

PLANTING ROOTS: A NUWER FAMILY HISTORY

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From the late 1820s onwards many from Soufflenheim emigrated to Erie County in western New York, including Buffalo, Lancaster, Alden, Cheektowaga, and East Eden. One of these families was Nuwer.

Excerpts from *Planting Roots: A Nuwer family history*, by Michael J. Nuwer, 2020, Chapters 1-5:
<https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Nuwer-140>



Indian Summer. George Inness

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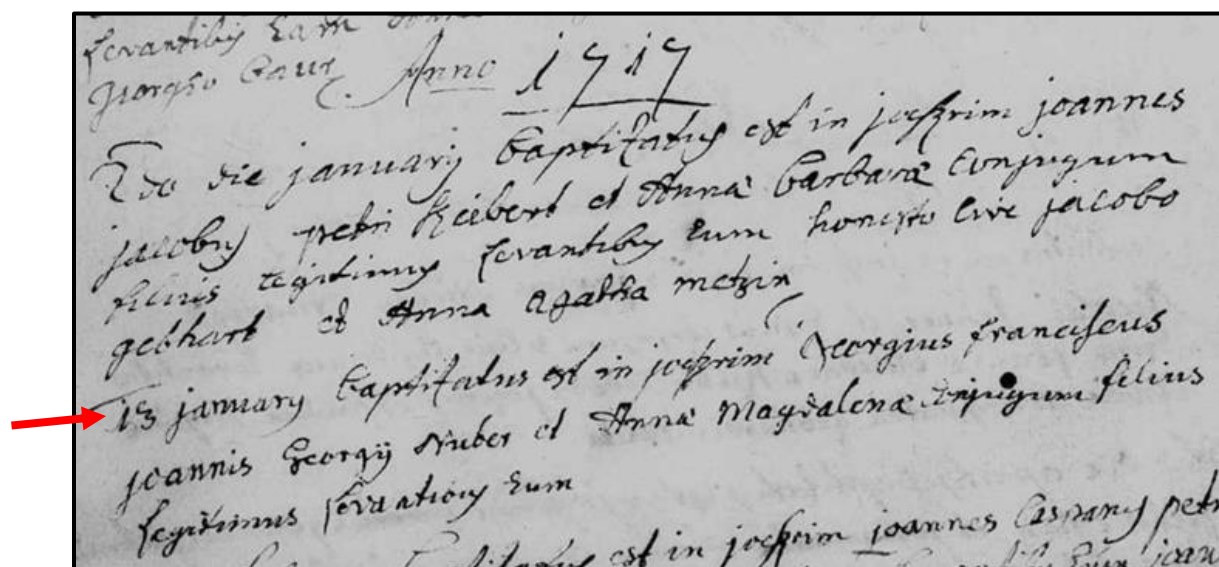
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THE NUWER FAMILY IN EUROPE

Chapter 1

The oldest Nuwer ancestors that I've been able to uncover are John George Nuwer and Anna Magdalena Wagner.¹ They lived in the village of Jockgrim in, what is today, Germany. Catholic Church documents from the Jockgrim parish indicate that George Nuwer and Magdalena Wagner had five sons, and we know for sure that four of them were born in Jockgrim.

The third son, whose name was George Francis, is our ancestor. He was born in Jockgrim in January 1717. The following image was his baptismal record from the Catholic Church.² It is written in Latin. This is the oldest family history document that I know about.



¹ I will use the "Nuwer" spelling of our family name throughout this paper. The alternate spelling, "Nuber," was commonly used in historical documents, but I have found no pattern or reason for one spelling over the other. Although "Nuber" was the only spelling found in Jockgrim documents, both spellings are found in Soufflenheim and both spellings were found in the earliest and the later documents.

I am grateful to Mark Drexler, a Soufflenheim genealogist, who read an earlier version of this essay and pointed out some important substantive errors. I believe those errors have been corrected in the current version and I know the essay is much improved with Mark's suggestions.

² The Church image is available at the FamilySearch website. Here is the URL: (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CSZR-N97V-7?i=10>).

Baptismal record for George Francis Nuwer, January 13, 1717

Below are the original Latin and an English translation as best as I can figure this out.

Latin text:

13 january baptisatus est in jockgrim Georgius franciseus
joannis Georgii Nuber et Anna Magdalena conjugum filius
legitimus levantibus sum

English

13 January he is baptized in Jockgrim, George Francis. A legitimate son from the married couple John George Nuber and Anna Magdalena, he is by the godparents.

§ 1

Jockgrim is a small village located on the west bank of the upper Rhine river.³ The town was in a district called Germersheim, and the district was in a region called Palatinate (or "Pfalz" in German). Both Jockgrim and Palatinate have a long history. We are interested in the period from 1680 to 1750. Church documents tell us that George Nuwer died January 23, 1728, only two years after his fifth son was born, and Magdalena Wagner Nuwer died 26 years later, on September 18, 1754. Furthermore, we know that their first son, Leonard, was born no later than 1712 and their last son, Nicholas, was born in 1726. These facts can be used to help estimate when John George and Anna Magdalena were born.

If George and Magdalena were about the same age, and if Magdalena was in her mid-60s or early 70s when she died in 1754, then they would have been born between, roughly, 1679 and 1689. George and Magdalena would have been between 23 and 33 when their first son was born in about 1712, and between 39 and 49 when George died in 1728. These seem to be reasonable approximations.

Central Europe was a difficult place to live in the period between 1680 and 1750. At the beginning of the seventeenth century (around the year 1600), the Palatinate was a militant Protestant region. Geopolitical rivalry between the Kingdom of France and the House of Habsburg, mixed with religious tensions between Catholics and Protestants, led to the Thirty Years' War. This war was fought primarily in Central Europe between the years 1618 and 1648, and it devastated the Palatinate. Some historians describe the conflict as the first "Total War"—that is, a war that made civilians, associated resources and infrastructure legitimate military targets. Much of the destruction of civilian lives and property in the Palatinate was caused by the mercenary soldiers of the Swedish and French armies.

The war killed soldiers and civilians, caused famines, destroyed livelihoods, disrupted commerce, postponed marriages and childbirth, and forced large numbers of people to relocate. Historians estimate that the population of the Palatinate was reduced between 50 and 66 percent. The War ranks along with the worst famines and plagues as one of the greatest catastrophes in modern European history. The people living in Germersheim during the seventeenth century faced tremendous hardships and challenges and it took those who survived almost a hundred years to recover. Genealogical data place the Nuwer family in the middle of this war and its aftermath.

A mere 40 years after the Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which marked the end of the Thirty Years' War, the region was again involved in war. The Nine Years War (1688-97) saw Louis XIV, King of France, order the destruction of the Palatinate. Yet again French troops laid waste to the region. The war prompted another wave of emigration. This one resulted in the resettlement of many "Palatines" to the mid-Atlantic colonies of British North America. We know them today as Pennsylvania Dutch.

The ravages of the French Army brought during the Nine Years War and the next one, the War of Spanish Succession (1701-14), created economic hardships for the inhabitants of the region. These hardships were exacerbated by a rash of harsh winters and poor harvests. This was precisely the time we

³ The Rhine river flows north from the Alps in the south to the Netherlands in the North. Thus, the upper Rhine is geographically south of the lower Rhine.

estimated George Nuwer and Magdalena Wagner were born, grew to adulthood, and started their family. Although we don't know precisely where they were born, their village was no doubt affected by these wars, famines, and migrations.

Table 1 presents information about the children of George Nuwer and Magdalena Wagner. It tells us that three of George and Magdalena's five sons—Martin, Francis, and Nicholas—migrated to Soufflenheim, which was in the Alsace region of France. Like the Palatinate, Alsace was a historical region on the west bank of the upper Rhine River. Today it is in eastern France, next to Germany and Switzerland. Until the Seventeenth Century, the Alsace was an administrative district within the Holy Roman Empire.

France gained possession of Alsace during the Thirty Years' War and the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) recognized the district as part of the French Kingdom. Nevertheless, existing rights and customs of the inhabitants were largely preserved. Alsace remained economically and culturally oriented to neighboring German-speaking lands and the German language remained in use in local administration and in schools.

The geography of the district favored this cultural and economic orientation. The Alsace was bordered to the west by the Vosges mountains. The Northern Vosges consists of rolling hills and dense forests that rise about 1,000-2,000 feet above the Alsace Plain. These mountains formed a barrier between Alsace and the rest of France. To the east was the Rhine river flowing north into the Palatinate and the rest of the Rhineland. This geography linked Alsace with its German neighbors and the two regions thereby shared similar fashions, customs and a common language.

TABLE 1
Events Involving the Children of George Nuwer and Magdalena Wagner⁴

(1) John Leonard	b: no date m: Eva Klemm, 19 January 1733, Jockgrim with Joannes Michael b: 20 August 1734, Jockgrim with Maria Margrethe b: 11 January 1736, Jockgrim
(2) John Martin	b: 1713, Jockgrim m: Dorothea Willhamer, 29 January 1748, in Soufflenheim d: 16 February 1772, Soufflenheim Seven children born in Soufflenheim
(3) George Francis	b: 13 January 1717, Jockgrim m: Anna Marie Muller, 21 August 1744, in Soufflenheim d: June 1763 Seven children born in Soufflenheim
(4) John Thomas	b: 9 October 1720, Jockgrim
(5) Nicholas	b: 20 June 1726, Jockgrim m: Marie Anna, 23 January 1750, in Soufflenheim d: December 1761 Seven children born in Soufflenheim

Like Jockgrim, Soufflenheim was a small village. It was approximately 34 miles south of Jockgrim. We don't know when the three Nuwer brothers moved to Soufflenheim, but the following timeline offers some facts that might help us make an estimate.

- 1726 Nicholas was born
- 1728 George Nuwer died

⁴ This Table is constructed from information posted on the Family Search website. The family name is spelled "Nuber" in all records found in Jockgrim. The following URL was used for the search:
(https://www.familysearch.org/search/record/results?count=20&query=%2Bsurname%3ANuber~%20%2Bbatch_number%3AC98953-1).

- 1733 Leonard married; Nicholas was 7, Francis was 16, Martin was 20
- 1738 Nicholas was 12, Francis was 21, Martin was 25
- 1744 Francis married; Nicholas was 18, Francis was 27, Martin was 31
- 1748 Martin married; Nicholas was 21, Francis was 31, Martin was 34

If the three brothers moved at the same time, they probably migrated after Leonard's wedding in 1733. It seems to me that Nicholas would have been older than seven when he made the move, since his mother was still living. Besides, even if the two older brothers migrated first and Nicholas followed some years later, 1733 seems to be a reasonable date because Francis was just 16 years old when his brother Leonard was married. 1744 was at the upper end of the range for the migration to Soufflenheim since the brothers would have moved at least a year or so before Francis' wedding. Thus, the move to Soufflenheim was probably between 1733 and 1744, the midpoint of which was 1738.

Another possibility was that Francis moved to Soufflenheim ahead of his brothers. After he was married in 1744, Martin and Nicholas then joined him. This scenario leaves about four years after 1744 for Martin to arrange his marriage and six years for Nicholas to make those arrangements.

Magdalena Wagner Nuwer and two of her sons—Leonard and Thomas—remained in Jockgrim. Church records tell us that Leonard, the oldest son, married Eva Klemm in 1733. The couple had at least two children, Michael born the next year and Margrethe born two years later, both children were born in Jockgrim. Very little is known about Thomas Nuwer. He was born in 1720 and the Church has a record of his confirmation, at the age of 11, in 1731. No other information has been found.

§ 2

Although we don't know much about the lives of the three Nuwer brothers in Soufflenheim, there are records showing that each married and had a family. George Francis Nuwer and Anna Marie Muller were our ancestors. Their marriage record from the church in Soufflenheim tells us that Francis was the son of the deceased (*defunctorum*) John George Nuwer, who was a former citizen (*civis olim*) of Jockgrim, and Anna Magdalena Wagner. For a genealogist, this is valuable information because it tells us the names of Francis' parents and where they lived. This is how genealogists traced our family to Jackgrim. The marriage record also tells us that Anna Marie Muller was the daughter of Andrea Muller, a citizen and farmer (*civis et agricola*) in Soufflenheim, and the deceased Eva Stuffelmeyer.⁵

Church records identify six children from George Francis and Anna Marie's marriage. The first child in the baptismal records was Francis Joseph, but he was born almost six years after his parents' wedding. It is possible that Francis Joseph was not the first child of Francis Nuwer and Marie Muller. Baptismal documents in the existing archive begin in 1748. Records before that date have been lost. Thus, George Francis and Anna Marie may have had one or more children in the years between 1744 and 1748, but the record was lost. In fact, there was a marriage contract dated November 1769 in which the bride, Maria Anna Nuwer, was said to be the daughter of Francis Nuwer and Anna Muller.⁶ Maria Anna is not found in the Church baptismal documents, and so, it is reasonable to suppose that she was born before 1748. The children of George Francis and Anna Marie are listed in Table 2.

⁵ The marriage record is available at the Archives of the Department of the Bas-Rhin. The URL is here: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284248#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284248-1407857>).

Instructions for using the Archives can be found on Brian J. Smith's website: (<http://www.smithancestry.com/alsace/alsaceaz/archivesbasrhin.htm>).

⁶ "Marriage contract in Soufflenheim between Jacob Wilhelm son of deceased Joseph Wilhelm and Veronica Hasser, assisted by Peter Glitz, and: Maria Anna Nuber daughter of deceased Frantz Nuber and Anna Müller, assisted by Georg Adam Ludwig guardian; witnesses: Joseph Hausser member of the local justice, Kieffer provost, Georg Adam Ludwig guardian, Bernhard Glitz, Johannes Mockers." 1 November 1769 Haguenau 6E16/75 Marriage Contract. Source: (<https://nebula.wsimg.com/cc3c37466021a5796413fe7313d48326?AccessKeyId=B148577D7422636F7E01&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>).

TABLE 2
Children of George Francis Nuwer and Anna Marie Muller

Maria Anna	m: 1 November 1769	d: 23 December 1802
Francois Joseph	b: 8 January 1750	
Laurent Mosser and Maria Anna, daughter of Andrea Dangel		
Marie Catherine	b: 13 October 1751	
Laurent Mosser and Maria Anna, daughter of Andrea Dangel		
Marie Magdalena	b: 9 January 1753	
Joannis Beck and Richard Urich, wife of Laurent Mosser		
Marie Clara	b: 12 August 1755	
Sebastian Stoll and Richard Urich, wife of Laurent Mosser		
Marie Eva	b: 6 April 1758	
Laurent Mosser and Marie Anna Dangel, wife of Sebastian Stoll		
Francis Antione	b: 19 May 1760	d: 22 April 1818
Sebastian Stoll and Odile Metzler, wife of Joannis Beck		

Surviving records provide more information than simply the names and birth dates of George Francis and Anna Marie's children. First, Maria Anna's marriage contract tells us that George Francis Nuwer had died before November 1, 1769. Indeed, documents filed with civil authorities called "Inventories" provide an inventory and description of the property left by a deceased person at time of their death. The Inventory for Francis Nuwer, filed with the royal bailiff in Roeschwoog on September 27, 1763, tells us that he died "four months ago," which would have been June 1763. He was therefore, 46 years old at the time of his death.⁷

A second interesting thing to note about the Church documents is that the first four baptismal records write the family name using the spelling "Nuwer." In fact, between 1748 and 1756, twelve children were born to the three Nuwer brothers and the family name was spelled "Nuwer" in every record. But beginning in 1757 the family name was spelled "Nuber" in each subsequent birth record—a total of eight records. In other words, we can find the "Nuwer" spelling about 100 years before the family arrived in the United States.

