

Below: Satellite view of the farms purchased in 1744 by Samuel Bechtol (plat 2, 150 acres), Michael Miller (plat 3, 150 acres) and Nicholas Gerber (plat 1, 100 acres). This placement of the plats is achieved by entering the actual survey calls from the deeds into the "PlatPlotter"¹⁴ program. The placement of the plats from the 1740's still align very nicely with today's roads and boundaries. It is also consistent with the plat placement done by Garver and Masters, and is 2 ¾ miles northeast of downtown Hanover, PA.



¹² Garver and Masters, op cit, pages 30-31, footnote number 20.

¹³ Carver & Masters, op cit., p. 25

¹⁴ <http://platplotter.appspot.com>, written by Jason Rushton.

Below: View of Nicholas Gerber/Johannes Gerber 100 acres near Hanover, PA, taken from Gitts Run Road. This is a northeasterly view of plat 1, in satellite photo, above.



According to Richard Warren Davis, the children of Johannes Garber were:¹⁵

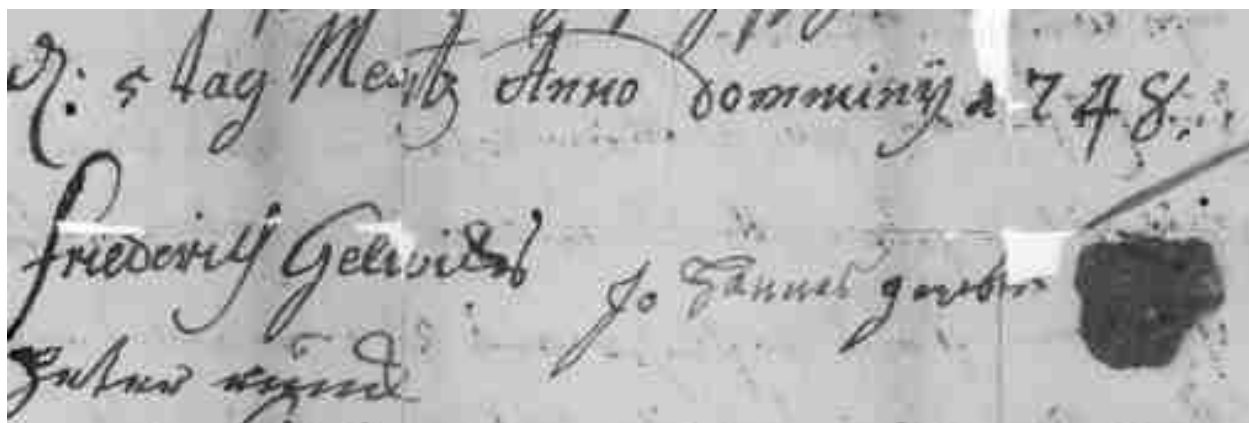
- A) Elder John Garber, b. c. 1728. d. 1787, Shenandoah County, Virginia. His wife was Barbara (probably Miller).
- B) Martin Carver, b. 1733, moved to Frederick County, Maryland in 1766. married Anna.
- C) ? Daniel Carver, b. 1738, moved to Nash County, Maryland.
- D) Nicholas Carver, b. c 1742, moved to Virginia in 1783.

Two well researched sources propose this Johannes Gerber as the father of Elder John Garber. They are sources A (Davis) and G (Garver & Masters). They generally assert that Johannes Gerber came to America prior to 1728 when a Johannes Gerber signed a petition to the governor requesting protection from Indian attacks in Coventry Township, Chester Co., PA. Garver and Masters state that “The signature of Johannes Gerber on the petition is identical to the signature on his will in 1748.”¹⁶ His name has not been found, however, on any ship's lists for vessels arriving in Philadelphia prior to 1728.

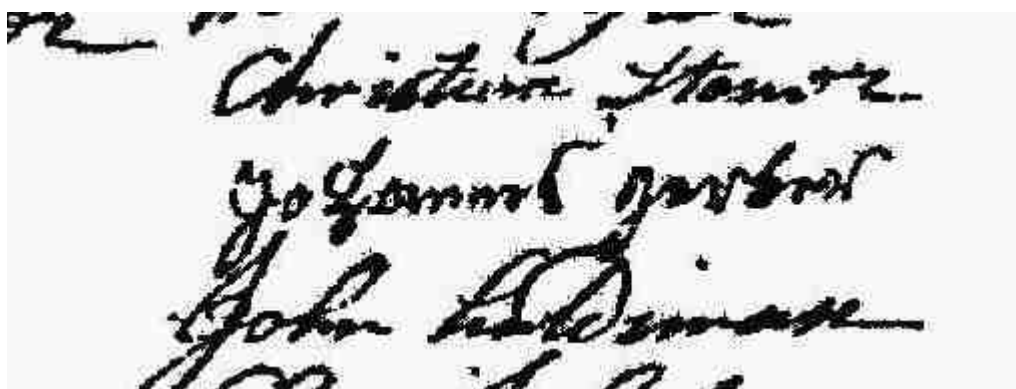
¹⁵ Davis, “Emigrants, Refugees and Prisoners,” Vol. III, p. 86. Garver and Masters do not include Daniel as a son, and, apparently, Davis had some question in this regard with his addition of a question mark beside Daniel's name.

¹⁶ Garver & Masters op cit. Footnote number 19 on page 30.

Below: Signatures of Johannes Gerber, firstly, from his 1748 will and, secondly from the petition of 1728.



The image shows a handwritten document in cursive script. The top line reads "Anno domini 1748". Below it, the name "Johannes Gerber" is written in a large, flowing cursive hand. There are other smaller, less legible words and numbers on the page.



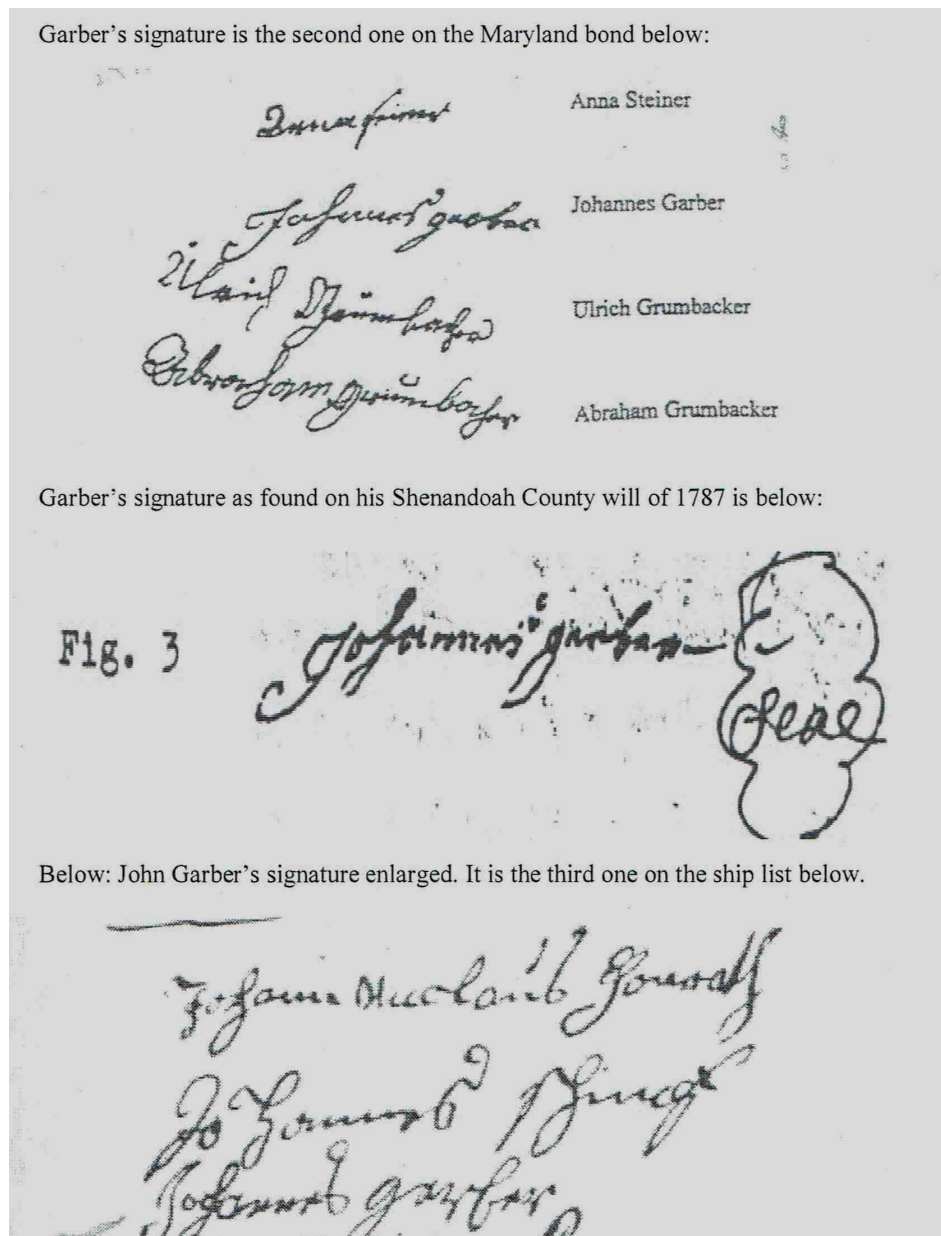
The image shows a handwritten document in cursive script. The name "Johannes Gerber" is written in a large, flowing cursive hand. There are other smaller, less legible words and numbers on the page.

This pre-1728 immigration assertion presents an anomaly in regards to Johannes Gerber being the father of Elder John Garber who died in Shenandoah County VA in 1787. No record exists establishing the date of Elder John Garber's birth, other than his tomb stone which reads, "17 J H G 87." This could be interpreted alternately as having lived from 1717 to 1787, or simply having died in 1787. The placement of the initials between the two sets of numbers can be read as a beginning and an ending, spanning the lifetime of "J H G." The birth date of 1732 is often used because his wife, Barbara, was born in 1733 as calculated from her tombstone. Many historians have assumed that he was about one year older than she and put his date of birth in 1732. If so, this begs the question of how could Johannes Gerber be his father if Johannnes was already in America by 1728? Elder John Garber, ?1717-1787, was born in Switzerland and immigrated to Pennsylvania on the Albany, September 2, 1749 according to Dr. Emmert Bittinger. Dr. Bittinger wrote a very scholarly article in the Spring, 2011 issue of "Brethren Roots", a quarterly journal, published by the Fellowship of Brethren Genealogists. Dr. Bittinger established the date of Elder John Garber's coming to America by comparing the signatures of Johannes Garber on the Albany's passenger list of 1749 to that of later known signatures of Elder John Garber of Shenandoah County, VA. He described them as a "perfect match." Dr. Bittinger compared the signatures to those of other Gerbers who migrated in the 1700's and found no other matches.

The "Maryland bond" referenced on the following page which has an Elder John Garber signature, was, "an Administrative Bond for Anna Stoner and John Carver who were acting as executors for the estate of her father, Dunker John Stoner of Frederick County in the state of Maryland."¹⁷

¹⁷ Bittinger, Emmert, "Elder John Garber; Minister of Flat Rock Congregation in Virginia," Brethren Roots journal, Spring 2011, page 33.

The graphic following shows three signatures of Elder John Garber and is taken from Dr. Bittinger's article.



It is quite possible that Elder John Garber was born in Switzerland in 1717, before Johannes Gerber left for America. This notion that Johannes left for America leaving a small son behind is unusual. Dr. Bittinger suggests that the death of Johannes Garber in 1748 precipitated the immigration of his son, Elder John Garber, in 1749. A birth date of 1717 begs the question of why was there such a large gap between the birth of Elder John Garber in 1717 and the next oldest known sibling, Martin in 1733. With the evidence available, there is no way of being certain in this regard.

Johannes Gerber died in 1748, about five years after moving to Codorus Township, York County, and his brother Nicholas died about the same time. Their neighbor, Michael Miller, himself widowed, married Elizabeth Garber, Nicholas' widow, shortly thereafter.

