

THE STORY OF KARL HANS VON HAUSER

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Authors Comment:

After considerable soul-searching, I have concluded that I would be less than faithful to my convictions if I did not tell the story of Karl Hans von Hauser. Though I am quite aware that the ravages of time have obliterated the records needed to validate his story sufficiently to satisfy careful genealogists, it does fit the isolated facts concerning a Hans Hauser that I have assembled in 30 years of research. Equally important, it fits the family traditions handed down for generations in my family, regarding our immigrant ancestor and also fits historical patterns of 17th century Europe. Thus, it has become my conviction that the story is essentially true, conforming with known facts and providing a plausible explanation of the origins of most, if not all, the Housers in the Lancaster Co. and York Co. areas of Pennsylvania in the early 1700s.

Background:

Though it is not the purpose here to refresh the reader's memory of the truly towering historical figures and the shattering historical events of the 17th century Europe, it is impossible to understand the immense forces that caused our ancestor to come to America without a brief discussion of these historical events and figures.

We must speak of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Though little remembered by modern historians, it was probably the bloodiest war in history. Catholic and Protestant armies raging back and forth across central Europe, were reeking unbelievable slaughter and destruction. Whole cities were destroyed and the surviving populations fled. One army alone, the Swedish Army, boasted of destroying over 1,200 cities and towns. People scattered in all directions to escape the carnage. Some historians claim that this war, with a little help from the bubonic plague, resulted in the deaths of about one third of the population of Europe. One third! If that happened in America today, over ninety million people would die!

We must speak of Louis XIV (1629-1715) the Catholic King of France. The "Sun King," who ruled France for 74 years, longer than any

monarch in history. He housed himself and most of the French nobility in incredible splendor at his magnificent 1,400-acre palace at Versailles, about fifteen miles southwest of Paris. There were ten large buildings of marble and miles of paved walkways and gardens. The formal boxwood garden alone, occupied nine acres and one greenhouse contained 1,200 orange trees bearing fruit. The "front porch" of the main building was over a half mile long. There was virtually constant lavish dining and entertainment for the nobility and their guests. Powdered wigs and elaborate and expensive brocaded frock coats were the usual attires of the nobles and their ladies wore equally elaborate dresses of velvet and silk and adorned themselves with Gold jewelry and precious stones.

It is estimated that, with the King, the nobility, their retainers, guards and servants, over 10,000 people lived at Versailles. Supporting the royal establishment at Versailles consumed more than twenty percent of the entire French budget for decades. Many historians believe that Louis XIV's extravagances so depleted the French treasury and the French economy, that they precipitated the French Revolution, sixty years after his death. That revolution resulted in the overthrow of the French monarchy and the beheading of Louis XIV's grand nephew, Louis XVI and his wife Marie Antoinette.

Louis and France found it increasingly difficult to finance his extravagances and turned to Pope Innocent XI for a loan.

Pope Innocent XI was no doubt a pious man. But, he had the misfortune to become Pope after the decisive periods of the Protestant Reformation had swept Europe and the Catholic Church was left with only desperate means to salvage small portions of their once extensive domain. Pope Innocent used all means at his power, including the church's still substantial treasury, in an effort to stem the tide away from the Catholic Church. One such deal was a loan to Louis XIV, on the condition that Louis would invade the German Palatinate and subdue the rebellious Protestants there.

We must speak of Queen Ann of England (1665-1714), the daughter of William III, who was thrust, totally unprepared, onto the Protestant British throne in 1702, when her brother, James, embraced Catholicism and was banished to France. From all accounts she was not only poorly equipped to rule, but ungainly, untidy in appearance and in poor health most of her life. She suffered through fourteen pregnancies, but did not

leave one living heir! She had to be carried in a chair during the last fifteen years of her forty-nine year life.

But, she had a "heart-of-gold"

When she ascended the throne, she had her parliament pass a law entitled: "An Act for the Relief of Protestants," commonly known as the "Queen Ann Act." It was, if you please, the first "Refugee Act." It provided that the British Government would pay for the transportation of persecuted Protestants from the European continent to England.