Each of the six existing baptismal records for the children of George Francis state that he was a citizen of the town of Soufflenheim (*civis huius soci*). In addition, the first four records state that he was a potter (*figuli*). The history of pottery-making in Soufflenheim is very long. Evidence of pottery-making dates to at least the twelfth century and in Roman times there was a brick and tile facility in the local area. The subsoil of the nearby forest was rich in clay and the remains of the Roman clay quarry are still visible. There are also records of a pottery guild dating to the eighteenth century. Guild membership afforded the right to extract clay and gather wood from the surrounding forest.⁸ The evidence suggests that George Francis Nuwer was a member of that guild. He was also a citizen of the town.

In the eighteenth century, and long before, people in Europe were not citizens of a nation-state. In the case of Alsace residents, the people held no membership in the territorial state known as the Kingdom of France. Instead, the residents were the subjects of the King. On the other hand, many towns were membership associations and members of those towns were known as citizens. Not all town residents were citizens. Simply living in the town did not confer membership rights. Towns selected their members

⁷ "Inventory and description of the property left at time of death by Frantz Nuber, in his lifetime burgher of Soufflenheim where he died four months ago, on request of 1) Anna Müller, his widow assisted by Michel Häussler, burgher here, 2) Georg Adam Ludwig, burgher here and guardian of the two children minor of years Maria Anna 16, Frantz Anton 3. The oath was taken in presence of the royal notary of Haguenuau, of Ignace Fridmann mayor, Andres Mössner member of the town council." (27 September 1763 Roeschwoog 6E33/64)

⁸ Paul Elchinger and Aloise Scheydecker, "Soufflenheim, The City of Potters" (<https://nebula.wsimg.com/901ecc3393c9e779aa5a3b007574ede7?AccessKeyId=B148577D7422636F7E01&disposition=0>).

and citizenship status conferred specific rights that non-citizens did not enjoy, such as the right to own land, the right to pursue a trade (like pottery in the case of George Francis), and the right to participate in municipal affairs.⁹

Since George Francis came to Soufflenheim from Jockgrim he arrived as a non-citizen. At some point after that, the citizens of Soufflenheim had to grant him membership in their association, that is, citizenship in their town. Although I haven't found documents that describe how someone became a citizen in eighteenth century Soufflenheim, in general there were three paths to urban citizenship. First, someone born to a citizen could become a citizen. Second, someone who married a citizen could become a citizen. Finally, someone could purchase citizenship. George Francis appears to have taken the second path. His marriage record identifies him as a former resident of Jockgrim and it identifies Andrea Muller, Anna Marie's father, as a citizen of Soufflenheim. It is not known why Francis was permitted to marry the daughter of a citizen and thereby gain citizenship himself, but the baptismal records of each of his children make a point to state his citizenship status.

The six baptismal records also tell us something about the relationships George Francis and Anna Marie had with other families in the town. Table 2 includes the sponsors or godparents of each child. Three families can be identified, presumably they were friends close enough to trust as godparents for the children. (1) Laurent Mosser or Richarde Urich, who were themselves married in 1748, were sponsors to five of the six children; (2) Sebastian Stoll or Marie Anna Dangel, who were married in 1752, were also sponsors to five of the children; (3) Joannis Beck or Odile Metzler, a third married couple, were sponsors to two of the children. Laurent Mosser was a baker (*pistor*), Joannis Beck was a tailor (*sartor*), while Sebastian Stoll was a wage laborer (*mercenaries*). The three men were citizens of Soufflenheim, which gave them the right to own land and to pursue their trade or work for a wage.

Out of the seven children born to George Francis and Anna Marie, we know that two married and had a family in Soufflenheim. We noted above that Marie Anne Nuwer was married in November 1769. Her husband was Jacob Wilhelm, and the couple had nine children between 1773 and 1788. Anna Marie died in December 1802, she was in her early 50s. We also know that Francis Antoine, our ancestor, was married and had a family in Soufflenheim. We will explore his family in Section 4 below.

The Inventory recorded at the time of George Francis' death tells us that he was survived by his wife, Anna Muller, and by only two children: Maria Anna age 16 and Frantz Anton age 3. This document thereby informs us that Francis Nuwer and Anna Muller's other five children died before 1763. Francois Joseph, the oldest of these five children, was born in 1750. Thus, none of the children would have been older than 13 years at the time of death, and some of them probably died as infants.

§ 3

The other two Nuwer brothers who migrated to Soufflenheim were John Martin and Nicholas.¹⁰ John Martin Nuwer was born in 1713. The church record in Jockgrim doesn't provide a day or month of his baptism. Martin was the second son of George Nuwer and Magdalena Wagner. He migrated to

⁹ In Soufflenheim burgers (i.e. citizens) renewed their citizenship oath every year. Each burger swore they were not a subject of any other lord, they did not bring debts that would burden the community, their loyalty to the mayor (*heimburger*), and to maintain good relations with other burgers in the town.

The mayor was elected each year by the citizens of the village. He was the guardian of the village, managed the village's wealth, made an account of income and expenses, raised the taxes and rents due to the seigniorial authority, and represented the village to the outside community. Burgers also nominated three names for magistrate (*schultheiss*) of the village court, while the court in Hagenau selected one of the names for the position.

(<https://nebula.wsimg.com/ac3cdef99c4e5fe88b7e7c9979ffe631?AccessKeyId=B148577D7422636F7E01&disposition=0&alloworigi n=1>).

¹⁰ Information on the Nuwer family in Soufflenheim can be found at Brian J. Smith's website. The following links point to the page documenting the families of Soufflenheim and Rosa Raiman's Soufflenheim Baptisms, Marriages, and Deaths Indexes:

(<http://smithancestry.com/places/souff/fams.htm>)

(<http://www.smithancestry.com/places/souff/ixs.htm>)

Also see:

For Nicholas, (<https://gw.geneanet.org/jann13?lang=en&v=NUBER-NUWER&m=N>)

For Martin, (<https://gw.geneanet.org/asor17?lang=en&m=N&v=nuwer&br=3>).

Soufflenheim sometime before 1748, perhaps along with his brothers, Francis and Nicholas, in the early 1740s. On January 29, 1748, at the age of 34 or 35, Martin married Dorothea Wilhammer. Church records in Soufflenheim tell us that Dorothea was the daughter of Laurent Wilhammer and Barbara Wolf. She had at least three brothers and a sister. Her sister, Barbara, was married in Soufflenheim in 1746.¹¹

Martin's marriage record identifies him as originating from Jockgrim (*oriundus ex Jockgrim*) and the baptism record for his first child, which was dated December 1748, stated he was a resident of Soufflenheim (*incola huius soci*). A year and a half later, in July 1750, Dorothea gave birth to fraternal twins and their baptism record stated that Martin had become a citizen of Soufflenheim (*civis huius soci*). Like his brother Francis, he married the daughter of a citizen which gave him the opportunity to petition for citizenship in Soufflenheim.

Review of the baptism records for Martin's seven children tell us that he worked as a day laborer (*mercenarii*). The records of the first four children state this occupation, while the records for the three youngest children do not state any occupation. A day laborer worked for others in the fields or in the village and were paid a daily wage. Although they were not servants with servile obligations, they still found themselves in a socially subordinate position – the social status of wage work in early modern Europe was very low. The worker had no craft or trade and was not a member of a guild. Some day laborers were in possession of a house or a small piece of land, but the land may not have been sufficient to sustain a family. This low status occupation may have also delayed Martin's citizenship status in the town until after his first child was born.

Nicholas Nuwer was the youngest of George Nuwer and Magdalena Wagner five sons. He was born in Jockgrim on June 20, 1726 and migrated to Soufflenheim sometime before his 23rd birthday. In Soufflenheim he married Marie Anna Hasser on January 23, 1750. His marriage record tells us that Marie Anna was the daughter of Jacob Hasser and Catherine Albrecht. She was born in 1729 and had at least five brothers and sisters.

In the record of his wedding, Nicholas was identified as a former resident of Jockgrim, but he was not yet a citizen of Soufflenheim. By the time his first child was born in 1752, however, the child's baptism record identified him as a citizen (*civis huius soci*). Both Nicholas and his brother Martin became citizens of Soufflenheim the same way their brother Francis had become a citizen: by marrying the daughter of a citizen.

Nicholas was identified as a tailor in all the records that provided an occupation. This trade would have given him greater status in the town than his brother Martin had. If Nicholas migrated to Alsace in the late 1730s, then he probably learned this trade in Soufflenheim. But, if he migrated in the late 1740s, then he would have learned the trade in Jockgrim. We don't know for sure, but it was common practice for a boy to enter an apprenticeship around the age of twelve.

All three of the Nuwer brothers who migrated to Soufflenheim died relatively young. We saw that Francis Nuwer's Inventory dated his death in June 1763, making him 46 years old when he died. The Inventory record for Nicholas Nuwer gives us his date of death as December 1761, he was only 35 years old. In fact, Nicholas died before his wife gave birth to their seventh child, which was in June 1762. Church records tell us that Martin Nuwer died February 16, 1772, which means he was 58 years old.

Records from the Soufflenheim Catholic Church tell us that both Martin and Nicholas had seven children. The children and their birth dates are presented in Table 3. Information about these children is, however, very sparse. We have baptism records for all the children which include the day, month and year of the event. But there are no records of events after the baptisms for all but two of these children.

¹¹ "Inventory and description of property left at time of death by the deceased Barbara Wolff, wife of Andres Dangel, burgher of Soufflenheim where she died about three months ago, established on request of 1) Johann Willhammer, living in Bollwiller, 2) Sebastian Willhammer, burgher here, 3) Michel Willhammer, living on a farm named Rothalb, property of the cloister of Sturtzelbronn, near Pirmasens, 4) Dorothea Wilhammer, assisted and authorized by Martin Nuber, burgher of this place, 5) Barbara Wilhammer, assisted and authorized by Martin Papinger here, all these children named born to the deceased and to Lorentz Wilhammer, deceased, her first husband, and finally requesting also the widower Andres Dangel. In presence of the royal notary of Haguenu, of Ignatz Fridmann, mayor of Soufflenheim, and Andres Mössner burgher and member of the local justice." (4 June 1760 Roeschwoog 6E33/62)

TABLE 3

Children of John Martin Nuwer and Dorothea Willhamer

1. Laurent	b: 14 Dec 1748	
2. Francois Antoine	b: 21 Jul 1750	
2. Maria Anna	b: 21 Jul 1750	
4. Magdalena	b: 23 Aug 1751	d: 23 Jun 1824
5. Jacob	b: 3 Aug 1758	
6. Barbara	b: 13 Sep 1760	
7. Margarethe	b: 16 Feb 1762	

Children of Nicholas Nuwer and Marie Anna Hasser

1. Marie Eva	b: 23 Jan 1751	
2. Peter	b: 5 Jul 1753	
3. Marie Magdalena	b: 15 Sep 1754	d: 15 Feb 1794
4. Margarete	b: 22 Jul 1756	
5. Marie Catherine	b: 3 Oct 1757	
6. Francis Joseph	b: 20 Apr 1760	
7. Marguerite	b: 9 Jun 1762	

Records subsequent to baptism exist for Martin and Dorothea's fourth child, Magdalena. She was born in 1751, we know she married in 1770 and died in 1824. Archives of notarized documents from Haguenau contain a marriage contract for Magdalena. This contract tells us that she married Antoine Messner on November 13, 1770.¹² Furthermore, Soufflenheim church records tell us that Antoine and Magdalena had twelve children over the next twenty years and finally, that Magdalena died June 23, 1824.

Similarly, a marriage contract in the Haguenau notary archives exists for Nicholas and Marie Anna's third child, who was also named Magdalena. Her contract tells us that she married Joseph Schaeffer in 1778.¹³ The contract also tells us that her father had died and that her mother had remarried Joseph Adam. We also know from church records that Magdalena Nuwer and Joseph Schaeffer had at least four children.

In July 1786, Joseph Schaeffer died. His Inventory records indicate that he was survived by three of his four children.¹⁴ Magdalena Nuwer Schaeffer married a second time, but we don't have a date for the wedding. Her second husband was Johannes Mockers, and they had at least two children in Soufflenheim. The first was born in 1788 and the second in 1791. Magdalena died in February 1794 at the age of 39.

¹² "Marriage contract in Soufflenheim between Anton Messner, son of Joseph Messner and Veronica Fritz, and: Magdalena Nuber, daughter of Martin Nuber and Dorothea Wilhamer, witnesses: Joseph Messner, Veronica Fritz, Joseph Mössner, Sebastian Wilhammer, Johannes Mockers, Kieffer, provost, Hatt royal notary." November 13, 1770 Haguenau 6E16/75 Marriage Contract. Source: (<https://nebula.wsimg.com/cc3c37466021a5796413fe7313d48326?AccessKeyId=B148577D7422636F7E01&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>).

¹³ "Marriage contract in Soufflenheim between Joseph Schaeffter, son of Johannes Schaeffter, burgher and carter and of Catharina Arn, deceased and Magdalena Nuber daughter of deceased Nichalus Nuber burgher tailor and of Maria Anna Hasser his widow; witness Joseph Adam, stepfather." February 8, 1778 Haguenau 6E16/42 Marriage Contract. Source: (<https://nebula.wsimg.com/cc3c37466021a5796413fe7313d48326?AccessKeyId=B148577D7422636F7E01&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>).

¹⁴ "Inventory and description of all property left at time of death by Joseph Schäfer, burgher in Soufflenheim where he died six months ago, established on request of Magdalena Nuber, widow, assisted by Joseph Adam, burgher in Soufflenheim and Antoni Götz as guardian; the oath was presented to the royal notary of Haguenau in assistance of Michel Kieffer, provost, and Nicolaus Daul, member of the justice here; the three children and heirs are 1) Nicolaus Schefer, 8 years old, 2) Catharina Schefer, 3 years old, 3) Joseph Schefer, one year old; a marriage contract took place the 08 February 1778 between Joseph Schefer, son of Johannes Schefer burgher and carter in Soufflenheim and of Catharina Arn his wife; and Magdalena Nuber daughter of deceased Nicolaus Nuber in his life burgher in Soufflenheim and of Maria Anna Hasser his wife; in assistance of Joseph Adam and of Joseph Wagner guardian; signed by Kieffer, provost, Joseph Adam, Joseph Wagner, Anton Schäfer, Johannes Mockers in front of the royal notary Ballet in Haguenau." (7 February 1787, Roeschwoog 6E33/68)

When Martin Nuwer died in 1772, his Inventory record identified only his widow, Dorothea Willhamer, and his married daughter, Magdalena, as heirs.¹⁵ This means that the other six children had predeceased him. The period between the respective child's date of birth and 1772 range from 23 years for the eldest child, Laurent, to ten years for the youngest child. It is not likely, therefore, that most of these children survived into their teenage years and most likely that they died as infants or young children.