Although his will mentions “my eldest son” and “children,” it is unfortunate that Johannes Gerber did not name any of them. His executors were Samuel Bechtly (Bechtol) and Andrew Hershey. This choice may have been due to the possibility of son Elder John Garber being in Switzerland, and the other sons being too young to serve as executors ie., Martin b. about 1733, Nicholas b. 1742 and ? Daniel b. 1738.¹⁸

Generation 2, Elder John Garber, ?1717-1787

Although there is no documented proof that Johannes Gerber is the father of Elder John Garber, there is circumstantial evidence linking them including:

a) both men were active in anabaptist churches. Richard Warren Davis writes that the Swiss Gerber ancestors of Johannes Gerber were documented to be “taufers” or anabaptists in Switzerland. Most of the Swiss anabaptists were Mennonites, and many Mennonites became members of the very similar Brethren church in 18th century Pennsylvania. The anabaptists tended to intermarry rather than mixing with other Pennsylvania Germans who were predominantly Lutheran or Reformed.¹⁹

b) Johannes Gerber lived near Michael Miller in the 1730's and 1740's, and Elder John Garber, according to most family historians, married Barbara Miller, daughter of Michael in 1752. Michael Miller was associated with Brethren churches in his adult life.

c) The Miller's and Garber's continued living in close proximity after migrating to Virginia. Jacob Miller and David Miller who would have been nephew's to Barbara Miller Garber moved to the Shenandoah Valley about 1780 and lived near Elder John Garber. In fact, this Jacob Miller is buried in the Garber family cemetery with Elder John and Barbara Garber.

Although no public record survives, it is generally agreed among Garber historians that, in 1752, Elder John Garber married Barbara Miller, 1733-1808, a daughter of Michael Miller.

Elder John and Barbara Miller Garber had ten children spread across two decades. The youngest, Magdalene, was only thirteen years old when he died. As Dr. Emmert Bittinger wrote, “*..the names of Elder Garber's sons and their wives have repeatedly been published, they will be added here as a matter of convenience for those who may be interested in the information.*”²⁰

1. *Eld. John Garber, Jr., (b. 175 _), m. Barbara Zook. They are said to have gone to southern Virginia, then to Kentucky and later to Ohio where they became founders of the Stone Lick Congregation. Nine children.*
2. *Eld. Samuel Garber (1756-1814), m. Mollie Stoner. They settled at Flat Rock. Twelve children and moved to Tennessee in 1811.*
3. *Eld. Abraham Garber (1760-1848), m. Elizabeth Humbert, daughter of Jacob. Abraham was a founding minister of the Middle River Congregation, north of New Hope in nearby Augusta Co., VA. Seven children.*
4. *Eld. Martin Garber (1761-1814), m. Rebecca Stoner, lived at Flat Rock. Four children.*
5. *Anna Garber (1762-1837), m. Daniel Miller (1752-1820), son of Lodowich.*

18 *Lancaster County Will Y-2-192*

19 Taufer was the German word for Baptist or immersion, and the word anabaptist referred to the re-baptism of adults in the Brethren and Mennonite churches. The Lutheran and Reformed churches which predominated in Switzerland and Germany practiced infant baptism rather than adult baptism.

20 Bittinger, op cit, page 38.

6. *Jacob G. Garber (1766-1836), m. Susanna Humbert (1772-1854), daughter of Jacob. They moved to Madison Co., OH*
7. *Eld. Daniel Garber (1769-1849) m. 1. Susanna Miller (b. ca. 1780), daughter of Jacob of 1748, and m. 2. Elizabeth Shank. Daniel was the founder of Garber Church built in 1822 for which he provided the land a mile north of Dayton, VA.*
8. *Catherine Garber; (1771-1835) m. John Flory. Lived near Pleasant Valley, Rockingham Co., ten children.*
9. *Joseph Garber (1773-1853) m., Catherine Leedy. Moved with his family to Claremont County and Dayton area of Ohio. Four children.*
10. *Magdalene Garber (1774-1832) m. George Wine (1774-1845) s/o Michael Wine and Susannah Miller. He was a farmer at Ottobine in Rockingham Co., and a Brethren minister.”^{21 22}*

Chronology of Elder John Garber based on public records

1717 – Born, interpretation of tombstone inscription which reads, “17 J H G 87”

1749 – Arrived in Philadelphia aboard ship, Albany, according to Dr. Emmert Bittinger research

1751 – Purchased 200 acres in Admire, York Co., PA, about 7 ¾ miles west of central York, PA

1761 – Sold 200 acre farm at Admire, PA

1767 – Purchased 21 acres from Jacob Danner at Woodsboro, MD

1775 – Woodsboro, MD farm resurveyed and boundaries corrected

1780 – John and Barbara Garber were **living in Frederick County, MD** and sold the Woodsboro, MD farm to Joseph Wood

1784 – 1787 – Listed on Shenandoah County, VA Personal Property Tax Rolls

1787, May – Attended Brethren conference at Pipe Creek, MD²³

1787,- between Sep. 4th and Dec. 27th, died, buried on Garber farm, Shenandoah County, VA based on dates of will being written and proved at courthouse.

There is widely varying information among Garber historians regarding where Elder John Garber lived during his ministry between 1761 and 1784. He was apparently a man of consequence in the Brethren Church because he is mentioned in a number of Brethren books and articles that were written between 1900 and the 1960's. It is likely that the writings concerning Elder John Garber were based on oral histories and traditions because sources for statements are rarely given. Some of the histories appear to be in conflict with each other. It is quite likely, however, that the discrepancies can be attributed to the fact that Elder John Garber traveled widely, and often, through western Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia in those years. Following are excerpts and quotes from a number of these Brethren writings to chronicle Elder John Garber's travels and ministries in those years from 1761 to 1784.

Steven R. Garver and Jerry R. Masters in the “Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage” magazine stated, “*Johannes (?H.) Garber; b. ca. 1728/1732; d. 1787, Shenandoah Co., VA;*²⁴. *In 1751 bought land in*

²¹ Bittinger, op cit., page 38

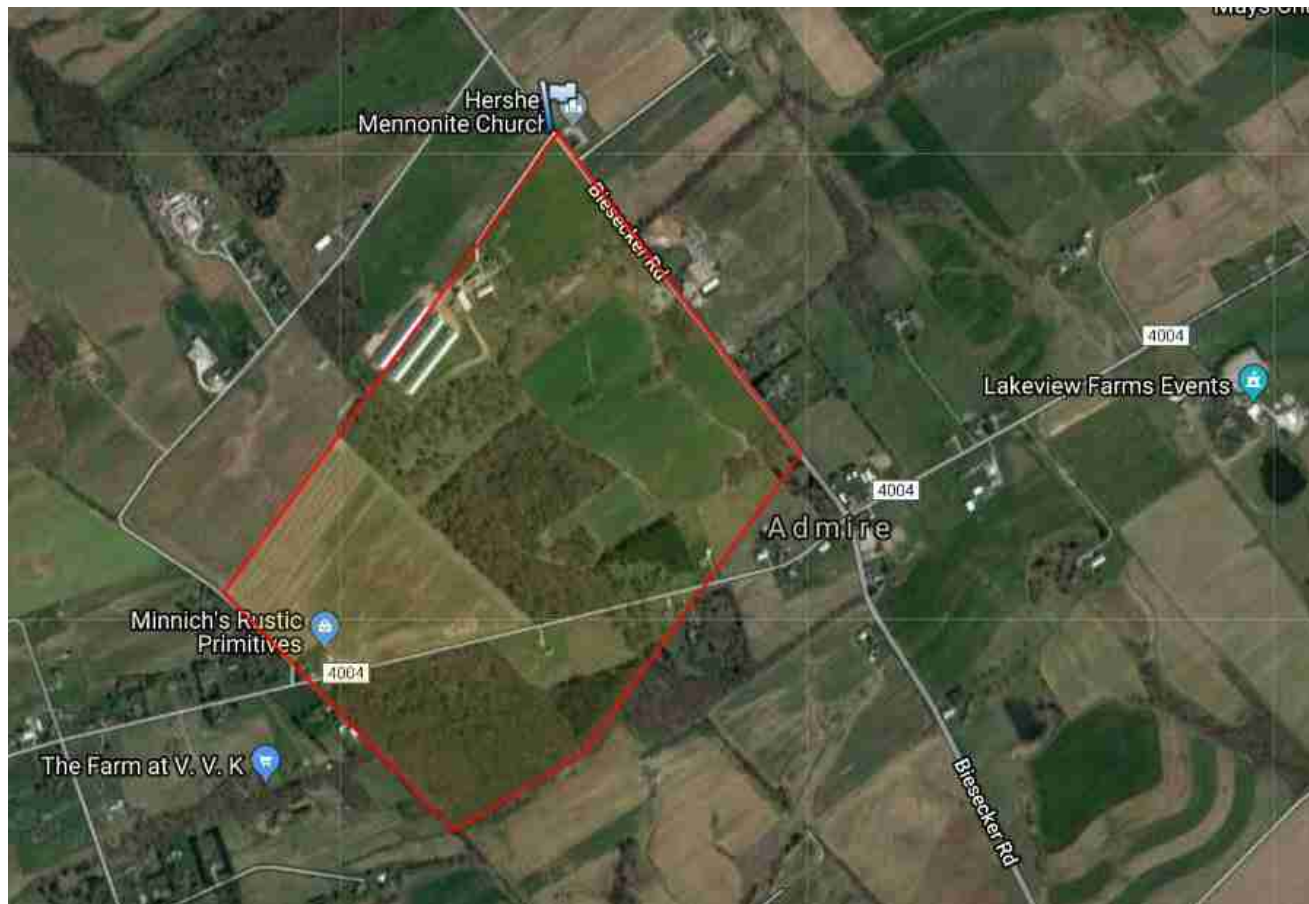
²² Elder Johannes/John Flory, 1766-1845, s/o Abraham Flory, Sr. and Anna Catharina Blocker, married 4/26/1790 to Catherine Garber. Elder Joseph Garber moved his family to Clermont Co., OH, Montgomery Co., OH, Miami Co., OH and finally to Shelby Co. OH, where he and his wife died. Wife, Catherine, 1777-1851, d/o Samuel Leedy & Catherine Weidner. Joseph and Catherine were married 7/26/1798. Gale Honeyman, Brethren genealogist, kindly provided this additional information via personal correspondence.

²³ Cooper, H. Austin, “Two Centuries of Brothers Valley Church of the Brethren,” The Times, Inc., Westminster, MD., 1962 , page 128.

²⁴ Davis, “*Emigrants, Refugees, and Prisoners (1995), p. 175 gives b. date as ca. 1728.*

York Co., PA.;²⁵ in 1761, sold farm and moved to Bedford Co., PA., where they lived for 12 years;²⁶ ordained elder at Beaver Dam Brethren Church; in 1775 moved to Flat Rock, near Harrisonburg (20 miles north thereof), Rockingham (actually Shenandoah County) Co., VA, where he organized several large Brethren congregations in northern VA; will²⁷ dated Sept. 4, 1787, and recorded Dec. 27, 1787, left 2/3 of estate to 10 children.”²⁸

Below: Two-hundred acre farm purchased by Elder John Garber in 1751. This is the York Co. land mentioned by Garver and Masters, above. He sold this land in 1761. Satellite view of plat from PlatPlotter program. One wonders what relationship, if any, Elder John had with the neighboring Hershey Mennonite Church which was there at the time.



25 Deeds A-526 and A-529, York: On Jan. 2, 1751, John Gerber purchased 200 acres in Codorus Twp. which was warranted on Nov. 9, 1750, to Hans Zimmerman; Johannes Gerber of Shrewsbury Twp. sold 170 acres of this to John Shaffer of Dover Twp. on Dec. 15, 1761 and 30 acres to Henry Neff on Dec. 14, 1761.

26 Deed L-515, Frederick County Archives, Frederick, MD. John Garber bought a 21-acre tract called “Garbers Good Luck” from Jacob Danner on June 3, 1767. On May 22, 1775, he returned this tract to Danner; Deed BD-1-539. John reportedly moved to Bedford Co. before moving to MD. See also Elmer Q. Gleim, “The History and Families of the Black Rock Church of the Brethren, 1738-1988” (Brodbecks, PA: Black Rock History Comm., 1987), p. 60. ... Elder John Garber moved from York County to Somerset (then Bedford) County PA, where he became minister at Brothers Valley in 1771 before moving to Beaver Dam, MD, in 1773; his sons Martin and Samuel m. daus of of Elder Jacob Stoner, who lived in Brothers Valley, before moving to Beaver Dam..

27 Based on wills and other sources, a detailed compilation was prepared by Barbara N. Shar, “Descendants of Johannes H. Garber,” unpublished ms, Feb, 1997.

