



## Getman News From The Past

### **The Getman Family**

The history of this family is Interwoven with the history of Montgomery county, from Revolutionary times till now and the family is spread over a goodly section of the western end of the county, in St. Johnsville, Canajoharie, Fort Plain, Fonda, Tribes Hill, Johnstown. N. Y. and other towns and villages. A genealogy of the family would show them to have entered in most every walk of life, farmers, merchants, lawyers and businessmen of all professions, thereby giving a good cross section of the history of the Mohawk valley.

(Saint Johnsville, New York, ENTERPRISE AND NEWS, Wednesday, February 19, 1936)

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## **Why Leave Your Historical Home?**

(Wayne Getman)

What causes a person to leave everything they know, their friends, their culture their familiar places and their relatives? Why would they pack up, travel into the unknown leaving everything behind? In the case of Caspar Getman, our ancestor, Maria Barbara, his second wife and eight children, it is reasonable to say that there were few options.

The area where they lived had been fought over by French and German royalty for years. It was a feudal time and they were very likely serfs or peasants. Minor lords and princes were constantly making war to gain more wealth and standing. Their wars were often justified by religion.

The Alsace-Lorraine region on the border of what is now France and Germany was an area where the religious conflict between Catholicism (France) and Protestantism (Reichsland state / Palatinate) was often used as a reason or excuse to wage war. Ordinary people were generally left alone during these wars because the conquerors needed them to till the soil, pay taxes and otherwise pay the costs of the war. However the devastation of war and the subsequent taxes left the local citizens impoverished.

The winter of 1708-1709 was an extreme weather event. Records indicate that

trees, grape vines etc. split and died due to the extreme cold. An event like this further impoverished the region. Food was scarce and starvation imminent.

Caspar is recorded as having been a Lutheran, Husbandman & Vinedresser. This would seem to indicate that he was in actuality a serf working in the vineyards of a wealthy land owner or minor noble. His livelihood and way of life was destroyed by the extremely harsh winter.

At the same time news was being shared throughout the region that the English Queen would send protestant settlers to build her new colonies. A publication known as the "Golden Book" (because of the color of its cover) was being read in public houses throughout the region. This book detailed the opportunity offered by the queen in such a way that it seemed too good to miss.

We have to presume that Caspar learned of the opportunity to have England send him and his family to the colonies as a result of the "golden" book. Facing starvation and death he and his wife made the decision to leave. Perhaps this was their chance to find a place where they could own some land and provide a better life for themselves and their children, neither of which was possible where they were.

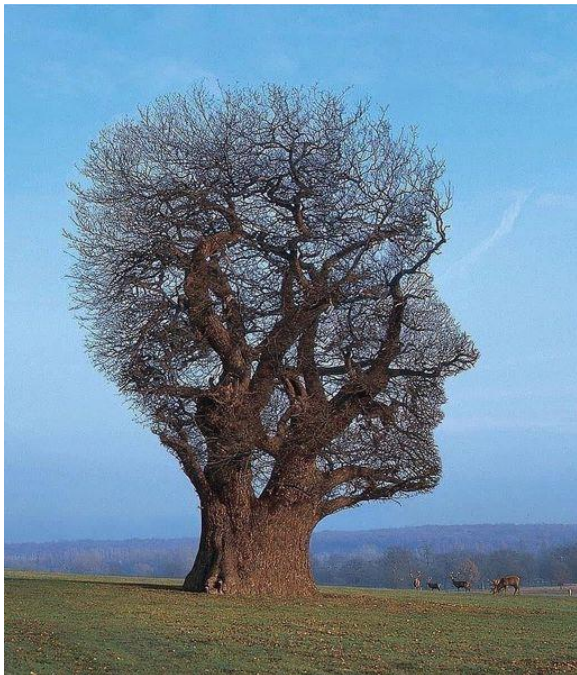
What now? It is a long way to England. As serfs they don't even own the building they lived in. Their possessions were limited to their clothing and the basic utensils

necessary to sustain life. If they weren't serfs and owned a home or some land, their position would be somewhat better. In either case they are living in a feudal society and "belong to the Lord." They could not leave without permission, and permission was unlikely. If they had property, they could use it to purchase permission to travel either by selling their property or ceding it to the Lord. If they did not have property, they were unable to legally leave.

It is currently unknown if Caspar and his family were able to purchase permission to leave or if they did so illegally, by simply packing up and going. I suspect they just left.

So the decision had been made to leave, hoping for a better life in a different place using the offer of the English Queen. What now? Traveling to England was a long, difficult trip.

*What happened next? Stay tuned for the next episode.*



Your family tree shapes you who you are.

## Johannes Nicholas Weaver.

Excerpt – Find A Grave

John had a hard life as a child. When he was only 2 years old his mother died. When he was 6 the Revolutionary War broke out and his father was often away serving with the 4th Battalion.

This might help explain why John, when only an young boy of 11 in 1780, decided to "take up arms" and fight along side his father and brother and do his part to bring peace to this remote wilderness. It isn't clear that he was old enough to truly realize that his contribution was not just a matter of helping to protect his home and family during those brutal times, but one that would help create this great nation that we all now enjoy.