Nicholas Nuwer's inventory record dated January 19, 1762 tells us that he was survived by five children: Maria Eva, 11, Magdalena 7, Catharina 4, Frantz Joseph 2 and "a posthumous child to come."¹⁶ From this information we know that Peter and Margarete died as infants or young children. As noted above, Magdalena will eventually marry in Soufflenheim, which leaves four of Nicholas' children to account for.

Our study of the Soufflenheim archives found no marriage or death records for these individuals. An interesting question becomes why there are no records following their baptism. First, records for deaths in Soufflenheim are not available before 1783, which is twenty years after the last of these children was born. Thus, records for any of the children who may have died before the age of twenty have been lost. Moreover, if the child reached adulthood and died after 1783 we would expect to see a death record. The absence of those records suggests that these children did not reach adulthood. Indeed, we know this to be the case for five of Francis Nuwer's children and six of Martin Nuwer's children.

Second, the marriage records for Soufflenheim are incomplete; pages are missing, many are too difficult to read and the years 1754 through 1787 are missing altogether. This is why there are no marriage records in the church documents for Martin Nuwer's daughter Magdalena, Nicholas Nuwer's daughter, Marie Magdalena, and Francis Nuwer's daughters Maria Anna. On the other hand, if other Nuwer children had been married in Soufflenheim, then there should have been a notary record for their marriage as well as baptism records for their children. The absence of these notary records seems to imply that all but one of Nicholas' children died before reaching adulthood.

Finally, we would not have a record in Soufflenheim, subsequent to a baptism, if an individual migrated to or married in a different parish. Moving to another town or marrying in another parish was not uncommon in this time period. However, the chance that more than one of Nicholas' children did either of these was very small. Which, again, implies that most of his children died before reaching adulthood.

§ 4

It was Francis Antoine Nuwer, the last-born child of George Francis and Anna Marie, to whom the ancestral baton was passed. He was both born in Soufflenheim and he died there. His son and three of his grandchildren found their way to Erie County, New York. The ancestral details are listed in Appendix 1.

Francis Antoine was only three years old in 1763 when his father died. He was raised by his mother and his sister, Anna, who was more than ten years older. Francis Antoine Nuwer was nine years old when Anna married Jacob Wilhelm in 1769. His mother, Anna Muller, did not remarry after Francis Nuwer died. She remained a widow for 16 years and died in February 1779. Her estate records identified her heirs as "Maria Anna Nuber married to Jacob Wilhelm" and "Frantz Anton Nuber 19 years old."¹⁷

¹⁵ "Inventory and description of the property left at time of death by : Martin Nuber, burgher in Soufflenheim where he died February 16th, on request of 1) Dorothea Willhammer, widow, assisted by Lorentz Sensenbrenner, burgher here, 2) Johannes Hummel, burgher and guardian of: Magdalena Nuber, 20 1/2 years old, wife of Antoni Mössner burgher here but himself also minor of years, 22 years old. The oath was taken in presence of the royal notary, of Anton Kieffer, mayor, and Ignatz Jägs, member of the local justice. A marriage contract was passed 1770 October 26 between Anton Mössner son of Joseph Mössner burgher here [father]. and of Anna Fritz [mother] and Magdalena Nuber daughter of Martin Nuber burgher here and Dorothea Willhammer, in front of notary Hallez in Haguenu." (16 March 1772 Roeschwoog 6E33/65)

¹⁶ "Inventory of Niclaus Nuber burgher of Soufflenheim, where he died 4 weeks ago, established on request of Maria Anna Haasser, widow assisted by Hans Enders, burgher in Soufflenheim, and of Martin Nuber, burgher in Soufflenheim and guardian of the following children of this couple: Maria Eva, 11, Magdalena 7, Catharina 4, Frantz Joseph 2 and a posthumous child to come. In front of the royal notary of Haguenu, in presence of Ignatz Fridmann provost of Soufflenheim and of Lorentz Wagner and Andres Müller, members of the local justice. (19 January 1762 Roeschwoog 6E33/63)

¹⁷ "Inventory and description of property left at time of death by Anna Müller, widow of Frantz Nuber, she died four weeks ago; on request of the guardian of the minor children, Georg Adam Ludwig burgher here; in presence of the royal notary of Haguenu, of

At the age of 27, Francis Antoine Nuwer married Marie Anna Schutt. The wedding took place at the Catholic Church in Soufflenheim on January 28, 1788. It was a double ceremony in that Antoine Schutt, Marie Anna's brother, was wed to Elizabeth Schneider on the same day. Marie Anna and Antoine's parents were Antoine Schutt and Margaret Geiger. They were both born in Soufflenheim in the early 1700s and were married in the mid-1750s. They both had died before the wedding. Church records identify Antoine Schutt (the older) as a farmer. Marie Anna was the couples' second child. She was born in 1759 and was 28 years old on the day of her wedding.

Church records tell us that Francis Antoine worked as a linen weaver. Linen was produced from flax, a fiber that grow well in Northern Europe. Cloth made from flax had been manufactured in Europe for many centuries. Across Northern Europe, as well as in Alsace, linen cloth was produced in large quantities during the pre-industrial period. One product made from the cloth was undergarments, which was Francis Antoine's speciality according to the church documents.

Marie Anna Schutt and Francis Antoine Nuwer had seven children, but only one survived to adulthood. Table 4 presents the birth and death dates for these children. The first child was born in February 1789 and died eight months later. Two years after that, their second child was born, but she too died eight months later. Their third child lived two and a half years.

Thus, when Antoine, our ancestor, was born, his mother and father had already seen three of their children die. When the fifth child, Michel, was born, it must have been a relief to the parents that Antoine had survived. Michel was two years old and Antoine was four when the sixth child was born, but this boy died before his second birthday. When the seventh child died just after his first birthday, Michel was six years old and Antoine was eight. Then, six years later Michel died at the age of twelve. Only Antoine lived to see adulthood.

TABLE 4
The Children of Francis Antoine and Marie Anna

	Born	Died
1. Francis Joseph	12 Feb 1789	28 Oct 1789
2. Marie Ann	14 Jun 1792	7 Jan 1793
3. Catharine	13 Oct 1793	22 Jun 1796
4. Antoine	27 Jul 1796	4 Dec 1857
5. Michel	1 Oct 1798	19 Aug 1811
6. Francis Joseph	5 Feb 1801	20 Oct 1802
7. Florentine	7 Nov 1803	27 Jan 1805

These hardships experienced by Marie Anna and Francis Antoine occurred during the period of the French Revolution (May 5, 1789 to November 9, 1799) and the reign of Napoléon Bonaparte (November 9, 1799 to April 6, 1814). During the revolution the new government attempted to assimilate Alsace into French culture. This action included the establishment of French-language schools in every part of Alsace and the introduction of French municipal administration of public affairs. It was during this time when Alsace was administratively reorganized into two departments: the Bas-Rhin in the north and the Haut-Rhin in the south.¹⁸ These efforts to assimilate the region were extremely destabilizing, both politically and economically.

Moreover, the Alsace became a major battlefield when Austria and Prussia sent troops to defeat the revolution. In 1793 the Allies occupied Lower Alsace, but they were driven back over the border by the French Revolutionary Army before the end of the year. Many in the Alsace feared reprisals by the French government and fled to German territories in Palatinate to the north or Baden on the east side of the

Anton Kiefer, mayor here, and Johannes Hummel, member of the local justice. The children and heirs are: 1) Maria Anna Nuber married to Jacob Wilhelm, present here; 2) Frantz Anton Nuber 19 years old." 4 March 1779, Roeschwoog 6E33/67

¹⁸ Bas-Rhin means lower Rhine and Haut-Rhin means upper Rhine. Remember, the upper Rhine is geographically south of the lower Rhine.

Rhine river. This episode is known as the “Great Flight.”¹⁹ Although records of exiles do not include names from the Nuwer family, many members of Soufflenheim’s Catholic parish were among those who fled.²⁰ For those who remained in Soufflenheim, the necessity of keeping the French army supplied placed great strain on local resources. Many families become impoverished and agriculture suffered from chronic neglect. These were the kind of conditions in which disease ran uncontrollable.

§ 5

Antoine Nuwer was 17 years old when Napoléon Bonaparte’s reign came to an end on April 6, 1814. Four years later, at the age of 21, he married Margarethe Ludwig. The wedding took place on April 11, 1818. Antoine’s father attended, but his mother had died six years earlier. Both of Margarethe’s parents attended.

Margarethe’s grandfather was from Steinweiler which, like Jockgrim, was in the Germersheim district north of Soufflenheim. Like Francis Nuwer had done before 1744, Jean Ludwig made his way to Soufflenheim some time before 1760. He married Richarde Uhrig in Soufflenheim, started a family and worked as a baker. Jean Ludwig was named as a 1793 exile. Church records identify three sons of Jean Ludwig and Richarde Uhrig. Margarethe’s father, Joseph, was the youngest of the three sons and was born in 1767. Joseph Ludwig came to have three children with his first wife and ten children with his second. Margarethe was the first child of Joseph’s second marriage. Catherine Messner was her mother. Catherine’s father (and Margarethe’s grandfather) Jacques Messner was also a 1793 exile.

According to the wedding record and other public records, Antoine Nuwer was a farmer and a weaver (*tisserand*). There was an 1819 record stating he was a farmer and six records between 1819 and 1829 stating that Antoine was a weaver. He no doubt learned the trade from his father. Beginning in 1831, however, public documents identified Antoine as a plowman or farmer. This occupation was reported in three records between 1831 and 1837. The story seems clear. Alsace was one of the traditional centers of the French textile industry—wool, linen and fustian (a mixture of linen and cotton) cloths were produced there—and there was plenty of work for weavers. Antoine was most likely a subsistence farmer and acquired money to buy market goods as a “cottage” worker. As a farmer he would have grown vegetables for his family, and he might have grown some wheat which he would have had milled and baked into bread. Also, he could have raised a cow for milk, cottage cheese, and butter. These products were all consumed by the family. Then, as a weaver he acquired money that was used to buy other goods like soap, pottery, and leather products.

Cottage industries were very common across Central Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A large proportion of the population was engaged in agriculture, and cottage work offered a means to earn money income. Farming was seasonal work with most of the labor needed in the spring and summer. Thus, farm families had time during the winter months to make market goods, like cloth. As a weaver, Antoine would have owned his own loom and subcontracted his services with a merchant from a town like Haguenau or Bischwiller. The merchant supplied the yarn and collected the finished cloth. The Industrial Revolution, however, centralized work into factories, and the cottage workers lost their status as subcontractors. It appears that such a change happened to Antoine after 1829.

Between 1818 and 1838, Anthony and Margarethe had eleven children but only three survived to adulthood, the other eight died before reaching the age of three.²¹ The children who survived were Jean who was born in 1819, Francis Xavier who was born in 1823, and Celestine who was born in 1829. These

¹⁹ Simmons maintains that the Great Flight illustrates that many people in Alsace identified more with German culture than with French culture. The large number of people leaving the district showed a widespread dislike and fear of the revolutionary government’s efforts to assimilate the region into French culture. The Great Flight was part of a struggle to preserve Alsace’s regional identity and of the resistance to French culture. Steven Simmons, “Between the Rhine and the Guillotine: The Bas-Rhin in the Year of Revolutionary Government.” Kalamazoo College, 2012.

²⁰ The names of Soufflenheim exiles in 1793 are found here: (<https://nebula.wsimg.com/99e2fc11f5464b7a691cda153421e3a8?AccessKeyId=B148577D7422636F7E01&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>).

²¹ Margarethe’s brothers experienced similar tragedy. Francis Joseph Ludwig was married in 1824 and had seven children between 1825 and 1839. Only one of these children married in Soufflenheim. Another brother, George Adam Ludwig was married in 1828. Three of his four children died as infants and he also died in 1835 at the age of 34.

five individuals left Soufflenheim in 1843 and 1844 and became commercial farmers in Lancaster, New York, USA. That journey is a story for a different essay.

ACTE DE MARIAGE, célébré à la Maison commune de Soufflenheim, département du Bas-Rhin,
 par l'Officier de l'État civil, à trois heures du soir le onze avril mil huit cent dix-huit
 PRÉNOMS et nom de l'ÉPOUX, Antoine Nuber, garçon.
un jeune d'ans, né en légitime mariage, le Neuf Thermidor an Neuf
 à Soufflenheim domicilié au dit lieu
 Profession ou qualité tisserand.
 A
 PRÉNOMS, nom, profession et domicile de son PÈRE, Antoine Nuber, tisserand, présent.
 B
 PRÉNOMS, nom et domicile de sa MÈRE, Marie Anne Schutt, veuve le onze
Décembre mil huit cent douze.
 B
 PRÉNOMS et nom de l'ÉPOUSE, Marguerite Ludwig, fille
un jeune d'ans, née en légitime mariage, le Deux Nivôse an quatre.
 A
 à Soufflenheim domiciliée au dit lieu.
 B
 PRÉNOMS, nom, profession et domicile de son PÈRE, Joseph Ludwig, laboureur, présent.
 B
 PRÉNOMS, nom et domicile de sa MÈRE, Catharine Messner, aussi présente.
 C
 Les publications ont été faites en cette mairie, dans la forme requise, et sans qu'il y ait eu opposition, à l'heure de
 midi, les dimanches Neuf et Dix & trois septembre, & chaque par devant la porte
principale de l'église de Soufflenheim commune, & qu'elles aient été exposées
 pendant à dix présent par le dit époux.
 D

Marriage record for Antoine Nuwer and Marguerite Ludwig, April 11, 1818

The husband (*l'époux*): Antoine Nuber, unmarried young man (*garçon*)
 his profession: weaver (*tisserand*)

A) name and profession of the father (*père*): Antoine Nuber, weaver, present (*présent*)

B) name and home of the mother (*mère*): Marie Anna Schutt, deceased, eleven December
 eighteen hundred twelve (*décédé onze décembre dix huit cent douze*)

Name of the spouse (*l'espouse*): Marguerite Ludwig, a girl (*fille*)

A) name and profession of the father: Joseph Ludwig, labourer, present

B) name and home of the mother: Catharine Messner, present as well (*aussi présent*)

Image source: <http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284414-1410259>



Iron grave markers for Anton Nuwer 1796-1857 (left, broken at the base) and Margarethe Nuwer 1796-1874 (right).
St. Mary's Cemetery, Lancaster, New York. Photo credit: Thomas Weichmann

Appendix 1

The Nuwer family line from John George of Jockgrim
to John Nuwer the immigrant. (Ancestors are indicated with bold typeface.)