28 Garver, Steven R., and Masters, Jerry, R., “Gerber, Garber, and Garver Progenitors in Pennsylvania: Part One” *Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage*, July, 1999, p. 25.

Below: Ground level view of Elder John Garber farm at Admire, York Co.



According to Garver and Masters, Elder John Garber moved to present day Somerset Co., PA after selling his York County farm. The writer has been unable to locate any Warrants or Patents for John/Johannes Carver/Garber/Garver/Carver in Somerset County. Somerset was formed from Bedford County in 1795. Bedford County was split from Cumberland County in 1761 which, itself, was formed in 1750. The Grantor and Grantee deed indexes in Bedford County do not include any entries for John Carver/Garber/Gerber, prior to 1790. A John Garber purchased 300 acres from his father, Michael Garber, in Cumberland County in 1771,²⁹ but Garver and Masters report that this was a separate Garber family.³⁰

H. Austin Cooper, writing in 1962, stated, "*John Garber was elected to the ministry in 1773 in the Stony Creek Church (Berlin, Somerset Co., PA). This elder was of an entirely different nature. He was a quiet and peaceable man. That year Garber with his large family removed to the Beaverdam country, within the bound of Frederick County, Maryland in the old Pipe Creek congregation. He did not stay long there and at an early date removed to the Flat Rock section of the Valley of Virginia.*"³¹

Elmer Q. Gleim, wrote in 1988, "*He (Elder John Garber) lived for nearly a decade in York County before moving into Frederick County, MD, to the Beaver Dam congregation (1768). From Maryland, he migrated to Rockingham County, VA.*"³²

It is known that Elder John Garber purchased fifteen acres from Brethren Elder Jacob Danner at

29 Cumberland County Deeds, Vol. 1, Book H, page 312.

30 Garver and Masters, op cit., page 28.

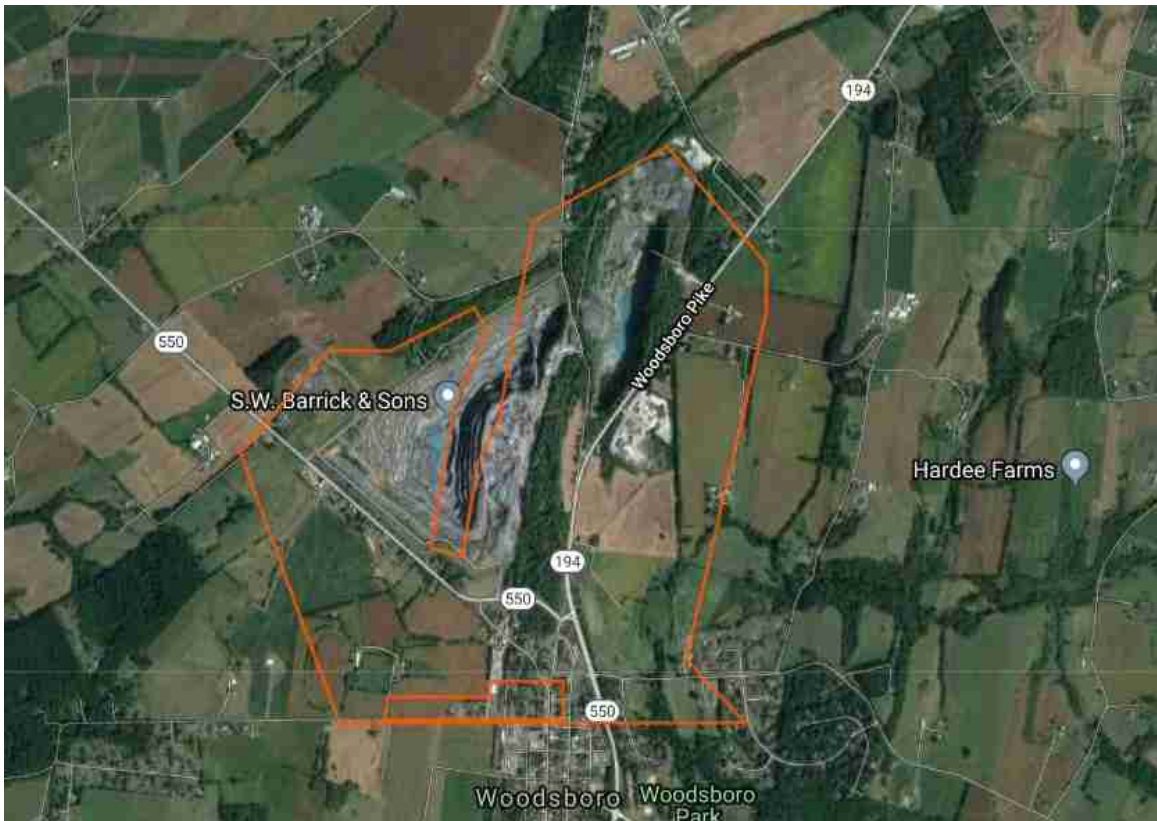
31 Cooper, H. Austin, "Two Centuries of Brothersvalley Church of the Brethren, 1762-1962", The Times, Inc., Westminster, MD, page 126.

32 Gleim, Elmer, Q., "The History and Families of the Black Rock Church of the Brethren, (1738-1988)," page 60. The Black Rock Church was about 16 miles due south of the Garber farm at Admire, PA, just north of the Maryland line. The Beaverdam Church at Woodsboro, MD was, in turn, 27 miles southwest of Black Rock.

Woodsboro, MD in 1767.³³ Eight years later in 1775, the parcel was expanded to 23 acres to include land originally intended for Garber but not included in the 1767 survey.³⁴ Garber paid Danner five shillings for this expansion. Danner had purchased a tract of 848 acres at Woodsboro in 1762. Previous to that time, Danner had been the leader of the Brethren congregation at Codorus in York County, where Elder John Garber was, also. It may have been that Elder John Garber became more of an itinerant Brethren preacher and less of a settled farmer in this time. He was known to have been a shoemaker by trade, and he may have relied on this skill to support himself and his family as he spent much time away from home establishing and visiting remote congregations in western Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia.

Writing in 1936, J. Maurice Henry stated, *“In the winter of 1766 three men with their families drove Conestoga wagons, across Israel Creek (at Woodsboro, MD) after a week's trip down the Monocacy Trail from York, County, Pennsylvania. These pioneering Brethren were Martin Garber (likely a brother to Elder John Garber), Michael Wine and Christopher Steele, who had purchased farms from the old pathfinder, Jacob Danner. John Garber, who had purchased a farm there, was already a minister and joined Danner in preaching among the scattered settlers. He remained only a few years, sold his farm and moved to Flat Rock, Shenandoah County, Virginia.”*³⁵

The satellite view, following, shows the 848 acre tract purchased by Jacob Danner on Israel Creek. The Elder John Garber plat of 1775 is along the southern edge of Danner's land. The initial plat in 1767 did not include some of the land intended for Elder John Garber. A correction was made in 1775 and the parcel was expanded from 15 acres to 23 acres. Satellite view using PlatPlotter by Jason Rushton.



33 Frederick County, Maryland Land Book L, page 515

34 Frederick County, Maryland Land Record BD-1, page 539-540

35 Henry, J. Maurice, "History of the Church of the Brethren in Maryland," Brethren Publishing House, Elgin, IL, 1936, p. 229-230.

Most Garber and Brethren historians put Elder John Garber's arrival in Shenandoah County, VA in 1775.

Writing in 1908, D. H. Zigler stated, *“At this place, it is sufficient to say that it is generally accepted that John Garber from York County, Pennsylvania, was the first member of the Brethren to locate in the northern part, or the Shenandoah Valley, if not the first in Virginia. He evidently came about the year 1775 or 1776. On his first visit, he was not accompanied by his family. The purpose for which he came is not clear. His object may have been to “spy out the land” in view of future permanent settlement. For it is known that he was joined by his family later on as the records will show. Yet, it is equally probable that his coming was prompted by a missionary spirit. He is known to have been a minister of ability, and, not unlike the Hackleton cobbler, William Carey, he made and cobbled shoes for a support, that he could preach a free Gospel to the people.”*³⁶

Most subsequent Garber historians echo that Elder John Garber and his sons came to Shenandoah County in 1775. Among them are Freeman Ankrum, in an article titled “Flat Rock, Virginia, Church,” in *The Brethren Evangelist*, Sept 26, 1953, page 4, “To this section of the forest, as it is called, John Garber and the members of his family came in 1775.” Roger Sappington, in his 1973 work, “The Brethren in Virginia” cites Ankrum in setting the same date for the Garber's arrival in Virginia. J. Floyd Wine, also recognized 1775 for Elder John Garber's coming to Virginia. Wine was from the Flat Rock Area and wrote “Life Along Holman's Creek” in 1983.

Examination of extant records for Shenandoah County, VA and Frederick County, MD casts doubt on the assertion.

In 1780, Elder John Garber sold his 23 acre Woodsboro, MD tract to Joseph Wood. The deed provides some helpful clues about Elder John Garber. It states, “... **between John Garver of Frederick County and state of Maryland Farmer** of the one part and Joseph Wood....” The deed also supports that this John Garver is the same one who moved to Shenandoah County, VA by naming his wife, Elizabeth.³⁷ It is important to note that he is a resident of Frederick County in 1780. Elder John Garber may have spent time in Shenandoah County in the late 1770's, but he apparently did not move there until after 1780.

Shenandoah County was formed in 1772. Personal Property Tax lists survive from 1782, forward. Examination of these lists from 1782 through 1789 reveals the following entries for the Carver/Garber/Garver/Gerber/Karver family.

1782 – No entries for any of the above spellings

1783 – No entries for any of the above spellings

1784 – Carver, John & Abm (Abraham) – 2 tithables (white males over 16), 4 horses, 14 cattle
Carver, Martin – 1 tithable, 2 horses, 8 cattle

36 Zigler, D. H., “A History of the Brethren in Virginia,” Brethren Publishing House, Elgin, IL, 1908, p.30-31. William Carey was well-known minister/missionary of the early 1800's who was also a shoemaker.

37 Frederick County, Maryland Deed Book 2, page 525. Gene Edwin Miller, writing in 1979, first pointed this out in his article, “George Wine (ca. 1725-1797) and Some Brethren Families,” page 4. There is a copy of Miller's unpublished article at Bridgewater College.

- 1785 – John Carver, 2 males over 21, 4 horses, 18 cattle
 Martin Carver, 1 male over 21, 2 horses, 7 cattle
 Martin Carver, 1 male over 21, 2 horses, 3 cattle
- 1786 – John Garber, 2 males over 21, 5 horses, 9 cattle
 Martin Garber, 1 male over 21, 3 horses, 9 cattle
 Samuel Garber, 1 male over 21, 3 horses, 8 cattle
- 1787 – Carver, John with Abraham Carver in his household, 6 horses, 27 cattle (John died this year)
 (Entry made on April 13th. 2 Elder John Garber died later on this year of 1787.)
 Carver, Samuel, 3 horses, 7 cattle
 Carver, Martin, 2 horses, 13 cattle
- 1788 – Garver, Samuel, 4 horses (cattle were not listed for this year)
 Garver, Martin, 1 horse
 Garver, Jacob, 2 white male tithables between 16 and 21, 2 horses
- 1789 – Garver, Martin, 4 horses
 Garver, Abraham, 1 horse
 Garver, Samuel, John Flora, 5 horses
 Garver, Jacob, Daniel Garver, 8 horses

From this data, it does not appear that Elder John Garber had taken up residence in Shenandoah County prior to 1784.