For those of you that have children, try to remember your child when they were only 11 years old. Now, imagine that 11-year-old comes home and announce to you that they are going off to fight in a war. It's something that in this day and age we can not even fathom. And unlike other parts of today's world where this can still happen, we will never have to do this again thanks to the sacrifices of those who stepped forward like Johannes Weaver.

In 1780 fighting was a necessity for survival. In this frontier part of the colonies, the entire Mohawk Valley was a battlefield and a notoriously cruel one at that. Death and destruction were all around during that bloody year of 1780 when Johannes joined the 4th Battalion Tryon Co. Militia. Sir John Johnson, Joseph Bryant and their force of Indians, Tories, and English burned and killed everything in their path up and down the Mohawk that did not belong to a Tory. Homes, barns, livestock, crops. It did not matter whether you were an old man, woman, or small child ... nothing was spared. By plundering the supplies and

creating fear among the civilians, the British hoped to weaken the resistance of our ancestors living on the frontier. You see, if you lived in the Mohawk Valley you had no options but to fight, hide, or die.

In the Valley anyone strong enough to carry a heavy musket was a soldier. Any male that could not, was usually too old or too young to serve. John was too young to lift a heavy musket, but he chose to serve his country as a drummer boy in Colonel Peter Bellinger's 4th Battalion of Tryon County Militia. Initially, I didn't think a great deal about this and simply took it for granted. But recently, in talking to some of the militia here today, I learned that the drummer's job was a critically important one during a battle. They didn't just provide music to keep the units in step as they marched. They always stood near their commanding officers and the drummers were the ones responsible for communicating the commander's orders to the troops using the correct drumbeats.

Now can you imagine your 11 year-old being responsible enough to do this in the heat of battle, with choking smoke, people being wounded near where you were beating out the commands, and bullets whizzing all around you? I would imagine that these drummers might as well of had a big bull's eyes painted on them as far as the enemy was concerned. Eliminate the drummers and commanders ... communication breaks down and chaos ensues. When I heard this it really caused me to stop and think ... could I have done the same if I lived back at that time? Thankfully, it's a question we will never have to answer. And thank God we had young patriots like Johannes fighting for us at that time.

Johannes did fatigue duty and served as a drummer at Forts: Dayton (Herkimer), Paris, Plank, Plain. He was also in 2 battles: the Battle of Stone Arabia and then the Battle of Klock's Field in St. Johnsville. To

give you a sense of what he went through, let me paint you a little verbal picture... the Battle of Stone Arabia began on the morning of Oct. 19th 1780 about 2 miles northeast of Palatine Bridge in a large open field. Here Col. Brown of Fort Paris led 150 militiamen (including Johannes) directly across that field without any protection. They marched right towards the front lines of a vastly superior force under Sir John Johnson who had just come up the Valley after burning much of it east of the Noses. The Americans were greatly outnumbered by 10-to-1 in this battle. The militia came under very heavy fire. In the end, about 1 out of every 5 militiamen were killed including their commander Col. Brown. It is likely that Johannes was standing next to Col. Brown when he was shot through the heart after giving the order to retreat. The remaining militia literally ran for their lives. The British then set fire to the entire Stone Arabia District including both the Stone Arabia Dutch Reformed and Trinity Lutheran Churches.

Johannes ran southwest towards the river and the very next day he joined up with a large body of fresh militia re-enforcements from Albany Co. and Schoharie Co. as they crossed the Mohawk in pursuit of Johnson's army. The large American militia force caught up with Johnson's Tory troops on the turnpike near the east side of St. Johnsville's village limits. This American army is reported to have been the largest force ever to go into battle in the Mohawk Valley during the whole Revolutionary War. The total number of men engaged in the battle on both sides was about 2,500. Johnson and the British realized that they could not avoid an attack by the large American militia forces, so he stopped and deployed his troops for a battle. As evening fell the Americans arrived and the battle began at what is now referred to as Klock's Field. The British troops were exhausted from the prior days Stone Arabia

battle and subsequent pillaging, followed by their long march to St. Johnsville. Soon they were over powered by the fresh American militia units and driven back towards the Mohawk River. Sadly, the Tories forces managed to escape across the river and lived to fight another day. One can only image how exhausted our little drummer boy John must have been if seasoned British veterans were falling on the battlefield from exhaustion.

John was than reassigned to Captain Samuel Gray's company of Batteamen (boatmen). This unit was responsible for moving scarce supplies up and down the Mohawk River on flat-bottomed boats like the one you see in your program. Given what must have been hiding in the trees and along the riverbanks, and the importance of these supplies to both sides, you can beat these were probably not a pleasure cruises he was taking on the river.

After the war John moved to Greenbush and Postenkill in Rensselaer Co. for several years where he met and fell in love with Sarah Clause. They were married in Albany in 1792 and returned to this area where John bought Lot #64 of the Klock /Nellis Patent that contained 100 acres. John and Sarah had a total of 10 children that lived to adulthood. Area names that are related to Johannes through marriage to his daughters include: Cramer/Cromer, Crouse, Countryman, Clemons, and Philips. Other area names that have married one of Johannes sons include: Smith, Phillips, Christman, and Snell. (SAR Dedication-Doug Weaver)

*Johanne Nicholas Weaver (GFG - I) was a grandson of Anna Maria Getman (GFG - I) 1721-1811 and Johann Henrich Meyers 1715-1810.*

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