Joannes George Nuwer	b:	d:23 Jan 1728
Anna Magdalena Wagner	b:	d:18 Sep 1754
	m:	
1. Joannes Leonard	b:	
2. John Martin	b: 1713	d:16 Feb 1772
3. George Francis	b:13 Jan 1717	d: Jun 1763
4. Joannes Thomas	b: 9 Oct 1720	
5. Nicholas	b:20 Jun 1726	d: Dec 1761
George Francis Nuwer	b:13 Jan 1717	
Anna Marie Muller	b:	
	m:21 Aug 1744	
1. Maria Anna	b:	m: 1 Nov 1769
2. Francois Joseph	b: 8 Jan 1750	
3. Marie Catherine	b:13 Oct 1751	
4. Marie Magdalena	b: 9 Jan 1753	
5. Marie Clara	b:12 Aug 1755	
6. Marie Eva	b: 6 Apr 1758	
7. Francis Antione	b:19 May 1760	d:22 Apr 1818
Francis Antoine Nuwer	b:19 May 1760	d:22 Apr 1818

Marie Anna Schutt	b:19 Sep 1759	d:11 Dec 1812
	m:28 Jan 1788	
1. Francis Joseph	b:12 Feb 1789	d:28 Oct 1789
2. Marie Ann	b:14 Jun 1792	d: 7 Jan 1793
3. Catharine	b:13 Oct 1793	d:22 Jun 1796
4. Antoine	b:27 Jul 1796	d: 4 Dec 1857
5. Michel	b: 1 Oct 1798	d:19 Aug 1811
6. Francis Joseph	b: 5 Feb 1801	d:20 Oct 1802
7. Florentine	b: 7 Nov 1803	d:27 Jan 1805
Antoine Nuwer	b:27 Jul 1796	d: 4 Dec 1857
Margarethe Ludwig	b:21 Feb 1796	d:19 Apr 1874
	m.11 Apr 1818	
1. Antoine	b:12 Feb 1819	d:13 Feb 1819
2. John	b:28 Dec 1819	d:31 Jul 1897
3. Joseph	b: 2 Nov 1821	d:28 Jul 1826
4. Francis Xavier	b: 8 Dec 1823	d:16 Jun 1888
5. Antoine	b:27 Dec 1825	d: 1 Nov 1826
6. Catherine	b:27 Dec 1825	d: 3 Mar 1827
7. Catherine	b:15 Dec 1827	d:17 May 1828
8. Celestina	b:28 Mar 1829	d:21 Mar 1892
9. Antoine	b:16 Dec 1831	d:25 Dec 1831
10. Ignace	b:10 Sep 1834	d: 8 Apr 1835
11. Antoine	b:30 Aug 1837	d:14 Jun 1838

CATHERINE KIEFFER

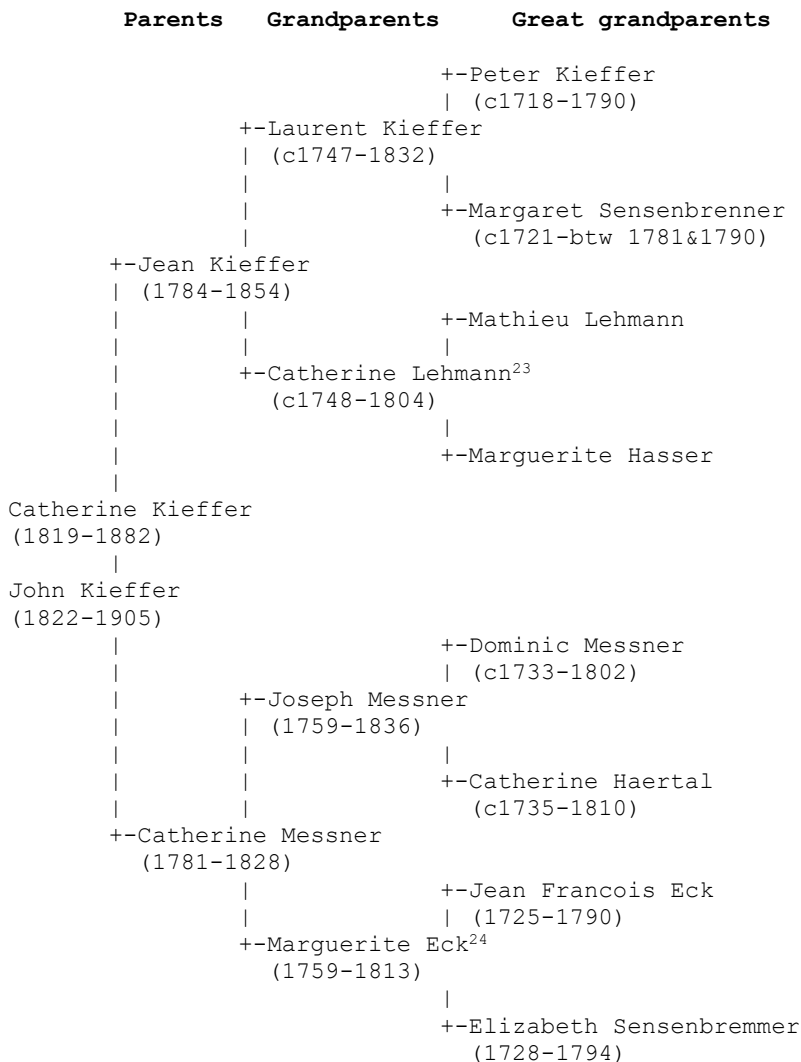
Chapter 2

In the town of Soufflenheim, Alsace, France the Grand Rue is a road stretching half a mile from east to west. It has been the town's main street for more than five centuries. Two hundred years ago, more or less, Catherine Kieffer and her younger brother John Kieffer were born at n° 119 Grand Rue. As you might already know, Catherine Kieffer (1819-1885) was married to John Nuwer and immigrated to western New York with her husband in 1843. John Kieffer (1822-1905) also immigrated to western New York in 1843 and married Celestina Nuwer in 1849. The two Kieffer siblings were the children of Jean Kieffer (1784-1852)²² and Catherine Messner (1781-1828), who were both born and married in Soufflenheim. This essay explores their family story.

Jean Kieffer was the son of Laurent Kieffer and Catherine Lehmann. Both parents were born in Soufflenheim in the middle of the eighteenth century. Laurent Kieffer was born about 1747 while Catherine Lehmann was born about 1748. At that time, Louis XV (r. 1715-1774) was the King of France and the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) was in its final years. In 1744 Soufflenheim had been a battle site between the invading Austrian army and French defenders. The events of this war would have been fresh in the experiences of Laurent Kieffer and Catherine Lehmann's parents. During Laurent and Catherine's teenage years, France was engaged in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), but in this case the battlefields were mostly elsewhere.

²² Throughout this essay I use the name "Jean Kieffer" to refer to the father Jean Kieffer the older (1784-1852) and the name "John Kieffer" to refer to the son Jean Kieffer the younger (1822-1905).

Pedigree chart for the brother and sister Catherine and John Kieffer



Laurent Kieffer and Catherine Lehmann were married in about 1768. Soufflenheim genealogists have identified eight children from the marriage—six girls and two boys. All were born in Soufflenheim and baptized at St. Michael's Catholic church. Jean Kieffer was the sixth child born. Records show that four of the daughters married. Between 1797 and 1801, Maria Anna, Marguerite, and Catherine were each married in Soufflenheim. Their mother, Catherine Lehmann attended these three weddings, but she died in 1804 when she was about 56 years old. At the time, Jean Kieffer was 20 years old and the youngest child, Madelaine Kieffer, was 16 years old.

²³ See (<https://gw.geneanet.org/droyal?lang=en&pz=dennis+louis&nz=royal&p=catherine&n=lehmann&oc=4>) and (<https://gw.geneanet.org/droyal?lang=en&v=LEHMANN&m=N>).

²⁴ See here (<https://gw.geneanet.org/gigirebsomen?lang=en&v=ECK&m=N>) and here (<https://gw.geneanet.org/pierrepaulwi?lang=en&v=ECK&m=N>).

Children of Laurent Kieffer and Catherine Lehmann²⁵

	Born Mother's age	Wedding date age	Spouse	Died age
Maria Anna Kieffer	22 October 1769 28 years old	18 March 1797 27 years old	Joseph Halter	15 November 1853 84 years old
Marguerite Kieffer	2 July 1772 24 years old	9 February 1800 27 years old	Joseph Goetz 4 children	4 May 1838 65 years old
Odilia Kieffer	25 August 1774 26 years old			
Catherine Kieffer	21 October 1776 28 years old	3 March 1801 24 years old	Michael Burger 8 Children	13 Apr 1814 37 years old
Antoine Kieffer	16 February 1779 31 years old			
Jean Kieffer	17 April 1784 36 years old	21 February 1811 26 years old	Catherine Messner	24 March 1852 67 years old
Eva Kieffer	5 April 1787 39 years old			
Madelaine Kieffer	2 November 1788 40 years old	21 February 1811	Ignace Obermeyer	4 October 1813 25 years old

Catherine Messner was the daughter of Joseph Messner and Marguerite Eck. They were both born in Soufflenheim. Joseph Messner's date of birth was February 13, 1759, but we don't have a date for Marguerite Eck. Joseph Messner was 12 years younger than Laurent Kieffer and when he was born France was already involved in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763).

We don't have Joseph Messner and Marguerite Eck's wedding date, but it was likely about 1780 because their first child was born in early 1881. Catherine Messner was the family's second born child. Her birth was in December 1881. A total of five children have been identified from the marriage between Joseph Messner and Marguerite Eck. There were four boys and one girl born in the years between 1781 and 1790. Historical records indicate that at least three of these children had a wedding in Soufflenheim. In addition to Catherine Messner's 1811 wedding, her brother Jean Baptist was married two months later and her youngest brother, Joseph Messner, was married in 1814. Marguerite Eck died January 9, 1813 which meant she was present at the first two weddings but not the wedding of her youngest child.

²⁵ Maria Anna Kieffer baptized: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284246#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284246-1408144>).

Antoine Kieffer baptized: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284246#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284246-1408247>).

Eva Kieffer baptized: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284247#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P3-R284247-1408357>).

The Soufflenheim Baptism Index is located here: (<http://www.smithancestry.com/alsace/souffbapt/index.htm>).

Children of Joseph Messner and Marguerite Eck

	Born father's age	Wedding date age	Spouse	Died age
Michel Messner	1781 21 years old			1840 59 years old
Marie Catherine Messner	30 December 1781 22 years old	21 February 1811 29 years old	Jean Kieffer 6 children	26 August 1828 46 years old
Francois Joseph Messner	16 March 1783 24 years old			
Jean Baptist Messner	25 June 1784 25 years old	4 April 1811 27 years old	Catherine Adam 11 children	16 November 1857 73 years old
Joseph Messner	21 April 1790 31 years old	19 February 1814 24 years old	Catherine Messner 8 children	7 March 1828 37 years old

Both sets of grandparents—Laurent Kieffer, Catherine Lehmann, Joseph Messner and Marguerite Eck—lived during a time when Soufflenheim’s population was growing rapidly. In 1761, the town’s population was about 700 people forming 155 households. Ten years later the population was about 950 people with 209 households. By 1776 the population was about 1,200 people distributed into 239 households. The first census of Soufflenheim was taken in 1800 and counted 1,547 people.²⁶

About one-third of Soufflenheim’s families were engaged exclusively as farmers. They grew wheat, oats and barley in the fields, vegetables in gardens, and raised horses, cattle and pigs. “All this farming activity was based on consumption of what was produced and not on commercialization.” There was also a wide variety of handicraft activity in the town. Pottery and ceramics were the most prominent of the handicrafts, with many pottery workshops and a few tile and brick factories. In addition, residents worked as masons, joiners, carpenters, tailors, weavers, dyers, shoe menders, bakers, millers, butchers, and innkeepers. Nevertheless, most of these craftsmen had access to land and produced their own food. “They were craftsmen-farmers.”²⁷

Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner were 5 years old and 7 years old when the Bastille in Paris was stormed on July 11, 1789, marking the beginning of the French Revolution. Among the first acts of the new revolutionary government (the National Assembly) was the abolition of feudal privileges, which sweep away seigniorial rights of the nobility. Although Soufflenheim was a commune, it retained seigniorial obligations to the Prefecture of Hagenau. Under the Holy Roman Empire, Hagenau was a “Free Imperial City,” that is, it was not ruled by a feudal lord, but the Prefect held seigniorial rights and rulership over some forty villages surrounding the city.²⁸ Soufflenheim was one of these. The French Revolution ended Soufflenheim’s obligation to pay seigniorial taxes.

Another early action of the French National Assembly was the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy,” which abolished the Catholic Church’s authority to impose the tithe, established an election system for parish priests and bishops, and set a pay rate for the clergy. By November 1790, the National Assembly was requiring an oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution from all members of the clergy. Many Catholics objected to the election system because it conflicted with the authority of the Pope over the French Church.

Large numbers of priests refused to take this oath, and in many places they were supported by their congregations. The population of Soufflenheim was almost totally Catholic and the commune assumed all

²⁶ Lucien Sittler, Marc Elchinger, and Fritz Geissert, in conjunction with the Societe D’Histoire et D’Archeologie du Reid Nord, *Soufflenheim, A city in search of its history*, (1987). Translated by Marie-Odile Peres. Excerpts available here: (<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c0db0dfe-27d2-4632-889f-eeb26fbb14e1/downloads/Soufflenheim%20Une%20Cite.pdf>).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ For a discussion of the complex relationships in Alsace between the French monarchy and German nobility see Stephen A. Lazer, *State Formation in Early Modern Alsace, 1648-1789*, (2019).

the expenditures for the priest and the church. Opposition to the oath found strong support in the town. One story maintained that in July 1792, the “fanatic” farmers of Soufflenheim, having heard that several non-oath taking priests had been arrested by soldiers and sent to jail in Sessenheim, marched towards the village, with the mayor at their head, to free by force the ecclesiastics. The mayor of Sessenheim, surrounded by his population, [was] opposed to this action. Both parties nearly come to blows....²⁹

In October of that same year, the priest in charge of St. Michael’s parish in Soufflenheim had refused to take the oath and was compelled to leave the country. The government closed the church and in February 1793 the properties of the vicarage were sold in an auction.

The third event of the Revolution that had a significant effect on Soufflenheim and on the young Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner was the counter-revolution. By August 1791 Austria and Prussia were amassing troops on the French border and threatening a war against the new revolutionary government. France preemptively declared war on Austria in April 1792 and Prussia joined the Austrian side a few weeks later. The war reached Alsace in fall 1793 when Austrian forces invaded northern Alsace. French forces immediately mounted a counter-offensive and by December 1793 the Austrian forces were obliged to retreat from French territory.

As the Austrian army retreated, many Alsatians were accused of collaborating with the foreign forces and feared retaliation by the French army. Alarmed by the threats, many people fled Alsace and headed into German territories in Baden and the Palatinate. This is known as the “Great Flight.” It is estimated that perhaps 40,000 people fled their homes in Alsace, most of them from the areas around Weissenburg and Haguenau. Many from Soufflenheim were included.