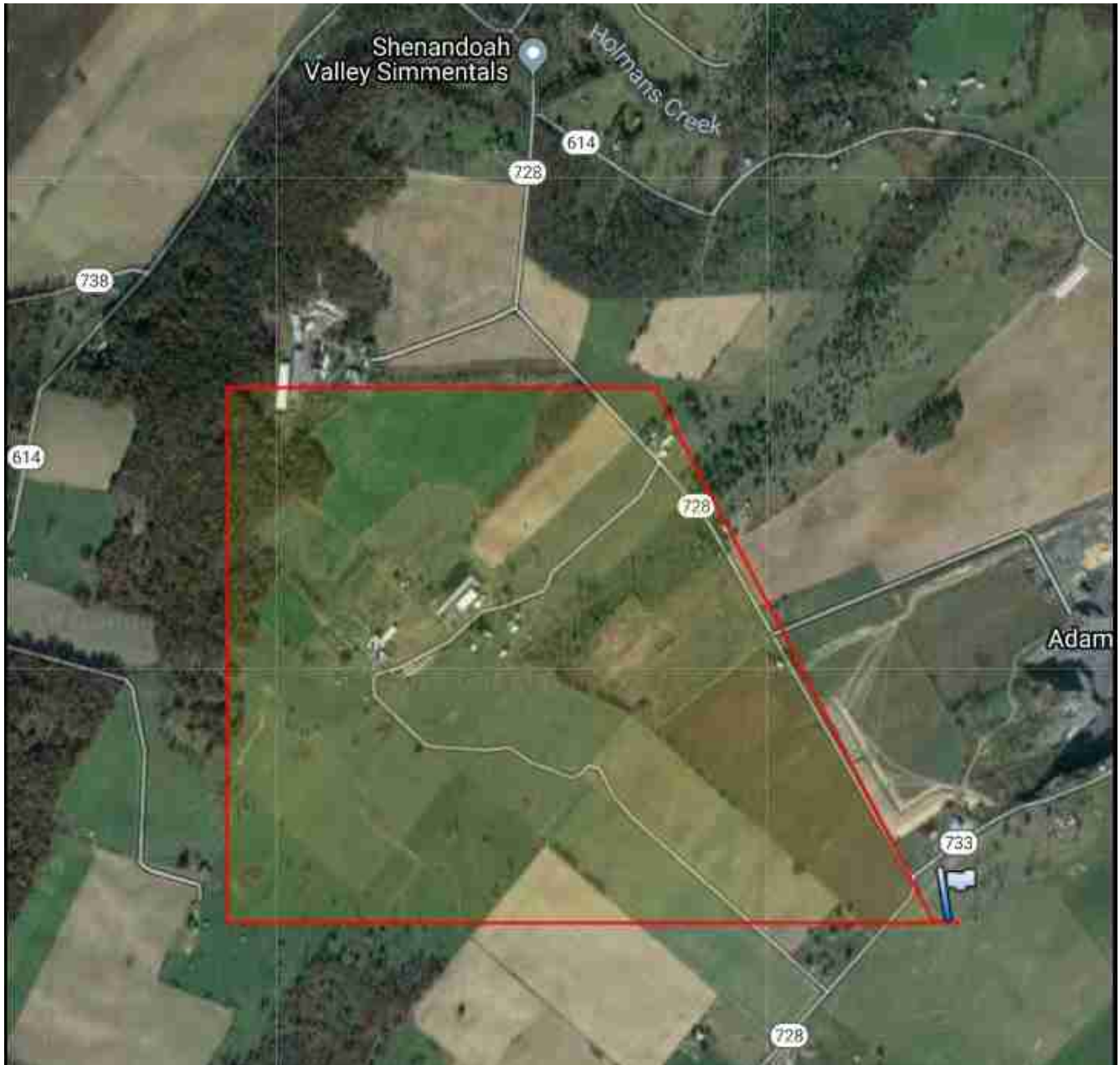
Further research into the Shenandoah County Deeds reveals that there were no land purchases by Elder John Garber under the spellings of Carver/Garver/Garber/Gerber. The first land purchase in Shenandoah County by any Carver/Garver/Garber was by Jacob Garber, a son of Elder John Garber, on March 4, 1792.³⁸ His acquisition was for 278 acres “on a Branch of Holmans Creek.” The first call on the survey stated, “Begin near some flat limestone rocks” which were very near the future location of the Flat Rock Church of the Brethren. The actual survey using the PlatPlotter program yields 269 acres. This plat is what is traditionally known as the Elder John Garber farm and includes the cemetery where he is buried. Jacob Garber purchased the land from Joseph and Rebecca Edmondson of York Co., PA in 1792. Given that Elder John Garber was buried on this ground five years before Jacob Garber purchased it, the Garbers must have had some business arrangement with Edmondson.

There was a Brethren community in the Flat Rock area prior to the arrival of Elder John Garber who reportedly began to visit and minister here in 1775. Roger Sappington quoted Morgan Edwards who wrote in 1772, “*They emigrated hither, (some from Pennsylvania and some from Maryland) about the year 1752, and settled on the waters of Shanadore, and have increased to about 36 families where of 36 persons are baptized. Their ministers are Rev. Jos. Chiefly (Sievly), Christopher Guss.*” Sappington continued, “*How long Jos. Chiefly remained in the Holmans area, which later became known as Flat Rock, is not known. He was evidently there as early as 1757 and as late as 1772 when Morgan Edwards wrote, 'The ministry was continued by John Glick, Sr., a Brethren elder, after his arrival in 1768.' The nucleus of Brethren in Flat Rock was also strengthened by the coming in 1775 of John Garber...*”³⁹

³⁸ Shenandoah County Index to Deeds at Library of Virginia. Also Shenandoah County Deed Book I, p. 89-91. Jacob was the son of 2 Elder John Garber.

³⁹ Sappington, Roger E., “The Brethren in Virginia” Harrisonburg, VA, 1973, pages 19 and 28.

Below: Satellite view of Jacob Garber farm of 1792 at Flat Rock, Shenandoah County, using the survey calls from the 1792 deed. Elder John Garber left this farm to son, Jacob, in his 1787 will.



Writing in 1908, D. H. Zigler stated, *“In the cemetery near the Flat Rock church stands a very modest stone with '17 J H G. 87' engraved upon it. Near by it is one of a somewhat more modern design upon which is the following inscription: 'Barbara Garber – ist GW 15 DB 1808 – Old 75 y 5 m'.*

“These humble slabs mark the graves of John Garber, the first minister of the Brethren Church that is known to have preached in the Shenandoah Valley, and that of his beloved wife, Barbara. Yet a far more enduring monument has been erected by their godly lives in establishing the church in northern Virginia and in giving it a most noble family of seven sons and three daughters. Of this number, six of the sons were preachers and the other a deacon. The daughters were also identified with the church,

two of whom became the wives of distinguished ministers. Four of the sons permanently settled in Virginia. Two of them, Samuel and Martin, remained near their father's home. Daniel located near Harrisonburg, and Abraham near Middle River in Augusta County. One of the sons went to Tennessee and two to Ohio.

“He was little past the meridian of life when he died. His widow survived him twenty-one years and was seventy-five years old at that time. This would have made her fifty-four years old at the death of her husband, which most likely corresponds closely to his age at the time of his demise.”⁴⁰

Below: Garber Cemetery on John Garber farm near Flat Rock Church of the Brethren. John Garber tombstone at far left and Barbara Miller Garber marker at near right. View is to the east.



40 Zigler, D. H., “A History of the Brethren in Virginia”, Brethren Publishing House, Elgin, IL, 1908, p. 53-56. Zigler lived from 1857 to 1930 and lived at Broadway, VA, about ten miles from John Garber's home.

Below: John Garber farm at Flat Rock, Shenandoah County, Virginia. Family cemetery is at far left, just in front of the tree line.



Sappington also wrote, *“According to John S. Flory, 'He (John Garber) was universally loved and admired, not only by those who knew him best, but by the scattered settlers and the roving Indians. . . . The legend still persists that several Indians were present to witness his death’”*⁴¹

Elder John Garber appears to have been elected to his office in the 1760's when he was middle age. He was obviously a man of character, ability and motivation to have been charged with this responsibility. Throughout the next twenty-five years, it seems that he traveled widely through southwestern Pennsylvania, western Maryland and the northern Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, ministering to new Brethren churches and their congregants. That he is mentioned in so many Brethren history books attests to his impact and esteem built over a quarter century of ministry. A second, but no less important, legacy is that of his children, most of whom carried on either as Brethren elders or their wives in new congregations.

41 John S. Flory, “The Flat Rock Congregation,” in Jacob David Wine, *A History of the Flat Rock Church of the Brethren*, (Published in mimeographed form, 1962), page 2. Flory was president of Bridgewater College in the early 1900's.

Generation 3, Elder Abraham Garber, 11/10/1760 – 02/16/1848⁴²

Elder Abraham Garber, 1760-1848, was probably born on his father's 200 acre farm near Admire, York Co., PA. The farm was sold soon, thereafter, and it seems that the family lived in several locations during his youth, including Woodsboro, MD and, possibly, Somerset Co., PA. Elder Abraham Garber's first appearance in public records is in the Shenandoah County, VA Personal Property Tax List of 1784, when he was listed as living in his father's household. His name does not appear in the Shenandoah County Personal Property Tax Rolls for the years 1785 and 1786, but he was likely one of the two white males over 21 living in Elder John Garber's household. Returns in 1787, again, include him by name as a member of his father's household. In 1789 he is on the tax list as an individual householder. He next appears on the Rockingham County, Virginia Personal Property tax roll in 1792 with his brother, Joseph.⁴³ He appeared in Captain Jacob Lincoln's Company #6 which included the Linville Creek area down to Broadway. In February, 1792, he sold a tract of land in Rockingham County to John Crumplaugher (Crumpacker⁴⁴), but the deed was burned by Union forces during the Civil War.⁴⁵ Three years later, in 1795, Elder Abraham Garber first appeared in the Augusta County Personal Property Tax Roll.

Elder Abraham Garber must have married Elizabeth Humbert about 1790 because their first child was born in July, 1792. Elizabeth Humbert's father, Jacob, had purchased Bowman's Mill on Cedar Creek, near Strasburg, VA in 1789, some thirty miles northeast of the Garber home in Shenandoah County.⁴⁶ It is not known what brought the two of them together over this distance. The Humberts had not been members of the Brethren Church. As late as 1786, Jacob Humbert appears in the church records of the Lutheran church in Frederick, MD, as a witness to the marriage of his wife's brother.⁴⁷ After the marriage of his daughter to Elder Abraham Garber, Jacob Humbert became closely aligned with the Garbers. In 1797 he co-purchased 233 acres with Martin Garber several miles northwest of Flat Rock in Shenandoah County.⁴⁸ In the early 1800's he purchased a farm, adjacent to the Garber farm at Flat Rock and then moved to Augusta County, living very near his son-in-law, Elder Abraham Garber.⁴⁹ Jacob Humbert died in Augusta County in 1819.^{50 51}

42 Garber, S. W., *Family Tree of Jacob Garber of Augusta County, Virginia and His Descendants*, 1919, p. 5. This death date for 4 Elder Abraham Garber is the earliest written record seen by this writer, and it is the date used by most Garber historians. It is also the date on his modern grave marker at Middle River Church. The records at the Augusta County Courthouse reveal that he died somewhat earlier, however. In Augusta County Will Book 28, page 92, it reads, "An Inventory and appraisement of the Personal Property of Abraham Garber, **deceased, taken the 25th day of May, 1847**. The actual sale of the property was entered at the Augusta County Courthouse term of October, 1847. The sale was apparently open only to family members because every item was purchased by a son or son-in-law.

43 Strickler, Harry M., *Tenth Legion Tithables, Rockingham County, Virginia, Tithables for 1792*, self-published, Luray, VA, 1930, p. 30.

44 Crumpacker was apparently a prominent Brethren. He is noted as a representative from Virginia to the Great Meeting in 1787 at Pipe Creek in Frederick Co., MD. According to the meeting record, he was "from Lentil's (Linville) Creek. See "Two Centuries of Brothers Valley Church of the Brethren" page 126.

45 Rockingham County, VA, Index to Deeds, Library of Virginia, Deed Book OOO, p. 375.

46 Shenandoah County Deed Book G, p. 291.

47 Evangelical Lutheran Church of Frederick Maryland original records. Posted on-line at Bob Fout Genealogy. There are other references to him in the parish records, as well.

48 Shenandoah County Deed Book L, p. 285.

49 Augusta County Deed Book 33, p. 327-332.

50 Taken from his tombstone in Humbert Cemetery near New Hope, Augusta County, VA

51 Descendants of Elder Abraham and Elizabeth Humbert Garber can claim kinship with President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Elizabeth Humbert Garber's maternal grandfather, Johan Nicholas Quirin/Query, 1714-1788, was the president's third great grandfather.

Writing in 1953, Freeman Ankrum stated that Elder Abraham Garber moved to Augusta County in 1790.⁵² Roger Sappington also gave this date for the move.⁵³ D. H. Zigler writing in 1908 gave no date for his arrival in Augusta County. It may have been that his marriage to Elizabeth Humbert and the need to establish their household precipitated the move, about thirty-five miles southwest of Flat Rock.