What the British didn't count on was the "flood" of refugees that followed. In one year alone (1709) over 35,000 people came to England. Needless to say these impoverished, mostly German speaking refugees, completely inundated the available facilities in and around London. They were everywhere, living in the run-down houses, warehouses and in lean-tos in the parks. The British made efforts to ship some of these people to other areas of England, but the local population there were seldom prepared to accept these "foreign tongued" people. Finally, the British began moving these people to the "new country" first by wagon over to Portsmouth, where they shipped to America, and later by ships directly from Rotterdam by way of Cowes, on the Isle of Wright, to America.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) hardly needs an introduction to serious students of the Houser Family. Though he can be viewed from several perspectives, there is no question of his leadership roll in the Protestant Reformation, beginning with his "95 Thesis" at Wittenberg in 1517. His thoughts and the thoughts of those that followed him, as well as those that disagreed with him, lead not only to a major schism in religious thinking, but a seemingly endless series of actions and counter actions in Europe that lead directly to our ancestor coming to this country.

Huldrych Zwingley (1484-1531) was an early Swiss follower of Martin Luther, but broke with him over the significance of the Communion Sacrament. Zwingley developed a large following in Switzerland and embraced other philosophies such as pacifism, "plain living," "shunning" and communal living, which are still seen today in sects like the Quakers, Mennonites, Amish, etc. Though he espoused pacifism, Huldrych Zwingley died at age 47, while serving as a Chaplain in the Swiss Army. Nonetheless, he and his followers produced a lasting impact on religious thinking throughout Europe and America.

Early Life of Karl Hans Hauser:

Karl Hans Hauser was born in the Canton of Zurich about 1655, seven years after the close of the 30-year war, the bloodiest war in history. While it is believed that his ancestors lived along the Rhine River and had fled south to avoid the ravages of the 30-year war, his family had lived in Switzerland for at least two generations. They were followers of Huldrych Zwingli, the Swiss Protestant Reformer.

Karl Hans, or Hans/John went "down river" (North on the Rhine River) and established himself in the small principality of "Onansbruck," a part of the Palatinate. In those days, Germany was made up of over fifty Principalities, Dukedoms, Earldoms and the like; each governed by the appropriate ruler. Though there is uncertainty about the precise location of "Onansbruck," it was likely a small principality of some 150 square miles, lying northwest of today's Wiesbaden.

The Good Life:

At any rate, Hans quickly became a prominent citizen in his community a successful merchant, deacon in his church and a supporter of the local government.

It was customary in those days, that the local princes selected a few prominent citizens each year for "honors". Karl Hans Hauser was so honored in 1686 at the castle in Heidelberg by Prince Henry VII, Prince Palatine. Hans was granted the title of "Von," equivalent to the British title "Sir."

Death and Destruction:

In 1688, Louis XIV, the Catholic King of France, in need of money to support his extravagant life-style, obtained a large loan from Pope Innocent XI on the condition that Louis would help stamp out the "Protestant hearsay that infests the Palatinate." The next year, Louis ordered his army into that German principality lying west of the Rhine River and launched severe measures of repression against the Protestants there. The Protestant leaders were driven out or imprisoned. At first, the French imposed repressive taxation, then outright confiscation of property, houses and livestock of the Protestant inhabitants. Resisting government officials were killed and their property confiscated or destroyed. Protestant Church buildings were burned and the Protestants were forbidden to assemble.

Louis was forced to withdraw his army in 1698 by a combination of political pressure from neighboring countries and a lack of money to keep the campaign of terror going. But, as they withdrew, the French Army turned their cannon against the cities and towns they had evacuated and reduced them to rubble. They drove off or killed the livestock and burned the houses, barns and fields. In short, they invoked a "scorched earth" policy that completely devastated the 8,000 square miles of the Palatinate. The dazed and heartsick population was left in complete poverty without shelter or food nor the implements or funds to create housing and rebuild agriculture to feed themselves. It was an utter wasteland.