After the fall of Robespierre and the creation of a new government under the Directory, the exiles were offered the opportunity to return to their homes. Historical documents list 70 people from Soufflenheim who were considered exiles and returned in 1795. The list included the names Laurent Kieffer and Joseph Messner. We don’t know whether they fled Alsace alone or with their families. Either way it would have been a difficult two years. In 1795 Jean Kieffer was 11 years old and Catherine Messner was 13 years old.

From 1793 to 1815, a period of more than 20 years, France was engaged almost continuously in wars with Britain and other major European powers. Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner spent their adolescence in the shadow of these wars.³⁰ Jean and Catherine were married on February 21, 1811— Napoleon Bonaparte had not yet marched into Russia. Jean Kieffer was 26 years old while Catherine Messner was 29 years old in 1811. The father of the groom, Laurent Kieffer, was 64 years old and his wife, Catherine Lehmann was listed as deceased. The father of the bride, Joseph Messner, was 52 years old but no age was given for Marguerite Eck. There were four witness for the marriage: Antonine Kieffer, a *laboureur*, age of 58, and Jean’s uncle; Joseph Schumck, age 52; Michel Messner, a *laboureur*, age 49, and Catherine’s uncle; and Francis Anton Kellhoffner, a *laboureur*, age 41.³¹

Before the wedding day, there were negotiations between the two families. In those days, a marriage was about the man finding an economical, hard-working partner who would educate the children, and the woman finding a man who could support her. Before the marriage was arranged, the two families discussed these matters and the economic contributions both sides would make.

The marriage contract for Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner was notarized in Roeschwoog on February 9, 1811 and stated:

Marriage contract between Jean Kieffer aged 26, son of Laurent Kieffer burgher in Soufflenheim and of deceased Catherine Lehmann his wife to Catherine Messner, aged 28, daughter of Joseph

²⁹ *Soufflenheim, A city in search of its history, op. cit.*

³⁰ Near the end of the Napoleonic wars Catherine’s younger brother, Joseph Messner, entered the French Army. He was conscripted in October 1813 at the age of 23 years, he served in an artillery battalion and was discharged from service in September 1814. “Soufflenheim Soldiers: 1742-1869,” Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History, p. 16, (<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c0db0dfe-27d2-4632-889f-eeb26fbb14e1/downloads/Soldiers.pdf>).

³¹ The wedding record for Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner is here: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284407#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284407-1409792>).

Messner in Soufflenheim, farmer, and of Marguerite Eck his wife. Community is limited to the acquired property that will come to them during the union. Separation of goods brought into the union and as to inheritances to come from each side in the future. The bride receives 700 francs. Laurent Kieffer gives a house in Soufflenheim n° 89 one side Jean Moser, the other side the road, for 800 francs. The father keeps his right to live in the house and receive all his needs. The new couple will pay the taxes and 14 francs to receive the house at time of his death.³²

Thursday February 21, 1811 was a day of weddings and probably a great banquet in the town of Soufflenheim. There were six weddings that day, all at St. Michael's church. In addition to Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner's wedding, Jean Kieffer's younger sister was married that day. Madelaine Kieffer married Ignace Obermeyer.

Also married that day were, Joseph Schmuck and Marie Anne Kellhoffner, Joseph Meyer and Madelaine Bitschy, Andre Kieffer and Marie Anne Muller, and Jean Uhrich and Madelaine Hasser. Not only were there six wedding on February 21, 1811, but there were four more on February 27. One of those weddings was between Joseph Kieffer and Richarde Burger who we will meet again below. Joseph and Jean Kieffer were second cousins.

For most ordinary people, the time of year when a wedding was possible was dictated by the seasonal cycles of work. For a farmer, the grain harvest was from mid-July to mid-August and the wine harvest from September to October which excluded social activities during those times. This was in part why there were so many weddings in February.

The Catholic church strove to make the sacrament of marriage a ceremony of dignified solemnity.³³ There were three solemn preliminaries to a marriage. First was the betrothal, an exchange of promises, regarded as binding, though they could be abandoned by mutual consent. The betrothal was a promise of future marriage, and hence differed from the marriage contract. By canon law, the object of the betrothal was to give time for the couple to achieve the right dispositions for receiving the grace of the sacrament.

The second preliminary was the marriage banns, which were announcements of the upcoming marriage. These had to be called in the parish church three times, always on a Sunday or a saint's day. The purpose of banns was to enable anyone to raise any canonical or civil impediment to the marriage, so as to prevent marriages that were invalid. There were various impediments to a marriage. For example, being underage (14 for males, 12 for females), impotence, the existence of a previous marriage or of vows of chastity disqualified someone from the sacrament of marriage. Descending from the same ancestor up to the fourth degree (that is, third cousins who shared great-great-grandparents) was another impediment. This was the marriage hinderance that Albert E. Nuwer and Edna Roll had to have waved in 1932 since they shared the same great-great-grandparents (*viz.*, Anton Nuwer and Marguerite Ludwig plus Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner).

Finally, a few days before the wedding, the contract would be signed. The contract between Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner was signed twelve days before their wedding while the contract for Jean's sister was signed nine days ahead.

When the long-awaited day came, the groom would go to the house of the bride's family. Then a procession would form, with the musicians leading, the bride followed on her father's arm, behind them the groom with the two mothers, all accompanied by a train of attending young men and women. After the ceremony it was typical for all to reassemble at a banquet in the house of the bride's father. Songs would follow and there would be dancing. On February 21, 1811 in Soufflenheim the six families may have sponsored a community banquet.

Jean Kieffer's marriage document tells us that he worked as a "*cultivateur*," which meant he farmed the land. Both Laurent Kieffer and Joseph Messner were listed in the document as a "*laboureur*." In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the term *laboureur* meant one who owned a plow and a team of

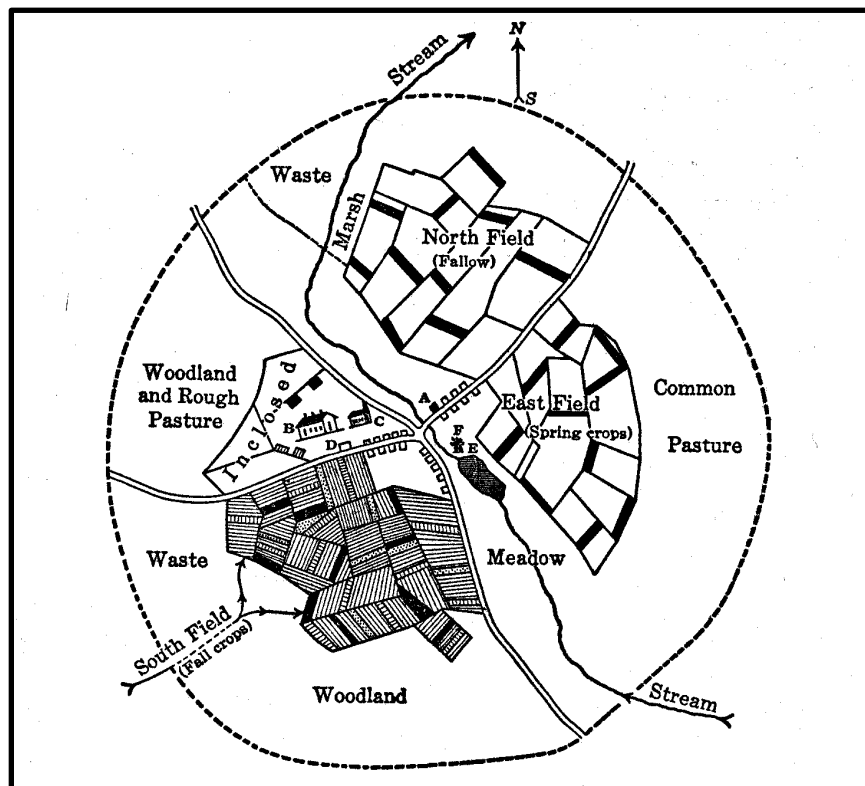
³² "Soufflenheim Marriage Contracts: 1676-1811," Soufflenheim Genealogy Research and History, p. 98, (<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c0db0dfe-27d2-4632-889f-eeb26fbb14e1/downloads/Marriage%20Contracts.pdf>).

³³ The following account of the marriage sacrament is taken from John McManners, *Church and Society in Eighteenth-Century France*, Vol. 2 (1999), pp. 18-27.

oxen or horses. This enabled him to plow the fields he owned and to rent the team to others in town. The ownership of draught-animals was a sign of status and a source of cash income in this time and place. Most artisans and craftsmen also had fields which needed to be plowed but didn't typically have the needed animals. The agricultural system in the upper Rhine valley (and in many other regions of Europe) was very different than the system we are familiar with in the United States.

The prevalent agricultural system in much of Europe during the Middle Ages is called by historians the open-field system. In many parts of western Europe, the open fields lasted into the twentieth century. Under this system, each town or village had three large fields, usually several hundred acres each, which were divided into many narrow strips of land. The strips were traditionally about half an acre in size and cultivated by individual families. A family might have use-rights to farm forty-five strips in the fields.

The open-field system necessitated and encouraged cooperation among the village inhabitants.³⁴ Farmers customarily lived in individual houses in a clustered village and the fields were located in the outskirts. They were part of the "commons." In addition to plowed land, the commons contained woodlands and pasture areas.



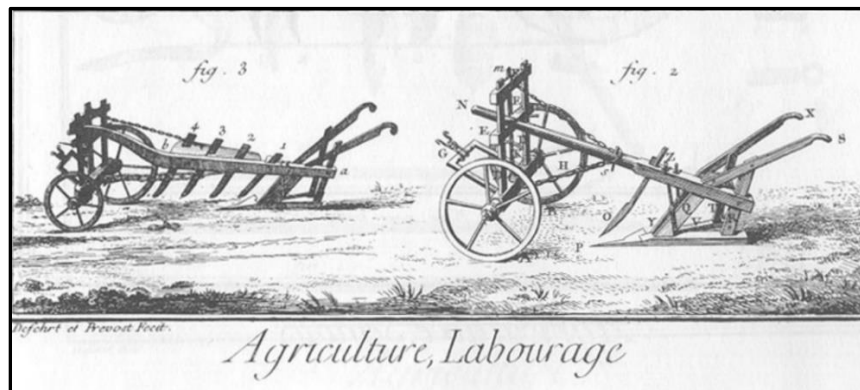
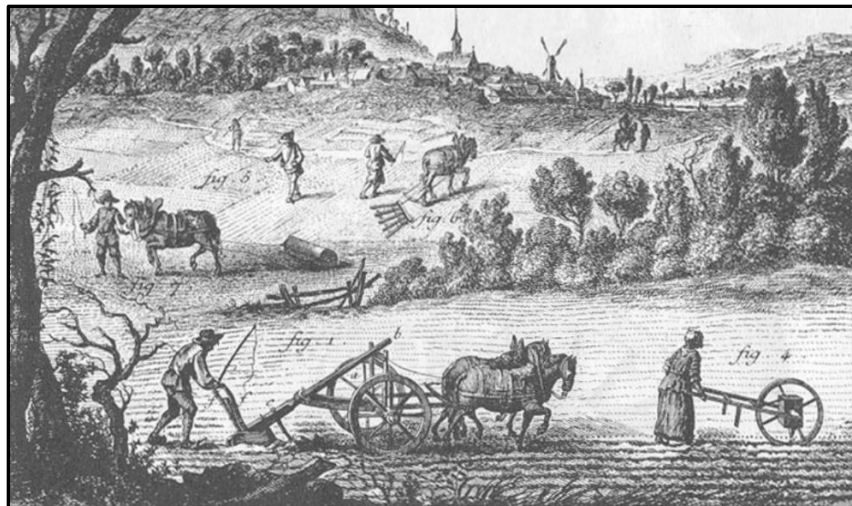
³⁴ "If an individual peasant held a total of thirty acres, why did he not have it in one consolidated thirty-acre farm rather than in thirty one-acre strips? The explanation lies in the cultural mores of village life. In the medieval community there was a strong equalitarian bent within social-economic classes. This was a community in which all people of the same class were supposed to share and share alike. Most families were privileged to share in the cultivation of the best soil and were also obligated to share in the cultivation of the worst soil in use. Land differed in fertility, drainage, distance from the village, and in other respects. Most peasants held some fertile and some infertile soil, some high land and some low land, some land close by and some distant land. The vicissitudes of weather, always so important in farming, were automatically shared under this arrangement. In a year of floods, the crops on low lands would be damaged while the crops on high lands might not be damaged. In dry years opposite conditions would prevail. The strip system guaranteed that families would be affected equally in wet or dry years." Dudley Dillard, *Economic Development of the North Atlantic Community*, (1967), Chapter 4.

The arrangement of an open-field village

A typical European village consisted of houses with tiny gardens on either side of a main street. The clustered village was a compact settlement of people. Houses in the open country were very rare.

The most striking aspect of the open-field system was the three great open fields, containing the bulk of the plow land, and their intricate arrangement into strips (indicated in the diagram only in the case of South Field). The strips of a single village family did not lie side by side but were scattered over the three fields. In this figure the strips of one family are shaded in black.

Suppose that it is May 1788. On South Field, a crop of wheat and rye, sown last fall, is ripening. East Field has been sown this spring with oats, barley, and peas. North Field will not produce a crop this year but is being used for pasture. Last year it produced a spring crop, and the year before a fall crop.³⁵



Agriculture et économie rustique – Labourage
("Agriculture and rural economy – Plowing")

³⁵ M. M. Knight, *Economic History of Europe to the End of the Middle Ages*, (1926), Chapter 5.

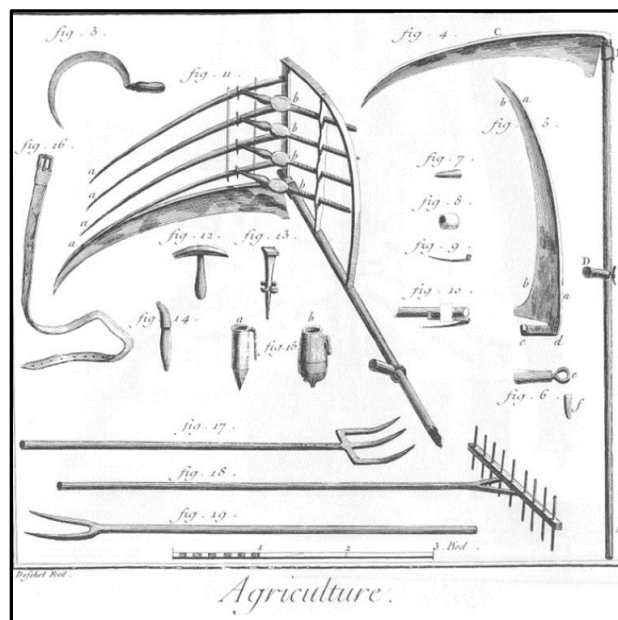
Images from *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert*, 1762. The *Encyclopedia* was the first general encyclopedia to describe the mechanical arts and was one of the greatest achievements of Enlightenment thought. It included seventeen folio volumes accompanied by detailed engravings. The plate here reproduces an agricultural field in northern France being plowed and seeded.