It has been noted above, however, that Elder Abraham Garber was living in the Linville Creek watershed in 1792. Elder Abraham Garber does not appear in the Augusta County Personal Property Tax rolls for the years 1790 through 1794. His first listing is in 1795 with tax on two horses. Also in 1795, Elder Abraham Garber purchased ninety-three acres of land on Middle River, near the village of Piedmont.⁵⁴ He would subsequently buy other properties, but this one was the home site of the farm on which he would live the next fifty-three years. At the time, and aged thirty-five, two of his children had been born, and five more would follow over the next eleven years. He was forty-six when his youngest child, Samuel, was born in 1806.⁵⁵

The children of Elder Abraham and Elizabeth Humbert Garber were: (ages of children in parentheses)

1. John Garber, 07/14/1792 – 07/16/1854, married Catherine Miller. In 1850 they had children Eli (26)⁵⁶ and John (19) living with them in Augusta County. He was a farmer and an Elder at Middle River Church of the Brethren.
2. Daniel Garber, 10/23/1793 – 09/05/1883⁵⁷ married Elizabeth ?, 03/01/1800 – 09/13/1880⁵⁸. In the 1850 US Census for Augusta County, VA, he appears with wife, Elizabeth and sons, Noah (25) and John (22). He is listed on the census next to Jacob Huff, who lived on Middle River, about one mile west of New Hope, just south of Dam Town Road. Some writers state that wife, Elizabeth, was a Dunston and others that she was Elizabeth Shank of Rockingham County. This writer has not found any record of a Daniel Garber marrying an Elizabeth Dunston. On January 10, 1815, a Daniel Garber married Elizabeth Shank in Rockingham County, VA. They wed by a Daniel Garber. The subject, Daniel Garber of Augusta County, would have been twenty-one years old and of marriagable age.
3. Jacob Garber, 10/28/1797 – 09/25/1876, married Nancy Arnold on March 10, 1823. More information on this family, below.
4. Sarah Garber, born about 1803 according to the 1860 and 1870 US Census. She married Christian Whitmer in 1833⁵⁹, and they had two children living with them in 1850, Leah and Abraham. Neither Sarah nor Christian appear in the US Census for Augusta County after 1870.
5. Mary Garber, 1804 – bet. 1860 & 1870⁶⁰, married John Arion on Dec. 15, 1831 in Augusta Co., VA. They were married by her father. The US censuses for 1850 and 1860 reported the following four children living with the Arions: Susan/Sarah, Abraham/A.G., Cornelius/Charles and Charlotte R.

52 Ankrum, Freeman, *The Brethren Evangelist*, Sep., 1953, p 4-5, 8-9.

53 Sappington, Roger, *The Brethren in Virginia*, The Committee for Brethren History in Virginia, Harrisonburg, VA, 1973, p. 38.

54 Augusta County Deed Book 28, page 340

55 Garber, S. W., *Family Tree of Jacob Garber of Augusta County, Virginia and His Descendants*, 1919, p. 6.

56 Age of persons in 1850 in parentheses

57 Findagrave.com Buried at Middle River Church of the Brethren

58 Findagrave.com Buried at Middle River Church of the Brethren

59 Vogt, John and Kethley, William, *Augusta County Marriages, 1748-1850*, Iberian Publishing Co., Athens, GA, 1986, p. 212.

60 US Census for John Arion/Ariew, Augusta County, VA, 1850 and 1860

6. Samuel Garber, 9/22/1806 – 01/13/1892⁶¹, was married to Ann Peters, 1811 – 1900⁶², on 06/31/1838 by Thomas Wheeler.⁶³ The Peters lived nearby but they were not Brethren, perhaps explaining why Samuel's father, Abraham, did not marry them. In the 1860 US Census, they had these children living with them: Eli (21), Sarah (19), Wm. B. (17), Noah J. (15), George Washington (13), Elizabeth R. (12) and Mary C. (8).
7. Esther(Hester) Garber, ~1813 - >1870⁶⁴, was married to Abraham Stoner by her father on 05/15/1833.⁶⁵ Abraham Stoner, son of Abraham Stoner and Sally _?_,⁶⁶ died between 1844 and 1850, and Esther had children Levi (14), Daniel (12) and Sarah E. (6) living with her according to the US Census for Augusta County in 1850.

Below: Elder Abraham Garber house on Middle River from the 1790's. This photograph first appeared in a 1919 book titled, "Family Tree of Jacob Garber of Augusta County, Virginia and His Descendants." The caption stated, "Birthplace of Jacob Garber. Removed a short time ago." The author, a grandson of Jacob Garber, was born and raised a few miles from this house. The other contributors to this book were from the Piedmont/Middle River area and would have been familiar with this structure, given that it was torn down shortly before the book's publication. The subject of the book, Jacob Garber, was born to Elder Abraham and Elizabeth Garber in 1797, thus making the date and location of this house certain.



61 Findagrave Middle River Church of the Brethren

62 Findagrave Middle River Church of the Brethren

63 Vogt & Kethley, op cit., p. 357

64 US Census of 1850 for Augusta County, VA

65 Vogt & Kethley, op cit., p. 194

66 Weber, Richard R., *Stoner Brethren*, (self-published), 1993, pp 184-185.

Below: Satellite view of 1795 farm of Elder Abraham Garber.⁶⁷ The farm was expanded in 1808 with the addition of a 57 acre parcel along the southern border.⁶⁸



Right: modern view of the Elder Abraham Garber home site on Middle River. View is to the northeast with Middle River at the distant tree line. He selected very fertile river bottom land to farm.



67 PlatPlotter program by Jason Rushton.

68 Augusta County Deed Book 2-A, page 365

Right: “Back” part of Elder Abraham Garber farm near Piedmont. This view is to the west from the Middle River cemetery.



Subsequent to the purchase of his first parcel on Middle River, Elder Abraham Garber purchased 130 acres on the north side of the Round Hill at New Hope, about 1.5 miles to the southeast. He followed this with the acquisition of 57 acres, adjoining his Middle River farm, in 1808. It was from this parcel that he later donated land for the Middle River Church of the Brethren. This was his “home” farm, and he willed it to son, Samuel, in 1848.

Below: In 1817 Elder Abraham Garber and his oldest son, John, purchased 120 acres on Middle River, next to Jacob Hoof.⁶⁹ This farm remained in the Garber family (Joel Garber's heirs) in 1885. Satellite view using PlatPlotter program. Daniel Garber, also a son of Elder Abraham Garber was apparently living here in 1850 because the adjacent person on the census was Jacob Hoof.



69 Augusta County Deed Book 41, page 332

Two years later, in 1819, Elder Abraham Garber purchased four tracts, totaling 235 acres from his brother, Joseph Garber, and his wife, Catherine.⁷⁰ The deed referenced Middle River and Christians Creek, and the land was near the mouth of the creek at Laurel Hill. He likely bought the land for his two sons, John and Jacob, to farm. In 1825, Elder Abraham Garber sold tract 1, including its mill, and tract 2 to his son, John.⁷¹ Six years, afterwards, he sold tracts 3 and 4 (135 acres) to son, Jacob, who was thirty-four years old at the time.⁷²

Below: Four tracts purchased by Elder Abraham Garber from brother, Joseph, in 1819. Tract 1 – seventy acres, tract 2 – thirty acres, tract 3 – seventy-five acres and tract 4 – sixty acres. Tract 1 included a mill on Christians Creek, known in modern times as Deffenbaugh's Mill. It was built around 1800, and Joseph Garber purchased it in 1814. The last mill at this site was torn down about 1916.⁷³



⁷⁰ Augusta County Deed Book 44, p. 1.

⁷¹ Augusta County Deed Book 48, p. 593.

⁷² Augusta County Deed Book 52, p. 548

⁷³ Downs, Janet and Earl and Sorrells, Nancy, *Mills of Augusta County*, Augusta County Historical Society, Staunton, VA, 2004, page 283.

Below: Tract 4 purchased by Abraham Garber in 1819, and later owned by his son, Jacob. View is to the northwest from Route 642.



Elder Abraham Garber is remembered for his role in establishing and nurturing the Middle River Church of the Brethren. Along with his first cousins, Samuel Garber (paternal cousin) and David Miller (maternal cousin) who also moved to Augusta County in the 1790's, Elder Abraham Garber oversaw the growth of the church from just a few families meeting in each other's homes to one of the largest Brethren congregations in America. In 1824 he donated land and led the building of the first Brethren Meeting House in Virginia in 1824. By the time of his death in 1848, the congregation had grown to almost five-hundred members. The congregation was of such importance that the Annual Meeting for the church was held in the Middle River community shortly after his death in 1851.

It is likely that Elder Abraham was living on the farm when the old log home of the 1790's, pictured above, was torn down and replaced by an L-shaped, two-story brick home. In 1937, the house was described as having a metal roof, thirteen 9 over 9 sash windows, a one story porch, eight large rooms with ten foot ceilings and a two flight stairway.⁷⁴

Elder Abraham Garber wrote his will in 1843 at age 83, and he died in 1848. He provided for all seven of his living children and left the home farm to youngest son, Samuel.

⁷⁴ Works Progress Administration of Virginia Historical Inventory. The survey was done on Oct. 30, 1937 by J. W. Apperson. Can be accessed on-line at the Library of Virginia

The sale of his personal property included German books, a bookcase, an inkstand, two wine glasses, a tea canister, a shotgun and spectacles. It also included the usual household furnishings and sundries but was a relatively modest accumulation of goods. All of the personal property was purchased by his sons and sons-in-law.⁷⁵

Generation 4, Jacob Garber, October 28, 1797 – September 25, 1876⁷⁶

Jacob Garber was born on Middle River, near Middle River Church of the Brethren. He had three brothers, two of whom were older, and three sisters, all younger. Jacob's father, Abraham, had just moved to Augusta County a few years prior to his birth. The family was part of a new, but quickly growing, group of Brethren in northeastern Augusta County.

As a youth, he received enough education to be able to write his name. Certainly, most of his time was devoted to working along side family members on the farm.

Dr. John A. Garber, a grandson of Jacob Garber, wrote about the courtship and marriage of Jacob Garber in 1822-1823. According to Dr. Garber, in the spring of 1822, Jacob Garber was sent by his father to Mechanicsburg, in present day West Virginia to purchase horses, a journey of 110 miles north, through the Allegheny Mountains.⁷⁷ While there, he stayed at the home of Samuel Arnold and was attracted to his daughter, Nancy.⁷⁸ Jacob Garber and Nancy Arnold (April 12, 1805 – Feb. 29, 1868)⁷⁹ corresponded for the next year, and, in 1823, Jacob returned to marry her on March 10th. Soon afterwards the couple returned to Augusta County to begin their wedded life.⁸⁰

Their children were:⁸¹

1. *Rebekah Garber; 12/27/1823-7/24/1886, married on 9/21/1846 to Daniel Miller (her 3rd cousin), 4/19/1816-1/23/1901. They lived ½ mile north of the Jacob Garber home and had two daughters. Daniel and Rebekah are buried at Pleasant Valley Church of the Brethren.*
2. *Abraham D. Garber; 12/19/1824-12/1/1911, married 5/9/1848 to a) Magdalene Wine, 10/17/1827-5/9/1868, nine children and to b) Sophia Byrd Hayes, 7/30/1833-3/3/1905, one daughter.*
3. *Levi Garber; 8/21/1828-11/10/1914, married 2/21/1850 to Barbara Miller (3rd cousin) 2/25/1825-8/1/1875. Eight children.*
4. *Reuben Arnold Garber; 1/26/1826-1/10/1884, married 3/19/1857 to Mary Flory, 1/5/1836-7/24/1898. Seven children.*
5. *Jacob W. Garber; 9/11/1842-8/28/1908, married 5/18/1865 to Susan A. Ham, 2/2/1845-11/11/1932. Ten children.*

75 Augusta County Will Book 28, pages 92-94.

76 Cemetery marker at Middle River Church of the Brethren.

77 The Samuel Arnold farm straddled present day Route 50, just west of its intersection with Route 220. Emmert F. Bittinger, "Allegheny Passage, Churches and Families West MARVA District Church of the Brethren, 1752-1990," Penobscot Press, Camden, Maine, 1990, p. 171.