From the Old Country to the New:

In 1703, Karl Hans Von Hauser sailed the 160 miles from Rotterdam at the mouth of the Rhine River, to London, England. The English Government, under the "Queen Ann Act," paid for his transportation. He remained in London for about three years and sailed to the New World with one or two of his children.

In 1707, Hans Hauser appears on a tax list at Germantown, Pennsylvania, some 15 miles up the Schuylkill River from Philadelphia. In 1708 he returned to London to retrieve the rest of his family.

On the 15th of June 1709, Hans Hauser, his wife Huldricha and three children sailed from the port of London for America.

Hans (a.k.a. John) Hauser appears on the 1711 tax list of the Conestoga community in the southern part of what is now Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Conestoga was, if you will, an early day "factory" town, having not only the customary commercial retail trade but a large fraction of the people engaged in manufacture of cloth, clothing, furniture, leather goods and vehicles. The famed "Conestoga" wagons used by many Americans in their westward migration were originally built in Conestoga using a design that was brought from Europe and featured the characteristic overhanging canopy on the front and rear.

Hans Hauser (Karl Hans Von) established himself in Conestoga at the age of about 55 and for the next eleven years he engaged in his trade as a weaver of fine linens and socks. He was also associated with Hans

Webber, and Hans' son, Johnannes "Hance" Webber (John's son-in-law), both prominent Mennonites, in the development of a near-by 150,000 acre tract of land known as the "Bondelli Tract."

Karl Hans Von Hauser died in Conestoga about 1722. He was survived by his wife, Huldricha, (1660-1734) and at least seven probable children.

PROBABLE CHILDREN OF KARL HANS Von HAUSER

I. ULRICH

Ulrich Hauser, a.k.a. "Woolrich Haufer," was born about 1685 in the Palatinate. It is probable that he lived with his parents for a time in England, but likely came to America before his father and settled in Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. Like his father, Ulrich was a weaver, a "yeoman" as they were referred to. Ulrich married twice and is thought to have had a large number of children, perhaps more than twenty, even giving more than one of them the same first name.

Ulrich Hauser first married Agnes ? b. 1690 and three children have been identified. They were Jacob, Elizabeth and Andrew, born in Lampiter Twp. Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. There were probably more children. Agnes died about 1717 in Lancaster Co.

Ulrich Hauser then married (2) Feronica ? who was born about 1700, some 15 years young than her husband. Seven of their probably more than a dozen children have been identified.

Ulrich died in 1754 and left a will in Lancaster Co. identifying only three of his children. Feronica died in Lampiter Twp. in June 1786 and left a will identifying seven of her children.

II. BARBARA

Barbara Hauser was born ca 1690 in the Palatinate, lived in England for a few years and probably came to America with her father in 1706. She married Johannes "Hance" Webber (1700-1786), a prominent Mennonite who was associated with his father and her father in the weaving business and is the development of the "Bondelli Tract," a 150,000 acre tract of land in the area. They had children and Barbara died in

Conestoga about 1750.

III. HANS, JR.

Hans Hauser, Jr. was born about 1695 in the Palatinate, lived in England with his parents and came to America with his parents in 1709. Little is known about his family because there is confusion in the records between he and his father. There are indications that he suffered poor health and probably died ca 1745 at the age of 50. He is sometimes confused with his Father.

IV. PETER

Peter Hauser was born about 1700 in the Palatinate, lived in England came to America with his parents in 1709. However, Peter did not stay in Lancaster Co. but returned to Germantown, near Philadelphia, where he died about 1755. His family has been extensively researched, especially his son, Abraham (1740-1825) who is the subject of several publications.

V. JACOB

Jacob Hauser was born about 1705 in London, England, shortly before his father's first trip to America. He came to America in 1709 and settled in Lampiter Twp. Lancaster Co. Pennsylvania. Jacob married (1) Maria Catherina (1715-1759) and moved to adjoining York Co. living for a time in Manheim Twp. and later N. Corodus Twp. near his brother John. Jacob, married (2) ? and died in N. Corodus Twp. in 1788. Jacob is credited with supporting his brother John's Family after John's death in 1756. Two of Jacob's children are known, one by each marriage. Several of Jacob's descendants still live in south central Pennsylvania.