Image 1: Plowman opening a furrow with ordinary plow (fig 1); seed drill (fig 4); hand seeder (fig 5); carter driving the harrow to cover the seed (fig 6); carter and clod breaker used to level the ground (fig 7). Image 2: left, Jethro Tull plow; right, Ordinary plow

Source:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0001.329>

<https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/encyclopedie1117/navigate/18/8/>



Agriculture et économie rustique – Façon des foins, et moisson
("Agriculture and rural economy – Haying and harvest")

Images from *The Encyclopedia of Diderot & d'Alembert*, 1762. Note the cooperative nature of planting and harvesting. On the previous page, plowing, clod breaking, seeding, and harrowing occur in sequence by different individuals. For the harvest, all hands are in the fields – neighbor helping neighbor.

Image 1: harvesting hay, left and grain, right. Image 2: Harvest implements. Sickle to cut wheat (fig 3); Faulx “for mowing hay” (fig 4); Faulx with fingers for barley and oats (fig 11); Iron fork, Two-sided wooden rake, and Wooden fork (figs 17, 18, 19).

Source:

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.did2222.0001.331>

<https://artflsrv03.uchicago.edu/philologic4/encyclopedie1117/navigate/18/10/>

Similar to most villages across France and Germany, the Soufflenheim commons were composed of three main parts: the plowed land, the meadows and the forest. The three plowed fields at Soufflenheim were known simply by the names Oberfeld, Mittelfeld, and Niederfeld (that is, upper-field, middle-field and low-field). Oberfeld and Mittelfeld were located on a terrace while Niederfeld was a wet area where many ditches were needed. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the community of Soufflenheim plowed about 510 acres, kept another 290 acres of meadows, and maintained an extended forest east of the village in the direction of Rountzenheim. As noted above, the town's population was growing in the last third of the eighteenth century, and in 1790, the commune approved a project to clear forest land and convert it into cultivated land. The project added 100 acres to the commune's fields.

The typical planting scheme in a three-field system was to plant barley, oats, or beans in one field in the spring, then to plant wheat or rye in the second field in the fall and the third field would be left fallow. The following year, the planting in the fields would be rotated. The farmers pastured their livestock on the fallow field and on the planted fields after harvest. An elaborate set of laws and controls regulated planting, harvesting, and pasturing. Within a European commune it was the villagers themselves who regulated and managed the communal lands.

In the twelfth or thirteenth century Soufflenheim became a rural commune. Throughout the Middle Ages the Holy Roman Empire was comprised of hundreds of small and fractured princely territories, each of which enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy. Within this structure central government was weak and townspeople needed protection from lawless nobles and bandits. Rural communes arose from a need to collaborate in order to ensure town safety and to manage the common lands. Communes were essentially sworn allegiances of mutual cooperation. All town “citizens” (the burgers) swore an oath in a public ceremony promising to defend each other in times of trouble and to maintain the peace within the town. The burgers of Soufflenheim renewed their oath every year.

Over time, such communes obtained the legal right of self-administration in place of direct seigneurial rule. Rural towns came to depend on local communal institutions and values for their survival and success. Throughout Alsace noble lords had delegated the power of self-government to the communes, but these rights were always limited to very local matters.

Soufflenheim had created a municipal body which administered civic affairs and the town's citizens (the burgers) elected officers who ran this body. Not all town's people were citizens. The rural population of Alsace was divided into two categories: peasants and burgers. Each year, the burger-citizens of Soufflenheim elected a *Bürgermeister* (a chief burger) responsible for the community finances and paying the taxes.

The burgers of Soufflenheim were responsible for various civic matters, including managing the crop rotations, the plantings, and the harvest of the fields. From time to time the land needed to be reshaped, and the burgers were responsible for this. They would conduct a survey under which the commons might be re-staked to delineate the fields and the boundaries of the meadows. The burgers were also responsible for care of the waters, the rivers, and the drainage ditches as needed.

Another important part of the communal lands was the forests to the east of the village. They provided firewood for energy and other wood for building supplies. The municipal staff of Soufflenheim included three foresters who looked after the communal forest. These forest clerks applied the forest regulations,

watched over the cutting of trees, punished violations of forest rules, and took care of the wild game. One of the privileges of a burger was the right of grazing livestock and gathering firewood inside the forest. Others were required to pay a forest fee to graze livestock or gather firewood and burgers would pay a fee for taking more than their quota. The commons brought important income to the commune through the sale of wood from the forest and hay from the meadows. In 1776, for example, Laurent Kieffer paid 14 guilders for access to wood in the forest. He would have been about 28 years old; maybe he took some oak for building supplies.

Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner had six children between 1812 and 1822. The first three children were boys born in 1812, 1813, and 1815. These three children will grow to adulthood but follow different paths. The fourth child, Joseph Kieffer, was born in 1817 but died shortly after his second birthday. Catherine Kieffer hadn't been born at the time of Joseph's death. Catherine and John Kieffer were the two youngest children.

The children's mother, Catherine Messner, died on August 26, 1828. She was only 46 years old. Her son John had just turned six years old while her daughter Catherine was almost nine. Catherine Messner and Jean Kieffer had been married seventeen years when she died. For the next four years Jean Kieffer lived as a widower with five children. Laurent and Louis were sixteen and fifteen when their mother died and old enough to help with work in the fields and at home.

The children of Jean Kieffer and Catherine Messner

	Born Mother's age	Wedding date age	Spouse	Died age
Laurent Kieffer	2 June 1812 30 years old	20 January 1843 30 years old	Catherine Schmuck	After 1880 68+ years old
Louis Kieffer	12 August 1813 31 years old			After 1836 23+ years old
Alexander Kieffer	27 April 1815 33 years old			20 November 1871 56 years old
Joseph Kieffer	20 February 1817 35 years old			9 March 1819 2 years old
Catherine Kieffer	10 October 1819 37 years old	9 May 1843 23 years old	John Nuwer	11 November 1882 63 years old
John Kieffer	8 August 1822 40 years old	9 October 1849 27 years old	Celestina Nuwer	5 April 1905 82 years old

Jean Kieffer's father, Laurent Kieffer, died May 20, 1832, he was about 85 years old. Then on September 5, 1832 Jean Kieffer married a second time. His new wife was Barbe Voegele, and it was her second marriage as well. In 1807 she had married George Helmer, a carpenter in Soufflenheim. He died in February 1830.³⁶ Barbe Voegele and Joseph Voegele, Sr. (1790-1868)—the latter is found in both the Nuwer and the Brian Smith family trees—were second cousins, that is, they had the same great grandparents.

After his wedding with Barbe Voegele, Jean Kieffer and his family lived in Soufflenheim for another ten years. The family was found in the 1836 census of Soufflenheim. Barbe and all five children were members of the household. Jean Kieffer was identified as a "*laboureur*" as was his son Alexander.³⁷

³⁶ Barbara Voegele married George Helmer in Soufflenheim on 24 November 1807. Georges Helmer was born in 1783, Soufflenheim and died 26 February 1830, Soufflenheim, aged 47 years old; occupation carpenter. (<https://gw.geneanet.org/pierrepaulwi?lang=en&pz=pierre+paul&nz=wilhelm&p=georges&n=helmer>).

³⁷ 1836 Census of Soufflenheim: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7464#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7464-78749>).

In the 1836 census the Kieffer family was household number 140. Anton Nuwer's family lived very close by, they were household number 142. Household number 141 was Joseph Messner, age 40, and his wife Maria Anna Friedmann. Joseph Messner and the late Catherine Messner were first cousins.³⁸

Jean Kieffer's family was also found in the 1841 census of Soufflenheim.³⁹ The family was identified as household number 148. Joseph Messner's family was household 149 and Anton Nuwer's family was 150. In this census Laurent Kieffer was listed as a wooden-shoe maker (*sabotier*) and John Kieffer, like his father, was a "*laboureur*." Therese Messner, age 14, was also listed as a member of Jean Kieffer's household. Therese was the daughter of Joseph Messner, who was Catherine Messner's younger brother. Joseph died the same year as his sister, 1828, and his wife died in 1834. It appears Jean Kieffer became Therese's guardian.

Louis Kieffer was not a member of the household in the 1841 Census, nor was he found elsewhere in the survey. He has no marriage document nor a death record in the Soufflenheim archive. We know Louis was 23 years old when the 1836 Census was recorded. Louis Kieffer probably left Soufflenheim looking for opportunities elsewhere, but we don't know what happened. It is possible that Louis Kieffer settled elsewhere and chose not to accompany his family to the United States in 1843.

1832	764	140	Kieffer	Jean	Laboureur	1				13
1832	770	140	Marie fr. Kieffer	Barbe				1		12
1832	771	140	Kieffer	Laurent	Sabotier	1				24
1832	772	140	Kieffer	Louis	Sabotier	1				23
1832	773	140	Kieffer	Alexandre	Laboureur	1				21
1832	774	140	Kieffer	Jean		1				10
1832	771	140	Kieffer	Catherine						17

1836 Census of Soufflenheim for Jean Kieffer and family

1843 was a transformative year for the Jean Kieffer family. In January Laurent Kieffer married Catherine Schmuck.⁴⁰ The bride's parents were Francois Xavier Schmuck and his second wife Catherine Helmer. Both had been deceased more than ten years on the day of their daughter's wedding.

Next John Kieffer left Soufflenheim and journeyed to the United States. We know John arrived in New York City on May 29, 1843 aboard the *Catharine*, and we know that the journey generally took between 45 and 90 days, which meant that John probably left Soufflenheim sometime between late February and early April.⁴¹

³⁸ The family of Joseph Messner: (<https://gw.geneanet.org/asor17?lang=en&p=francois+joseph&n=messner&oc=4>).

³⁹ 1841 Census of Soufflenheim: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7465#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7465-78812>).

⁴⁰ (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284439#visio/page:ETAT-CIVIL-C468-P1-R284439-1412131>).

⁴¹ The immigrant "undertook a trip that, given the very best of luck, lasted a month and a half, and could have lasted three months or more. Before the immigrants even reached the embarkation port, they engaged in some combination of walking, taking a "short" steamboat trip, driving a wagon, and riding on carriages or early railroads. At the embarkation port, the immigrants were beset with runners and others eager to take their money. Aboard the ships, they encountered crowded conditions and the possible outbreak of disease, with no place to flee to and little idea of how to protect themselves. ... Even if the immigrant was sufficiently fortunate to avoid an onboard epidemic, and the vast majority did, they might run out of food or water and have to buy these items at exorbitant prices. On finally reaching the United States, the immigrants again encountered runners anxious to take their money, a situation that

Since John Kieffer arrived in New York City on May 29th, he would have missed his sister's Soufflenheim wedding with John Nuwer, which took place May 9, 1843. Shortly after this wedding Jean Kieffer and his family (except for Louis) left Soufflenheim on their journey to New York. We know they arrived in New York City on September 20, 1843 aboard the *Oneida*, so they probably left Soufflenheim in mid-June or July.⁴²

The group of travelers consisted of Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegele. Both were listed as 59 years old in the ship's manifest. Laurent Kieffer (age 32) and his wife Catherine Schmuck (age 24); Alexander Kieffer (age 28); Catherine Kieffer (age 24) and her husband John Nuwer (age 24); Jean Kieffer's niece by marriage, Therese Messner (age 17); and Barbe Voegele's nephew, Alois Thomas⁴³ (age 16).

Upon arriving in New York City, the group headed directly to Erie County where Jean Kieffer purchased 125 acres of land on October 21, 1843, a mere 31 days after arriving in the country. He paid \$2,646 for the property with money he brought from Soufflenheim.

The lives of Catherine Kieffer Nuwer and her brother John Kieffer in the United States will be discussed in upcoming essays and the details are not duplicated here. Catherine will have eight children and lived at the same home on Erie road in Lancaster until her death in 1882. John Kieffer will also live on Erie road, but on the Alden side of Town Line. He will have ten children and died at his home in 1905.

Laurent Kieffer and his wife Catherine Schmuck worked a farm in Lancaster for about ten years after they arrived in western New York. For reasons we do not know, Laurent Kieffer moved to Michigan in late 1854 or early 1855. His fourth child was born in New York in 1854, but his family was absent from the 1855 New York Census. In the 1860 Census, Laurent was found farming land in Monroe County, Michigan. By the time the 1870 Census was taken, however, Laurent Kieffer had left farming and was working as a day laborer in Monroe City, Michigan. He was also found in the 1880 Census, still living in Monroe City and then working as a gardener. Laurent was 68 years old in the census year. Laurent Kieffer died in Monroe City on July 30, 1885, he was 73 years old.⁴⁴

Alexander Kieffer remained in Lancaster, New York after immigrating to the United States. He never married. In the 1850 and 1860 Censuses, Alexander was living with his sister, Catherine Kieffer Nuwer on Erie road. He was working as a laborer on the Nuwer farm. Alexander Kieffer was not included as a member of the Nuwer household in the 1870 Census and was not found elsewhere in the document. Records from St. Mary's church list his death on November 20, 1871. He was 56 years old.⁴⁵

continued until they reached their final destination." Raymond L. Cohn, *Mass Migration Under Sail: European Immigration to the Antebellum United States*, (2008), p. 154.

⁴² Passengers on the *Oneida*, (<http://www.smithancestry.com/sources/ships/ships18201850notes.htm#oneida1843match>).

⁴³ Alois Thomen was the son of Michel Thomen and Magdelaine Voegele. Magdelaine and Barbe Voegele were sisters. Magdelaine Voegele died in 1831 while Michel Thomen died in 1838. Alois Thomen traveled to North America with Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegele.

⁴⁴ "United States Census, 1850, Lorenzo Rieffer, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCYW-P1Z>).

"United States Census, 1860, Lorenzo Keefer," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MWDX-F72>).

"United States Census, 1870, Lowena Keefer," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHC4-Q2T>).

"United States Census, 1880, Lorenz Kiefer, Monroe, Monroe, Michigan," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW3M-VXQ>).

⁴⁵ "United States Census, 1850, Alexander Rieffer in household of John Noder, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCYW-P1C>).

"United States Census, 1860, Elick Keifer in entry for John Naurice," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCW2-26S>).

Church records, St. Mary's in Lancaster, (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS4G-M7N8-9?i=422&cat=24234>).

Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegele were found in the 1850 Census.⁴⁶ Both were 66 years old. Records from St. Mary's church tell us that Jean Kieffer, died March 24, 1852 and Barbe Voegele died June 11, 1853, both at their home on Erie road in the town of Lancaster. Jean Kieffer was 67 years old when he died and had been living in the United States for only eight and one-half years.

GOING TO AMERICA

Chapter 3

The Nuwer family traces its ancestry to Soufflenheim, Alsace, France and before that to Jockgrim, Palatinate, one of the German speaking states of the Holy Roman Empire. The Nuwer family left Soufflenheim for America in the early 1840s. Their immigration story was intertwined with the immigration story of the Jean Kieffer family. Indeed, these are not two distinct stories, but rather a single story involving both families.