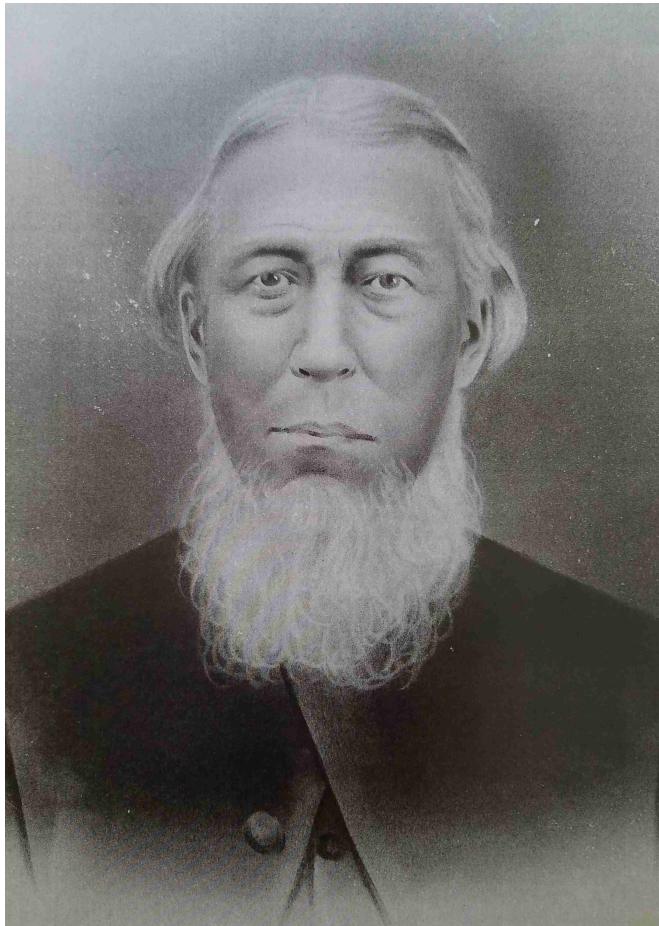
78 Binnie, Lester H., *The German Baptist Arnolds*, Dogwood Printing, Ozark, MO., 1990, pp 21-22. Nancy was the d/o of Elder Samuel Arnold and Mary Ludwick.

79 Cemetery marker at Middle River Church of the Brethren. Her parents were Samuel and Mary Ludwick Arnold.

80 Garber, Wayne E., "Johannes 'John H.' Garber, His Descendants in the Shenandoah Valley," Wish Book Press, Studley, VA, 2007, p. 51. The Arnold family was prominent in Brethren circles. Jacob's grandfather, 2 Elder John Garber likely knew the Arnolds from his missionary work in western Maryland and Pennsylvania in the late 1700's.

81 Garber, S. W., op cit. Various pages

Below: Charcoal likeness taken from a photograph of Jacob Garber, 1797-1876.⁸²



Jacob Garber's native language was probably German. Most Brethren switched to English in the first half of the 1800's, and Jacob Garber is a good example. Wayne Garber, in his book, "Johannes 'John H.' Garber," noted that Jacob Garber in his German Bible recorded the births of his first four children, from 1823 to 1836, in German, but the fifth child's entry of 1842, in English.

Jacob Garber's first recorded land purchase in Augusta County was for 45 acres on Christians Creek from Thomas Teague in 1829⁸³ It was about 2 ¾ miles southwest of his father's, Abraham, farm, and near Laurel Hill.

In 1831, Jacob Garber's father, Elder Abraham, sold part of a farm on Middle River near Laurel Hill to Jacob. The transaction included tract 3 and tract 4 of a four tract farm that Abraham had purchased in 1819.⁸⁴ Tracts 3 and 4 totaled 135 acres (see above under Generation 3, Elder Abraham Garber). It is quite possible that Jacob and Nancy had been living on this property prior to buying it. In 2018, there are no standing structures that appear to date to the first half of the nineteenth century on this property that may have been their home.

The oldest three children (Rebekah, Abraham D., and Levi) of Jacob and Nancy Arnold Garber were likely born at the Christians Creek farm.

In 1835, Jacob Garber, sold his Christians Creek holdings, which by that time totaled 291 acres, to Daniel Flory for \$3,000. Simultaneously, he purchased three tracts from Flory for the same price. Two of the tracts, totaling 55 acres, were on Middle River at Knightly Mill, and the third parcel of 28 acres

⁸² Ryman, Blaine R., "Descendants of Jacob Garber of Augusta County, Virginia," self-published, 1998, page 1 for likeness of Jacob Garber.

⁸³ Augusta County Deed Book 52, page 2.

⁸⁴ Augusta County Deed Book 52, page 548.

was near Round Hill at New Hope.⁸⁵ The small tract at Knightly Mill was rich river bottom land, but the swap of some 291 acres for 83 acres is curious.

Jacob Garber's next land purchase was an interesting one in 1843. His maternal second cousin, John Miller, sold him 151 acres for \$1 on both sides of today's Buttermilk Road, about 200 yards west of its intersection with Knightly Mill Road.⁸⁶ John Miller and his wife, Elizabeth, left Augusta County and moved to Elkhardt, IN. Although this tract was near what eventually became known as the Jacob Garber homestead on Frames Run, it was not the same parcel. This parcel was less than a mile north of where the Garber family was probably living at Knightly Mill.

The Augusta County Genealogical Society, published a book in 1998, titled “Augusta County Virginia Heritage Book, 1732-1998.” It included a few paragraphs on Jacob Garber claiming that he purchased a “Louisiana Lottery” ticket in 1804 and actually won the lottery. There was no source noted for this claim, and Jacob Garber would have only been seven years old in 1804. The date must have been a typographical error. If the book's assertion is true, it may be referring to this purchase of land for \$1 in 1843.

One year later, Jacob Garber purchased two tracts from Jacob and Anna Senger on Frames Run, about one mile east of Mount Sidney. The larger tract 193 acres became what was known as his home place farm. The second tract, adjoining to the east, contained an additional 46 acres, and the total purchase price was \$8,000.⁸⁷

Below: Satellite view of the two tracts purchased from Jacob Senger in 1844. Route 775 is Buttermilk Road, and Route 778 is Knightly Mill Road.



85 The property at Knightly Mill had been formerly owned by Jacob Spitler and John Myers. Jacob Garber sold this land to Jacob Senger in 1844, and Senger sold it that same year to Christian Kline who was the son-in-law of John Myers.

86 Augusta County Deed Book 64, page 63.

87 Augusta County Deed Book 65, page 82.

Several years later, in 1847, Jacob Garber sold the Knightly Mill and Round Hill tracts that he had acquired in 1835 to Jacob Senger. The selling price was \$1.⁸⁸

Below: Jacob Garber brick home which he purchased in 1844 and lived until his death in 1876. Picture is from the early 1900's and taken from the book, "Family Tree of Jacob Garber of Augusta County, Virginia and His Descendants," published in 1918. The family in the photo is that of Jacob W. Garber, youngest son of Jacob and Nancy Arnold Garber.



Right: Modern view of the Jacob Garber homestead on Frames Run. View is to the south from where the house stood before being torn down in the late 1990's.



88 Augusta County Deed Book 67, page 270.

Jacob Garber added one more parcel of 121 acres to his holdings along Buttermilk Road in 1851, purchasing the land for \$1,000 from another Miller cousin.⁸⁹ His contiguous holdings exceeded 500 acres.

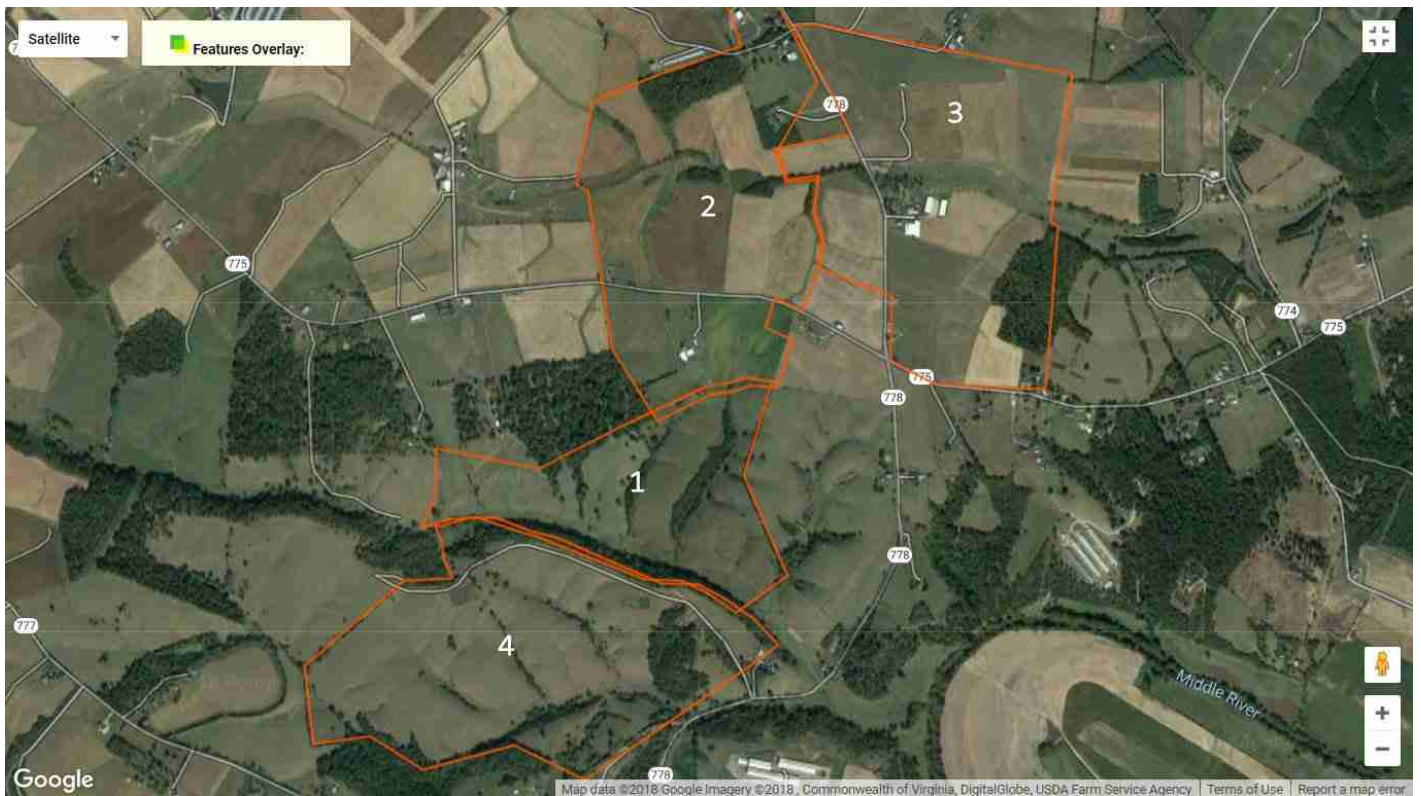
In 1869, Jacob Garber began selling parcels to his sons. The satellite view, below, shows the divisions of the property.⁹⁰ S. W. Garber wrote in 1919, “Fortunately, at the marriage of each of them (his sons), they were located on farm homes near by, where they reared their families and spent their lives.”⁹¹

Tract 1 – Reuben Garber, 88 acres in 1869 for \$2,877.