VI. JOHN, SR.

John Houser, Sr. was born about 1709, probably in Germantown, Pennsylvania. It is possible that he was born in England or even at sea while his parents were in route to America, because he was born about the time they made the journey from England to America.

He grew up in Conestoga in Lancaster Co. Pennsylvania and followed his father's trade as a weaver. In 1744, he moved to adjoining York Co. and, shortly thereafter, Abt. 1745, he married MARY E. WEHRLY in York Co. Pennsylvania, daughter of DIETRICH WIERLI and MADELINE RUPP.

She was born Abt. 1724 in Belmont, Alsace (Bas-Rhn), Frances, and died Abt. 1780 in York Co. Pennsylvania. They had seven children: John, Jr. (1747-1 833); Elizabeth (1749-1825); Peter (1751-1845); Juliana (1753-1833); Henry (1756-1822); Jacob b. 1758; and George (1760-1843)

John Houser, Sr. (1709-1763) was not only a successful weaver and tailor but acquired considerable acreage of land for farming. Various estimates are that he owned some 12-1400 acres of land when he died in 1763, at age 54. He left a widow and seven, largely adolescent children. John's will divided his land between his two eldest sons, John (Jr.) (about 17 years old) and Peter (about 12). Mary raised her children with the help of her husband's brother, Jacob who lived nearby.

The children grew to adulthood and John, Jr. became a farmer while Peter developed skill as a blacksmith. The daughters, Elizabeth and Juliana, both married Millers. Jacob and Henry, being landless, moved to nearby Northampton Co. about 1775, where they enlisted in the Revolutionary Army. John, Jr. and Peter also served in the revolution.

John, Jr. and Peter sold their land in Pennsylvania in 1796 and moved to Lincoln Co., North Carolina. About 1812, John moved most of his Family to Knox Co. Tennessee, there to join his brother George. Peter remained in North Carolina until his death in 1845.

VII. ANDREW, SR.

Andrew Hauser, Sr. may have been the seventh child of Karl Hans von Hauser and Huldricha ? . However some researchers believe that Andrew was a son of Ulrich Hauser and, thus, a grandson of Karl Hans von Hauser. Andrew, Sr. was born about 1714 in Conestoga, Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. He married ? (1714-1799) and moved to St. Matthews Co., South Carolina. He probably had several children but one, Andrew, Jr. (1752-1842), is well documented and has been the subject of some publications.

VI. 1. John Houser, Jr. (1747-1833) is the subject of Section II

VI. 2. Elizabeth Houser (1749-1825) is believed to have married Henry Miller. Her death is mentioned in an 1825 Power of Attorney by her brother, Peter Houser, to Collect" all I may be entitled to from the estate of my late sister Elizabeth Houser of York Co., Pennsylvania."

VI. 3. Peter Houser (1751-1845) is the subject of Section III.

VI. 4. Juliana Houser was born ca 1753 in York Co., Pennsylvania. About 1782 she married Jacob Miller (1750-1830). She died in April 1836 and her 1833 will was probate that year in York Co. She named her five children, all born in Pennsylvania.

VI. 5. Henry Howser (1756-1822) is the subject Section IV.

VI. 6. Jacob Houser b. ca 1758 is known to have enlisted in the Revolutionary Army in 1776 with his brother Henry, in Northampton Co. Since no record has been found of a Jacob Houser losing his life in that war, it is likely that Jacob survived the Revolution. But, he is "lost" in the "forest" of Jacob Housers that lived at that time. Some researchers believe that he moved to Bedford Co. Pennsylvania and was the Father Of John Thomas Houser who lived in Blount Co. Tennessee

VI. 7. George grew to manhood, married Philipina Herleman about 1782 and began his migration that included several stops down the Great Valley of Virginia and ended in Knox Co., Tennessee.

George Houser is the subject of Section V.