Anton Nuwer and Jean Kieffer were neighbors in Soufflenheim, and they will be neighbors in Erie county. John Nuwer married Catherine Kieffer in 1843 and John Kieffer married Celestine Nuwer in 1849. Although they did not travel together, Anton Nuwer and Jean Kieffer probably made their immigration decisions together.

In the years between 1826 and 1859 a large number of people from Soufflenheim immigrated to North America. Data collected by the Soufflenheim Genealogy Research network suggest perhaps 10-14 percent of the town made the journey.⁴⁷ We found no evidence that any of Jean Kieffer's siblings nor any of Catherine Messner's siblings joined this migration. Nevertheless, there were others who migrated before 1843, and Anton Nuwer and Jean Kieffer likely knew many of them. They may have even seen letters describing America.

Among those who made the journey to North America before 1843 were Joseph Kieffer and Richarde Burger. Joseph was Jean Kieffer's second cousin and, as noted in the previous essay, he and Richarde Burger were married only six days after Jean Kieffer's first wedding in 1811. Joseph Kieffer and Richarde Burger, along with six children, left Soufflenheim in 1832. Joseph was 45 years old and Richarde was 43 years old. They settled on a farm in East Eden, New York, which was located in the southern part of Erie County.⁴⁸

In addition, Joseph's brother, Anthony Kieffer and Anthony's wife, Catherine Burger, migrated to East Eden. Anthony Kieffer and Catherine Burger were married in September 1811 and they were accompanied to the United States by seven children. Although we don't have the date they arrived, we know that Anthony Kieffer purchased land in Erie County in 1830. We also know that Anthony Kieffer left Soufflenheim with a money-fund of \$1,200 while his brother Joseph left with \$1,300.⁴⁹

Although none of Catherine Messner's siblings journeyed to the United States, we know at least one of her nephews made the trip before 1843. Leon Messner, the son of Catherine's brother, Jean Baptist Messner, left Soufflenheim in 1840. At the age of 28, Leon Messner, his wife and young daughter arrived in New York City in June of that year. Their destination was New Germany, Ontario, Canada. Emigrants from Soufflenheim had settled in New Germany as early as 1826. Several families were living there by

⁴⁶ "United States Census, 1850, John Rieffer, Lancaster, Erie, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCYW-P1S>).

⁴⁷ Robert Wideen, "Soufflenheim Emigration to North America," pp. 20-29. (<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c0db0dfe-27d2-4632-889f-eeb26fbb14e1/downloads/Emigration%20to%20North%20America.pdf>).

⁴⁸ (<http://www.smithancestry.com/places/souff/fams.htm#KiefferBurgerJosRic>).

⁴⁹ Robert Wideen, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

1840 when Leon Messner joined them.⁵⁰ Information about life in Erie County, New York and Waterloo County, Ontario was surely flowing back to Soufflenheim, and that information was very helpful for each successive wave of emigrants.

Of all the antebellum immigrant groups, Germans (including Swiss and Alsatians)⁵¹ were most likely to have skills, to travel with their family and to carry a fair amount of cash. These German-speaking immigrants were mainly from the middle class. They were small farmers, village shopkeepers, and artisans, with few coming from large towns. Jean Kieffer and Anton Nuwer fit this description. Moreover, these German immigrants had property that could be turned into cash, a key resource to fund their trip and buy a larger farm in America.

Jean Kieffer and his second wife Barbara Voegele were both 59 years old when they immigrated. They will leave Soufflenheim with four adult children, three sons and one daughter. Two of these children were married, but there were no grandchildren. Anton Nuwer and Margarethe Ludwig were 48 and 49 years old when they immigrated. Their two sons were 24 and 21 years old and their daughter was 15. One of their sons, John, was married.

Long distance immigration in the nineteenth century was often dominated with adults between the ages of fifteen and thirty-five. These individuals were the ones most likely to benefit from immigrating, because their relative youth meant they had more years in their new home to earn higher income. The Nuwer and Kieffer children fit this description.

It remains unclear, however, why Jean Kieffer, Anton Nuwer and their wives immigrated to the United States. Immigration involved a decision in which costs are incurred now and higher income is used to repay those costs in the future. The younger an immigrant the longer the time period over his or her lifetime in which the costs can be repaid. But, due to their age, the time horizon for Jean Kieffer and Anton Nuwer was very short and they would not recover their immigration costs. They would have been better off staying in Soufflenheim while their children journeyed to America. Nevertheless they immigrated.

The cost of moving from Alsace to North America, both money and otherwise, was relatively high in the 1830s and 1840s. Immigrants faced a break with home, often a difficult journey and an uncertain future. This may have been the most important single experience they faced.

The costs of immigration included more than the cost of passage. They included the income that was forgone before an immigrant could earn a living in the new homeland as well as the degree of uncertainty they were prepared to accept. Subsistence farmers who immigrated would have lost a full year's supply of food. If the immigrant left at the start of a season, the crop that would have fed their family in the upcoming year was never planted. If they left after a harvest, the food could not be carried with them to their new homes. Thus, money was needed to buy replacements, at least a year's worth of food.

Historians have noted that, a great many of the German and Alsatian emigrants in this period, sold their house with its patch of land to raise the money for their journey. Land prices throughout southern Germany had increased due to decades of population growth, which presented an opportunity for the freeholder. As one historian explained:

The price of land [in southern Germany] was disproportionately high to the income it produced. But the same high land prices which prevented the small farmer from acquiring enough land to feed his family made it possible for him to move it; he might be able to liquidate his inadequate holding at a price enabling him to cross the sea to America and buy a larger farm, which would absorb his and all his family's energies productively. Those unable to do so did not ordinarily emigrate.”

⁵⁰ (<http://www.smithancestry.com/places/souff/fams.htm#MessnerBitschy>).

⁵¹ “Many of the conditions that caused large-scale immigration from southwest Germany may have also led to immigration from Switzerland [and Alsace].... A large portion of the immigrants to the antebellum United States from the European continent, especially before the 1840s, came from the west central part of the continent, encompassing south and southwest Germany, eastern France, and Switzerland.” Raymond L. Cohn, *Mass Migration Under Sail: European Immigration to the Antebellum United States*, (2011), Chapter 2.

In many cases this fund of money was just enough to pay their passage and the overland journey. For many others the fund was large enough to also purchase land in their new home. Nicole Fouche maintains that about 42 percent of Alsatian emigrants took a sum of money large enough to buy land in America. Thus, the size of this cash fund was key to an emigrant's opportunities in North America.⁵²

The need to liquidate land holding was an important reason why immigrating as a multi-generational family-group predominated in southwestern Germany, Switzerland, and Alsace. If Jean Kieffer and Anton Nuwer had remained in Soufflenheim, the funds available to their children for buying land in New York would have been much less.

The first to leave Soufflenheim and arrive in America was John Kieffer, Jean Kieffer's youngest son. He was born in 1822 and at the age of 20 sailed from the port of Le Havre, France to America. He arrived in New York City in May 1843.⁵³ John Kieffer traveled with several others from Soufflenheim. The genealogist Brian Smith has identified 38 passengers aboard the *Catharine* who originated from Soufflenheim.⁵⁴ At least 22 of this group are known to have settled in New Germany, Ontario, Canada. Among those with whom John Kieffer was traveling were Joseph Voegele, Joseph Zinger, and Joseph Fuchs (also spelt Fox). All four were 20 years old and single. Although John Kieffer, Joseph Fuchs, and Joseph Voegele settled in Erie County, New York, Joseph Zinger continued to New Germany. Joseph Zinger could have spent time in Erie County before going to Ontario or he could have gone directly with the others, we don't know for sure. Joseph Voegele will return to Soufflenheim and, in 1847, he will accompany his parents and six siblings back to the United States.⁵⁵ They will settle in Lancaster, New York and Joseph Voegele will become Anthony Nuwer's father-in-law. Joseph Zinger's parents will also make that 1847 passage. They will settle with their son in New Germany, Canada.

A few months later in 1843, the rest of Jean Kieffer's family left Soufflenheim. They arrived in New York City in September 1843. Joining Jean Kieffer and Barbara Voegele on the voyage were Jean's son, Laurent Kieffer (aged 32), and Laurent's wife, Catherine Schmuck (they had been married in January 1843); a second son, Alexander Kieffer, who was 28 years old; and Jean's daughter Catharine and her new husband, John Nuwer. Both were 24 years old and they had been married only five months. All the Kieffer's and their spouses settled in Erie County, New York within a month of their New York City arrival.⁵⁶ The ship's manifest lists two more passengers who traveled with Jean Kieffer and Barbara Voegele. Jean Kieffer's niece by marriage, Therese Messner (age 17) and Barbara Voegele's nephew, Alois Thomas⁵⁷ (age 16) made the journey to America, but it is not known where they settled.

⁵² Nicole Fouche, "Alsatian Emigration to The United States, 1815-1870," *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, July 1985, (https://amct.pagesperso-orange.fr/migrants_eg.htm).

⁵³ Brian J. Smith, "Ship Passenger Lists: Immigrants from Alsace to America, 1820-1850." Smith has assembled an extensive database that matches passenger lists for ships that arrived through New York Harbor between 1820 and 1850 with Soufflenheim birth records. This database is the source for the three immigration events presented here. The passenger list images presented in this text are available from FamilySearch.com or from the author.

Smith's match for John Kieffer, Jr. can be found at this URL:
(<http://smithancestry.com/sources/ships/ships18201850notes.htm#catherine1843match>).

⁵⁴ Passengers on the *Catherine*, (<http://www.smithancestry.com/sources/ships/ships18201850notes.htm#catherine1843match>).

⁵⁵ Joseph Zinger's parents (Joseph Zinger, Sr. and Catherine Schoeffter), his brother Jean (age 21) and his sister Euphemia Zinger and her husband, Mathias Schlosser, in a family of six were also on the *Exchange*. All settled in New Germany, Canada.
(<http://www.smithancestry.com/places/souff/fams.htm#ZingerSchoeffter>).

⁵⁶ Brian J. Smith, "Ship Passenger Lists: Immigrants from Alsace to America, 1820-1850."
(<http://smithancestry.com/sources/ships/ships18201850.htm#oneida1843>)

⁵⁷ Alois Thomen was the son of Michel Thomen and Magdelaine Voegele. Magdelaine and Barbe Voegele were sisters. Magdelaine Voegele died in 1831 while Michel Thomen died in 1838. Alois Thomen traveled to North America with Jean Kieffer and Barbe Voegele.

Jean Kieffer	59	M	france
Barbara	50	f	"
Sorenz	32	M	"
Catharina Schmutz	24	f	"
Alexandre Kieffer	28	M	"
Catharine	24	f	"
Johannes Rieber	24	M	"

Passenger listing for the Oneida. Departed La Havre France, Arrived New York City September 20, 1843.

The following year John Nuwer's family followed him to America. On October 24, 1844 Anton Nuwer and Margarethe Ludwig, their son Frank and daughter Celestine, arrived in New York City and made their way to Erie County.⁵⁸

Antoine Nuwer	48	M	
Catharine	"	f	
Frank	21	M	
Celestine	11	f	

Passenger listing for the Argo. Departed La Havre France, Arrived New York City October 24, 1844.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, Le Havre, France was the chief port of departure from continental Europe. The port was located at the mouth of the Seine River on the English Channel. Swiss and southern German emigrants arrived there overland or by sailing from Cologne. The Swiss and Germans who left the right bank of the Rhine river and cross Alsace to embark at Le Havre where joined by Alsatians, who shared the same language with them.

When they arrived at the Port of Le Havre, it was necessary for the emigrants to make arrangements for passage directly with the captains of the vessels. During the sailing season there were always several thousand people waiting to leave. They were often obliged to wait for weeks, partly in lodging houses for those with funds, partly outdoors for those without. Thus, a German colony of innkeepers, shopkeepers and brokers materialized to service the travelers.⁵⁹ Furthermore, emigrants embarking from Le Havre were required to provide their own food on the ship, so that the price paid to the master of the vessel was not the largest part of their expenses.

⁵⁸ Brian J. Smith, "Ship Passenger Lists: Immigrants from Alsace to America, 1820-1850." (<http://smithancestry.com/sources/ships/ships18201850.htm#argo1844>)

⁵⁹ Kathi Gosz, "A Look at Le Havre, a Less-Known Port for German Emigrants," 2011, (<http://19thcenturyrhinelandlive.blogspot.com/2011/10/look-at-le-havre-less-known-port-for.html>).



Le Havre, 1841

The length of a nineteenth century Atlantic crossing depended on the season of the year and weather conditions. Vessels were fortunate when they made the passage from Le Havre to New York in less than a month; unfortunate when it took them two months. The average length of a voyage for a sailing ship was about forty-five days and no material reduction was made in this figure until the introduction of steamships in the 1860s. As Nicole Fouche describes,

There were few shipwrecks but dirt, hunger and epidemics were frequent on these sailing ships. Cholera frequently raged. There was the real danger of being swindled on arrival [in both Le Havre and New York] by unscrupulous adventurers who promised a great deal but did not deliver. The language was quite unknown to the inhabitants of the Rhine provinces and all these factors made the likelihood of success uncertain.⁶⁰

New York's connection with America's interior was a prime cause of the city's commercial supremacy. Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and Milwaukee were the distributing points for immigrants bound for what was then considered the Northwest. The Erie Canal was the quickest and cheapest route to reach these cities from the eastern seaboard. (After 1846 the railroad from New York to Buffalo offered an alternative to the Canal.) The Erie Canal reduced the travel time from the Hudson River to the Great Lakes and was a popular alternative to the rutted, muddy roads used by the stagecoach. Passengers traveled on 70-foot packet boats pulled by horses or mules at a pace equivalent to that of a fast walk.

Upon arriving in New York City, Jean Kieffer and his family headed directly to Erie County where Jean Kieffer purchased 125 acres of land on October 21, 1843, a mere 31 days after arriving in the country. He paid \$2,646 for the property with money he brought from Soufflenheim.

This money would have come from the sale of Jean Kieffer's house and his rights to the communal farmland in Soufflenheim. This was most likely the reason he and Barbara left Soufflenheim at the age of 59 years old. By liquidating all his assets in the old country, he could make a much larger financial stake in the new country. Had Jean and Barbara remained in Soufflenheim, the funds available to his children for buying land in New York would have much less. We don't know how much money Jean Kieffer brought to the United States, but there are data from those who left Soufflenheim between 1828 and 1837 which help give us some idea. Farmers who were single or who were married with no child, left

⁶⁰ Nicole Fouche, "Alsatian Emigration to The United States, 1815-1870," *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, July 1985, (https://amct.pagesperso-orange.fr/migrants_eg.htm).

Soufflenheim with between \$50 and \$180. With these funds they could make a start in their new home. On the other hand, farmers with more than four children left Soufflenheim with between \$600 and \$1,300.⁶¹ Jean Kieffer left Soufflenheim with a fund of money in the upper part of this range, and he was able to make a significant stake for his sons Laurent and John Kieffer and his son-in-law, John Nuwer.