Tract 2 – Levi Garber, 143 acres in 1869 for \$5,183

Tract 3 – Abraham D. Garber, 154 acres in 1869 for \$4,929

Tract 4 – Jacob W. Garber, 154 acres (home place) in 1876 for \$4,638

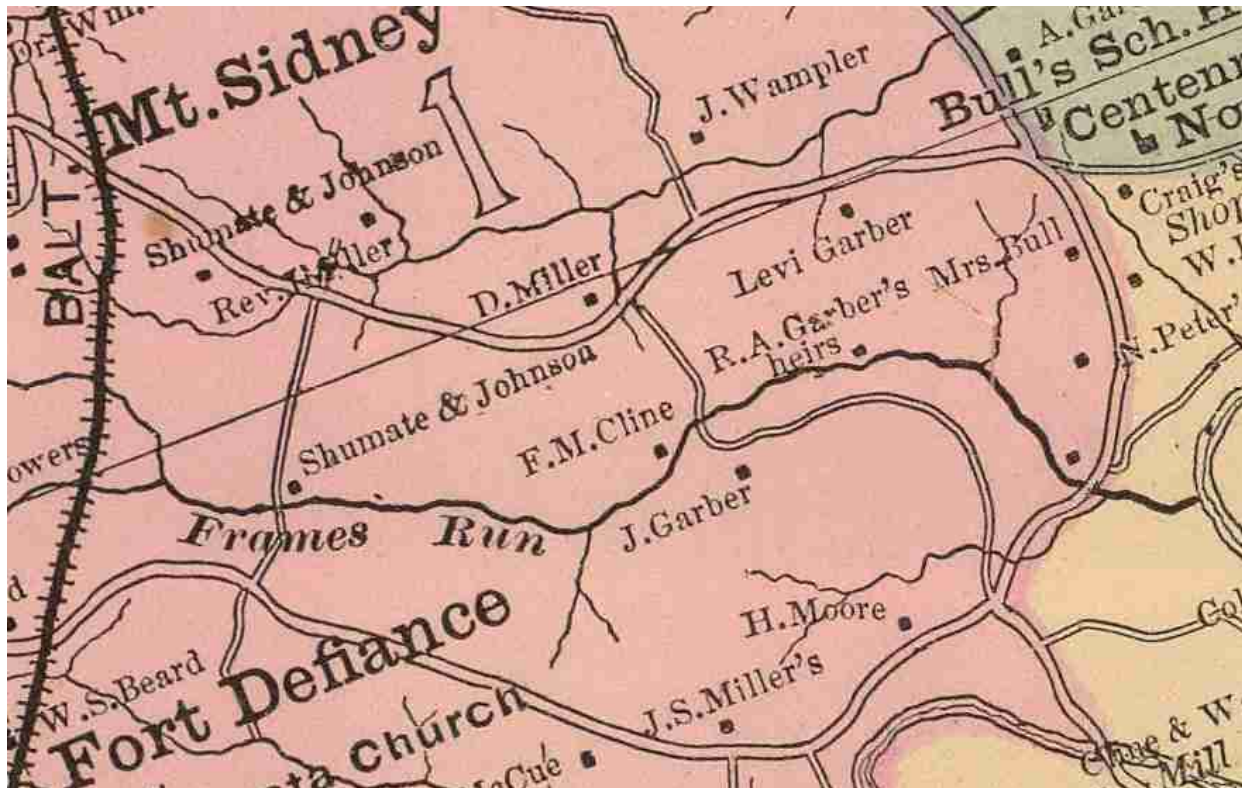


⁸⁹ Augusta County Deed Book 71, page 218.

⁹⁰ PlatPlotter program by Jason Rushton.

⁹¹ Garber, S. W., op cit., p. 8.

Below: Augusta County Map of 1885 showing farm of J. (Jacob W.) Garber on Frames Run, along with that of his son-in-law, Daniel Miller, son, Levi Garber and son, R. A. (Reuben) Garber. Jacob's son, Jacob W., purchased the farm from his siblings after his father's death in 1876.



Many of the Brethren farmers in the Mount Sidney area filed with the U. S. Southern Claims Commission in the 1870's to recoup losses for property confiscated by the Union army during the Civil War. Jacob Garber, however, was not one of them. There is no evidence that his property was molested. His son, Reuben, on the other hand, did file a claim, but it was denied.

Jacob Garber was a witness, testifying that he had seen two horses belonging to Reuben in the possession of Union Cavalry in September, 1864. Reuben's claim was denied in large part because Jacob had hired a substitute after Reuben had been drafted into the Confederate army. Regarding the substitute, Reuben testified, "... Yes, but it was done wholly against my will. I did not furnish the substitute myself. My father (Jacob) did it for me to keep me out of the rebel service. I had been drafted. My father paid him, I think, about \$1,200 in Confederate money. I did not intend to go into the army. I was going across the lines. My father done it to keep me home."⁹²

Jacob Garber personally signed the paper on which his testimony was recorded. It reads "Jacob Garber Sr."

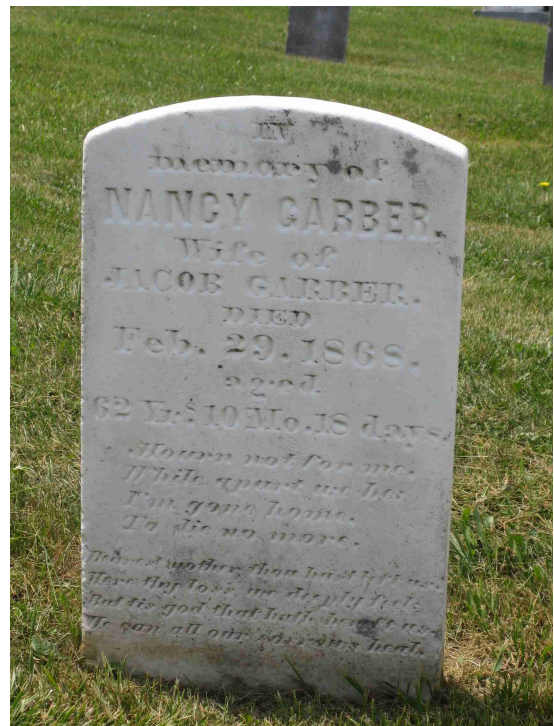
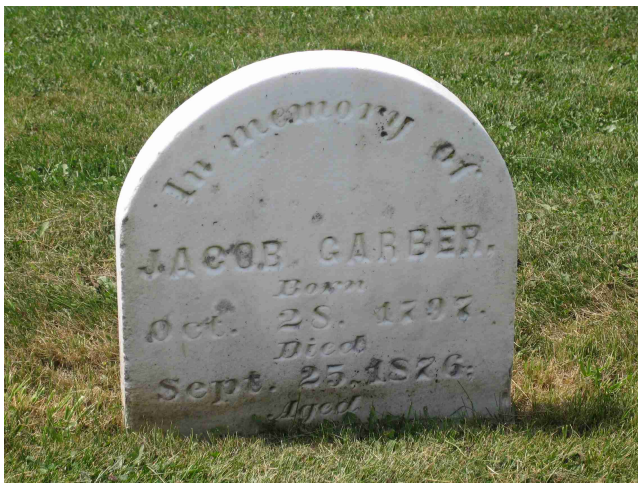
⁹² U. S. Southern Claims Commission, Denied Claims, Commission Number 2505, Reuben Garber, Augusta Co., VA, 1872

A few years after the Civil War, in 1868, Nancy Arnold Garber died at the relatively young age of sixty-two. Jacob Garber, now a widower, remained in the house, and his youngest son, Jacob W's., family lived with him.

Some Garber historians have noted that there is no record of Jacob Garber holding office in the Brethren Church. Neither were his brothers Daniel or Samuel elected to Deacon or Elder, even though their father, Elder Abraham, was a patriarch of the Middle River Church. Two of Jacob's son's were called to the Brethren ministry. Levi was elected Elder of the Middle River Church and served for several decades. Abraham D. lead the Pleasant Valley congregation for over fifty years and did much missionary work.⁹³ Apparently, Jacob's primary interest was farming, and he was very successful. He was able to purchase farms for each of his four sons to cultivate. All of Jacob's children lived their adult lives within a mile of him, and all remained active Brethren.

Jacob Garber lived eight years beyond his wife's death, dying in 1876, just shy of age seventy-nine.

Below: Tombstones of Jacob and Nancy Arnold Garber at Middle River Church of the Brethren.



Inscription on her stone reads:
Mourn not for me
While apart we be
I'm gone home
To die no more.

Dearest mother, thou hast left us
Here thy loss we deeply feel
But 'tis God that hath bereft us
He can all our sorrows heal.

93 Garber, S. W., op cit., pages 16 and 32.

European Origins of Johannes Gerber, 1694-1748, the immigrant

Helen Ummel Harness wrote a well-researched article for the October, 2002 "Mennonite Family History" magazine. It traced the line of Johannes Gerber back three additional generations in Switzerland. Excerpts of her article follow.

"My Gerber Roots" by Helen Ummel Harness

Ancestral Homeland

The Gerber families originated in the Emmental Valley of Canton Bern, Switzerland, where they were found in the parishes of Langnau, Steffisburg, Eggiwil, Oberdiessbach, Thun, Sumiswald, Signau, Rothenbach, and others. As early as the mid-1500s, some Mennonite Gerbers left their homes for the Jura area to escape religious persecution, and later many fled to the Palatinate in Germany and eventually to America.

The Mennonite Encyclopedia tells of one Gerber martyr: "Walti Gerber of Rothenbach was one of the earliest and most prominent Anabaptist ministers in the Emmental, taking part in the disputation at Bern in March 1538." The State archives in Bern have the minutes of this religious discussion that was demanded by the towns of Hofstetten and Signau. The attempt was made to prove the Old Testament equal to the New, [which] was an argument against the Taufers, who largely avoided the Old," according to Eshleman. Walti Gerber "preached fearlessly, although forbidden to do so by the state, and baptized many." He was imprisoned and escaped, but was captured and executed at Bern on September 17, 1543.

Many Gerber families immigrated to America to escape the widespread persecution and for more economic opportunities. Stephen Garver and Jerry Masters compiled an outline tracing thirty different ancestral lines that immigrated in the 1700s mainly to Pennsylvania. Besides remaining Mennonite, many Gerbers also were Amish and Church of the Brethren.

Origin of Gerber Name

The most common spellings of the surname are Gerber, Garber, and Garver, found today in America, Switzerland, and Germany. Other variants are Gerver, Kerver, Carver, Carber, Garven, Kerber, and Kirber.

The German verb gerben means "to tan, to refine," which denotes the occupation of tanner. The Mennonite Encyclopedia published in 1959 says, "There are two very old tanning establishments in Langnau today." In a few cases, the name Gerber has been anglicized to Tanner.

First Generation

GE1. Ulrich Gerber was b. ca1605, probably Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland. He m. Barbara Farni.

Known children of Ulrich and Barbara (Farni) Gerber:

- i. HansGerber was bapt. Jan.31, 1631, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- ii. Anni Gerber was bapt. Jan. 22, 1632, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- iii. Christian Gerber (GE2) was bapt. Mar. 20, 1635, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland. He in. Barbara Farni.

Second Generation

GE2. Christian Gerber², Ulrich¹ was bapt. Mar. 20, 1635, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland. He m. Barbara Farni.

Children of Christian and Barbara (Farni) Gerber:

- i. Niclaus Gerber (GE3) was bapt. Nov. 21, 1661, Steffilsburg, Bern, Switzerland. He m. Anna Bachman, b. ca 1665.
- ii. Barbara Gerber was bapt. Feb. 25, 1663, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- iii. Verena Gerber was bapt. Sept. 11, 1664, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- iv. Catharina Gerber was bapt. Aug. 19, 1666, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- v. Anna Gerber was b. ca 1668, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- vi. Ulrich Gerber was bapt. Mar. 19, 1671, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- vii. Peter Gerber was b. Feb. 1674, Markkirch, Alsace, France.

Christian Gerber (GE2) was baptized in the Swiss Reformed Church on March 20, 1635, in Steffisburg in the Emmental Valley of Canton Bern, Switzerland. He married Barbara Farni, who was probably a relative of his mother Barbara. As required by the state church, they had their first four children baptized in the parish church. At the time their son Ulrich was baptized in 1671, both Christian and Barbara were called Anabaptists in the baptismal record.

In 1671, when the "great expulsion" of the Anabaptists into Alsace, the German Palatinate, and Holland began, Christian fled with his family, including infant Ulrich, to the Markkirch area of Alsace southwest of Strasbourg. After living there a number of years they returned to Steffisburg by 1684. Peter, ten years old, and his sixteen-year-old sister Anna were baptized in the Steffisburg parish church on November 7, 1684, with their mother's permission.

Third Generation

GE3. Niclaus Gerber³, Christian², Ulrich¹ was bapt. Nov. 21, 1661, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland. He m. Anna Bachman, b. ca 1665.

Children of Niclaus and Anna (Bachman) Gerber:

- i. Barbara Gerber was bapt. July 7, 1689, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- ii. Anna Gerber was bapt. Oct. 4, 1691, Steffisburg, Bern, Switzerland.
- iii. **Hans (Johannes) Gerber was b. Oct. 1694, Schwarzenegg, Bern, Switzerland; d. 1748, Heidelberg Twp., York Co., Pa.**
- iv. Niclaus Gerber (GE4) was b. ca 1698, prob. Immelhäuserhof, Germany; d. 1748, Heidelberg Twp., York Co., Pa. He m. Elizabeth_.

Although born of Anabaptist parents at Steffisburg in Canton Bern, Switzerland, Niclaus Gerber was baptized in the parish church on November 21, 1661. At the age of ten years, he fled with his parents and younger siblings to the Markkirch area of Alsace, France, where they lived for several years before returning to Steffisburg.

Niclaus married Anna Bachman, and when their first two children were born, they had them baptized in the parish church at Steffisburg. As persecution of the Anabaptists continued, about 1695 they were forced to leave, and by 1709 they were living on a farm at Immelhäuserhof in Germany. Records show them still living there in 1731 as part of the Steinsfurt Mennonite congregation.

End of Helen Ummel Harness excerpt

The January, 2004 issue of "Mennonite Family History" contained an interesting article pertaining to Johannes Gerber's (1694-1748) direct Swiss ancestors. 'From Steffisburg to Ste. Marie-aux-Mines: The Exodus of Those Who Would Become Amish,' was written by Robert Baecher who carefully foot-noted his findings. The article is excerpted, below, and for purposes of brevity, Baecher's foot-notes have been omitted.

The modern Amish sect was founded by Jacob Ammann, 1656-1730. He broke away from the Mennonites and a number of his initial followers came from Steffisburg, the home of the Gerbers, among them Christian Gerber, grandfather to Johannes Gerber, 1694-1748, the immigrant.

"From Steffisburg to Ste. Marie-aux-Mines: The Exodus of Those Who Would Become Amish"

From the time that Jacob Ammann began to inspire a group of Anabaptists in the Rhine River plain of Alsace, he set himself in opposition to a kind of accepted and entrenched bourgeois Anabaptism. In the spring of 1693, he made a visit to Switzerland, his country of origin, the goal of his tour being persuasive explanation of his point of view in the Emmental in order to convince coreligionists of the validity of his ideas and thus win them over. In vain. The so-called Amish Division was born. Still, Jacob Ammann had more success at Steffisburg. . .

At the beginning of my research, the results of which have been published annually for some fifteen years now, numerous references I found cited the village of Steffisburg in Canton Bern as the place of origin of many families who came to settle in Alsace. As my investigation continued, this observation was reinforced time and again. Steffisburg emerged as a kind of reservoir that nourished the group whose members became the first followers of Jacob Ammann. Marshaling documentation to support this observation meant dove-tailing data extracted from Swiss archives with details recovered from archives in two very different geographic locations in France—Alsace and the County of Montbéliard.

The fundamental question to be answered concerned the extent of demographic and family ties binding the core of the group who later made up the Amish in Alsace and, most particularly, those in their legendary stronghold of Ste. Marie-aux-Mines. To accomplish this, I used mainly citations in the parish registers of Steffisburg and the archives of the "Consistory (Chorgericht)" in that location.

These events have largely escaped the notice of historians' for three main reasons.

- The period of time during which the events unfolded, essentially 1685 to 1695, is relatively short. In the context of the flood of forced emigrations between 1670 and 1710, Steffisburg is scarcely mentioned.
- Anabaptists left this location of their theories and positions of Jacob Ammann, departed with the approval of Swiss authorities.
- Finally, there are significant gaps in documentation for this period.

While traditional documentation has obvious limitations, genealogical studies are able in turn to help illuminate this crucial period of time that witnessed the creation of the Amish movement. I have put together a series of 48 sections about individuals or families—plus two more, of earlier date—which, when taken together for the purpose of historical deduction, shed light on the milieu in which the Amish movement arose.

Located quite close to Thun and the lake of the same name and nestled in the hills that open onto the Bernese Oberland, Steffisburg is today a town of 14,000 inhabitants. Here, much more than elsewhere in Canton Bern, by perusing parish registers, leafing through the telephone directory, or

walking cemetery pathways, a researcher becomes conscious of surnames strikingly similar to those found in Amish communities from the very beginning.

The parish of Steffisburg occupies a vast expanse of land along the valley of the Zuig, encompassing the hamlets of Riederer, Lueg, Eriz, and Schwarzenegg. The last-named became an independent parish in 1692 in order to be able to wrestle more effectively with the Anabaptists. The church in that location was built in part with receipts from the sale of property confiscated from Anabaptists. The administrative affairs of Steffisburg were under the control of the bailliage of Thun. Its famous château, the place of imprisonment of numerous Anabaptists, dominates the town.

The First Group of Amish in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines

In order to give the reader a quick survey of surnames encountered in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, I reproduce here the first known complete listing of Anabaptists in Jacob Ammann's group. That community of fellow believers had been in existence for scarcely 12 years. The list was made in 1703, probably by Joder, a member of the group. The list gives the names of various heads-of-household subject to a tax of 12 livres for local rights, a tax that had to be paid for each member of the group. Both Charles Mathiot and Jean Séguy have already made reference to this list, but I have decided to reproduce it here once more, with some alterations to refine orthography in use at the time. Customary Swiss or familiar alternative spellings are in parentheses.

(Baecher then lists forty-nine surnames of early followers of Jacob Ammann which are omitted for brevity's sake.) Continuing with Baecher...

To this list can also be added the names of several other persons who had already left the area before 1703, for example:

Hans Gingrich (Gtingerich), mentioned in 1693
Stephan Imhoff, mentioned in 1693

Christe Farny (1699)

Ulrich MULLER (1676)

Christen MULLER (1692)

Christian Gerber (1671)

Kaspar Kilchhoffer (1692)

Jacob Seen (1698)

Let us turn now to discussion of individual cases. Only those families who can verifiably or very probably be traced to Steffisburg are described here. The descriptions may at first glance seem dull and boring, but detail of this kind is necessary in order to gauge the full extent of the phenomenon. Moreover, I shall endeavor to give priority to forging links without an exhaustive parade of all documentation, especially that from the records of the Consistory, which fortuitously have been preserved at Steffisburg. The reader who is not interested in the various genealogical discussions can move directly to the concluding arguments, to be presented in the sequel.

I. THE FORERUNNERS

Well before the epic story of the Amish begins at the end of the seventeenth century, several persons from Steffisburg had made their appearance in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines (*about 130 miles north of Steffisburg*), due in large measure to intervention by Adolphe Schmidt, an Alsatian Anabaptist well known locally for his entree into the circle of the Lords of Rappoltstein, or, in French, Ribeaupierre.

1. Christian Gerber from Kapfern and Barbara Farni. This couple married at Steffisburg on February 21, 1653. The first nine of their children were baptized, apparently without arousing the suspicion of the local pastor." When Ulrich was presented for baptism, on May 19, 1671, the parents are described in the margin of the baptismal record for the first time as Anabaptista. Given what was then occurring, the time had come for Christian to flee if he wished to escape imprisonment.

He reappeared several months later in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, and there he leased the farm called Haute Broque "and everything belonging to the property" for a period of nine years. Surety and guarantee of payment were provided for him by Adolphe Schmidt of Brdhagotte (St. Philippe) for an annual rent fixed at 25 Reichstaller.

The following year, on February 10, 1672, Christian presented himself at the chancellery of the Lords of Rappoltstein in order to request direct intervention with officials at Bern because he "would like to be able to recover the assets he had in Steffisburg and elsewhere to use that money to make it possible for his wife and children to emigrate together at the same time." The grand or chief bailli, acting with the consent of the Lord of Rappoltstein, arranged to draft a letter to this effect to the mayor and members of the council of the city of Bern. A copy of this document in the German language is still extant. The letter states that, by reason of "good testimony about him (gutes Zeu gnus)," Christian Gerber of Steffisburg had been granted the "right to live and work locally (manance)" in order to manage the "barn and dairy farm (Scheuer und Melkerei)" belonging to the nobility already entrusted to him on lease.

Despite this intervention at a high governmental level, the authorities in Bern were not prepared to act favorably on the request so as not to set a precedent. As far as I can judge, only Christian Gerber's wife, Barbara Farni, was able to join him eventually. The children left behind were placed under guardianship by the authorities, and the family's assets were frozen. It was these restrictions more than adverse conditions in Alsace that convinced Christian Gerber to return to Kapfern after several years.

In 1684, Pastor Hans Jakob Freudenreich (1639-1711) at Steffisburg received a visit from Barbara Farni and a young boy, Peter, years old, for the purpose of belated baptism. The pastor added a notation to the baptismal record, dated November 7, 1684: "The boy was born in February 1674 at Sainte Marie-aux-Mines in Alsace. But Anna, the sister [of Barbara Farni], who accompanied them and spoke on their behalf at the mother's request, explained that holy baptism had not been administered because of the influence of Anabaptist teaching. I have only just learned this, and so he has been baptized this day, according to the wish of the mother and the boy himself."

Despite what must properly be termed persistent acts of persecution, for all that the parents did not renounce Anabaptism. Still their children were taken from them and placed in guardianship at the home of another Christian Gerber, who lived at Waidmatten, by reason of that fact that, with reference to the parents themselves, "she and he are Anabaptists." Somewhat later, in the baptismal records of three grandchildren, children of their son, Niclus Gerber, who married Anna Bachmann of Diessbach on December 10, 1686, the grandfather is still called something like "the Anabaptist of Kapfern." After 1691, in their turn, Niclus and Anna disappeared from the records of Steffisburg.

The Gerber family is especially well represented in Alsace and in Lorraine at the opening of the eighteenth century, beginning with Peter Gerber on the list from 1703. It is not very likely that this man was the son of Christian. He is a bit young to fit that description. On the other hand, it is possible that he belongs among the children of Ulrich Gerber and Barbara Lehmann. They came from Langnau and ran a mill at Rothachen near Heimberg. They too are identified as Anabaptists at about the same time, namely in the record of the baptism of Christen recorded at Steffisburg on March 19, 1671.' This is the last time they are mentioned in these records.

End of Excerpt "From Steffisburg to Ste. Marie-aux-Mines..."

Below: Photo by J.Antenat of Sainte Marie-aux-Mines in the Alsace-Lorraine region of northeastern France, near the German border. Sainte Marie-aux-Mines is about 135 miles north of Steffisburg.



Below: Steffisburg area of Switzerland



Appendix

Who was the father of Elder Samuel Garber, c1756-1820, of Augusta County, VA?

When Elder Abraham Garber, 1760-1848, moved to Augusta County in the early 1790's, his first cousin, Elder Samuel Garber, came about the same time from Shenandoah County. Many marriages of the early 1800's in the New Hope/Mount Sidney area were performed by these two men.

Floyd and Kathryn Mason compiled a comprehensive work titled, "Elder Samuel Garber and Elizabeth Miller of Augusta County, Virginia." It was self-published in 2002 and contained an extensive assemblage of Garber descendants, of whom there were many. Elder Samuel and Elizabeth, themselves, had fourteen children. It is a most valuable reference for this family.

The Masons proposed that Elder Samuel Garber was the son of a Michael Garber, a brother to Elder John Garber, 1717-1787. On page 87 they write, "Michael Garber/Garver is believed to have lived with his brother, John and Barbara Garber, perhaps now married and starting his family. We believe that later he moved on some of the land at Flat Rock, VA owned by Johannes (*Elder John*) & Barbara Garber. We believe that he lived there and with his family. In the Garber cemetery ... is a small head stone with "M G" on it. It is placed beside the head stone of "J H G" (John H. Garber/*Elder John*). This writer believes that this is the place that Michael Garber is buried. ... We know that Michael's son Samuel Garber married Elizabeth Miller, a niece of Barbara Miller, the wife of Johannes (*Elder John*) Garber."

Examination of the Shenandoah County, VA Personal Property Tax Rolls for the years 1782 through 1794 does not reveal a Michael Garber/Garver/Carver/Karver/Gerber living in the county. There was, however, a Martin Garver/Garber enumerated for the years 1785, 1790, 1791, 1792, 1793 and 1794 in Shenandoah County. Likely, it is he with the head stone marked "M G" and buried near Elder John Garber which Mason thought to have been that of Michael Garber. Martin was probably the brother of Elder John Garber and the father of Elder Samuel Garber who moved to Augusta County in the early 1790's.

Neither Richard Warren Davis nor Garver and Masters in their extensive research of the early Pennsylvania Gerbers list a Michael Gerber as a brother to Elder John Garber. They only identify Martin, 1733-1800, Nicholas, 1742->1783 and tentatively (Davis only) a Daniel, as his brothers.

Elder Samuel Garber died in 1820. Augusta County Chancery Court Record 1823-086, page 2 states, "On the __ day of __ 1820, said Samuel Garber departed this life after having duly made and published his last will and testament, appointing Solomon Garber and Michael Garber his executors.."

END

Researched and compiled by Wayne Diehl

June, 2019

Additions, corrections and comments are welcomed

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