In western New York Jean Kieffer and Anton Nuwer acquired land on which they took up commercial farming. Jean Kieffer purchased 125 acres of land on Erie road in Lancaster. He, his sons, Laurent and Alexander, and Jean Nuwer farmed that land. When Anthony Nuwer arrived the next year, he purchased 55 acres of land on Erie road in Alden for the sum of \$712, and in 1847 he purchased an additional 100 acres of land. Anthony Nuwer, his son Frank, and his future son-in-law John Kieffer farmed this land.⁶²

On October 9, 1849, John Kieffer married Celestine Nuwer. This was a double wedding at St. Mary's church in Lancaster, as Frank Nuwer married Anna Catherine Bach on the same day. The wedding took place in the "barn-like structure of logs that served as a church" since the brick church was not built until 1851.

The 1850 Census provides additional information about the Nuwer's and Kieffer's. The Census tells us that the families lived in two housing clusters. In Lancaster we find the following households listed.

- 1158 John Kieffer and Barbara
- 1159 John Nuwer and Catherine
- 1160 Lorenzo Kieffer and Catherine

The Census used a sequence number for each household, and it was incremented in the order that the household was interviewed. In the list above the households were numbered consecutively. This means the three households were living in separate dwellings and that the dwellings were next to each other.

16	1158	1195	John Kieffer	66	m	Farmer	1,240
17			Barbara	66	f		
18	1159	1196	John Nuwer	30	m	Farmer	2,520
19			Catherine	30	f		
20			Henry	5	m		
21			Mary	3	f		
22			John	7	m		
23			Alexander Kieffer	34	m	Farmer	
24	1160	1197	Lorenzo Kieffer	38	m	Farmer	1,240
25			Catherine	30	f		1,240
26			Catherine	3	f		
27			Mary	1	f		

1850 Census, Lancaster

This image shows the entries for John Kieffer, Sr., John Nuwer, Alexander Kieffer, and Laurent Kieffer. The right most column was the self-reported value of the real estate.

⁶¹ Robert Wideen, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-65.

⁶² At the time of this writing, my hypothesis for future research is that Anthony Nuwer originally acquired 90 acres of land in Alden. John Kieffer, Jr. acquired an adjoining 70 acres. At some point Anthony divided his land among his three children – about 30 acres each. John Kieffer added Celestine's share to his 70 acres. When Frank moved to Lancaster, his Alden land was also transferred to John Kieffer. Thus by 1865 John Kieffer had 120 acres and John Nuwer had 30 acres, which conforms with information on property maps.

Similarly, in Alden we find three households numbered consecutively:

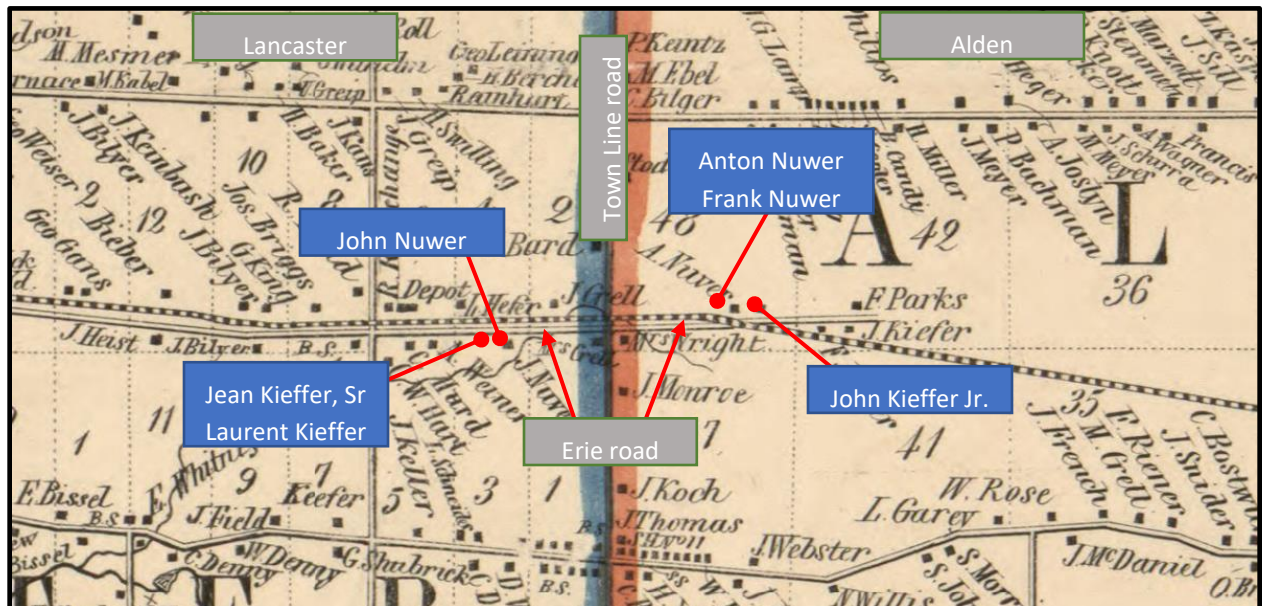
- 272 John Kieffer and Celestine
- 273 Francis Nuwer and Catherine
- 274 Anthony Nuwer and Margaret

6	272	284	John Kieffer	28	m		Farmer	800
7			Celestine	21	f			
8			Anna Shuler	5	f			
9	273	285	Francis Nuwer	26	m		Farmer	400
10			Catherine	24	f			
11	274	286	Anthony	54	m		Farmer	800
12			Margaret	59	f			
13			Leist Shuler	11	m			

1850 Population Census, Alden

This image shows the entries for John Kieffer, Jr., Frank Nuwer, and Anthony Nuwer. The right most column was the value of the self-reported real estate.

Investigation of property maps for Lancaster and Alden, informed us that these two housing clusters were actually one cluster of households. The three Lancaster households were located on Erie road at the intersection of Town Line road. (This road is literally the border between Lancaster and Alden.) The three Alden households are directly across Town Line road on what is today called Kieffer road (in 1850 it was named Erie road on both sides of Town Line). For the first ten years of their residency in the United States, the six couples lived and farmed very close to each other.



Erie Road Farms, Lancaster and Alden, 1843-1850

The Agricultural Census of 1850 provides insights about the activities of these farms. In 1850, farmers in the eastern United States were in the midst of adjusting their production to compete with cheap wheat,

cattle, and pork arriving over the Erie Canal from the Midwest.⁶³ By 1850 growing wheat and raising cattle and hogs in the east became less profitable, and eastern farmers turned to regional products intended for the rapidly growing urban markets of New York and New England. In addition to the New York City urban complex, Albany, Troy, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo were demanding food for both people and horses. New York farmers specialized in urban market goods such as milk, butter, potatoes, fresh fruit and vegetables, and oats and hay for horses.

The Nuwer and Kieffer farms were a reflection of this adjusting pattern of production. Table 1 presents agricultural information about five farms. In 1850 John Nuwer farmed 63 acres of land with two horses. He owned four dairy cows but only two other cows, and three hogs. He grew rye, barley, buckwheat, corn, and oats. Note that he grew a small amount of wheat while oats (necessary for horses) was his largest crop. He also grew potatoes and hay. This farm was both diversified and produced products intended for the urban markets in Buffalo and elsewhere in New York State.

Jean Kieffer, Sr. and Laurent Kieffer produced almost the same combination of products. Each had 31 acres of land. Combined they had four horses, four dairy cows, three other cows, and five hogs. They grew a very similar selection of grains as John Nuwer. Again note that beef, pork and wheat were not significant products of these farms.

Across Town Line road, Frank Nuwer (and presumably his father Anton) worked 90 acres of land and John Kieffer, Jr. worked 71 acres. They each owned two horses, three dairy cows, and two other cows. Frank had three hogs while John had only one. Both grew mainly oats, barley, and hay. Frank produced butter. Again the products were those intended for sale in urban markets, with very little production of beef, pork and wheat, which was sold in national and international markets.

Table 1

1850						
	Acres of		Dairy		Other	
	Land	Horses	Cows	Cows	Sheep	Swine
John Nuwer	63	2	4	2		3
John Kieffer, Sr	31		2	1		2
Laurent Kieffer	31	4	2	2		3
Frank Nuwer	90	2	3	2		3
John Kieffer, Jr	71	2	3	2		1
	Wheat	Rye	Corn	Oats	Barley	Buckwheat
	(bush)	(bush)	(bush)	(bush)	(bush)	(bush)
John Nuwer	40	100	20	200	70	25
John Kieffer, Sr	15		60	150	40	15
Laurent Kieffer		30	14	135		15
Frank Nuwer				200	40	30
John Kieffer, Jr	40			200	30	
	Potatos	Butter	Hay			
	(bush)	(lbs)	(tons)			
John Nuwer	40		25			
John Kieffer, Sr	50		15			
Laurent Kieffer			12			
Frank Nuwer	20	100	8			
John Kieffer, Jr			5			

Between 1850 and 1860 the Kieffer and Nuwer families experienced some changes. First, Jean Kieffer and Barbara Voegele died—Jean in 1852, Barbara in 1853. Second, Laurent Kieffer and his family moved

⁶³ Russell H. Anderson, "New York Agriculture Meets the West 1830-1850," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History*, Part I: vol. 16, no. 2 (Dec., 1932), pp. 163-198; Part II: vol. 16, no. 3 (Mar., 1933), pp. 285-296.

to Michigan in late 1854 or early 1855. In the 1860 Census Laurent's family was living in Frenchtown, Michigan, which is located between Toledo, Ohio and Detroit. Third, Anton Nuwer died in 1857 at age 61, after which Frank Nuwer moved to a farm in southern Lancaster, on what is today the Schwartz Road.

Margaret Ludwig lived another 17 years after Anton Nuwer passed. The Census found her living with Frank Nuwer in 1860 and with her daughter Celestine in 1865. She died in 1874 at the age of 78. Alexander Kieffer lived and worked on John Nuwer's farm until November 1871 when he died at age 56.

John Nuwer and Catherine Kieffer went on to have eight children. His brother Frank Nuwer had ten children and Celestine Nuwer had 11 children.

<p>Jean Nuwer (1819-1897) and Catharine Kieffer (1819-1882) married May 9, 1843</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Henry Nuwer (1845-1911) 2. Ann Marie Nuwer (1847-1905) 3. John Nuwer (1849-1924) 4. Theresa Nuwer (1851-1923) 5. Joseph Nuwer (1853-1889) 6. Catherine Nuwer (1856-1943) 7. Anthony Nuwer (1858-1944) 8. Christine B. Nuwer (1861-1945) 	<p>John Kieffer (1822-1905) and Celestine Nuwer (1829-1892) married October 9, 1849</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Marie Ann Kieffer (1850-1906) 2. Marie Celestine Kieffer (1853-1896) 3. Catherine Kieffer (1855-1888) 4. Rose Kieffer (1857-1921) 5. George Kieffer (1859-1859) 6. Gertrude Kieffer (1860-1923) 7. John Kieffer (1863-1864) 8. Henry Kieffer (1865-1929) 9. Margaret Kieffer (1867-1881) 10. Elizabeth Kieffer (1869-1929)
<p>Francis Xavier Nuwer (1823-1888) and Ann Catherine Bach (1826-1907) married October 9, 1849</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anthony Nuwer (1850-1850) 2. Peter Nuwer (1850-1850) 3. Felicitas Nuwer (1851-1928) 4. John Peter Nuwer (1853-1904) 5. Katherine Nuwer (1855-1931) 6. Magdalena Nuwer (1858-1942) 7. Rose Nuwer (1860-1861) 8. Francis Xavier Nuwer (1862-1940) 9. Aloyious Nuwer (1864-1937) 10. Jacob Xavier Nuwer (1868-1936) 	<p>Laurent Kieffer (1812-1885) and Catherine Schmuck (1820-1901) married January 20, 1843</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Catherine Kieffer (1847-1912) 2. Mary Kieffer (1849-1913) 3. Celestina Kieffer (1851-) 4. Gertrude Kieffer (1854-1923) 5. John Kieffer (1858-1912)

JOSEPH FUCHS

Chapter 4

Joseph Fuchs was born in Soufflenheim, Alsace, France in 1824 and immigrated to Lancaster, New York in 1843. He made the journey with his friend and future neighbor John Kieffer. Joseph Fuchs was also a friend of John and Frank Nuwer, both in Soufflenheim and in Lancaster.

Parents	Grandparents	Great grandparents
		+--Christophe Fuchs
		Died 14 February 1762, Buehl
	+--Josef Fuchs	
	Born 26 May 1755, Buehl	
	Died 26 February 1815, Soufflenheim, aged 59	
		+--Marie Dorothe Schaub
		Born 10 July 1729, Buehl
		Married 4 November 1754, Buehl
		Died 18 February 1777, Buehl, aged 47
+--Martin Fuchs		
Born 12 November 1797, Soufflenheim		
Died 26 March 1871, Soufflenheim, aged 73		
		+--Jean Roth
		Died 23 November 1780, Soufflenheim
	+--Marie Anne Roth	
	Born 17 March 1759, Soufflenheim	
	Married 1782	
	Died 3 January 1818, Soufflenheim, aged 58	
		+--Veronique Meder
		Married 2 September 1749, Soufflenheim
Joseph Fuchs		
Born 14 May 1824, Soufflenheim		
Married 1854		
Died 21 December 1896, Lancaster, aged 73		
		+--Michel Beck
	+--Michel Beck	
	Born in 1761	
	Died 2 November 1845, Soufflenheim, age 84	
		+--Barbe Voegele
+--Madeleine Beck		
Born 12 November 1794, Soufflenheim		
Married 11 April 1818		
Died 29 August 1865, Soufflenheim, aged 70 years		
		+--Jean Adam Mey
	+--Marie Anne Mey	
	Born 6 January 1762, Soufflenheim	
	Died 28 December 1826, Soufflenheim, aged 64	
		+--Odile Schutt

The Fuchs family first appeared in Soufflenheim records in 1783 when Marie Anne Fuchs was baptized at St. Michael's Catholic church.⁶⁴ Marie Anne was the daughter of Joseph Fuchs' grandparents, Josef Fuchs and Anna Roth. The older Josef Fuchs was born May 26, 1755, in the Alsatian town of Buehl, which is about 80 miles south of Soufflenheim. Buehl is situated in a valley at the foot of the Vosges Mountains. Josef Fuchs' father, Christophe Fuchs, died in Buehl in 1762 when Josef was only six years old. His mother died fifteen years later, in 1777, at the age of 47 years. Josef Fuchs was 21 years old at that time and probably left Buehl after his mother's death.⁶⁵

Within the next five years or so, between 1777 and 1782, Josef Fuchs found his way to Soufflenheim and married the daughter of a town burgers. This was a time when Soufflenheim's population was growing and the French Revolution was yet to explode. The population of Soufflenheim was estimated to have been about 1,200 people in 1776.

In about 1782 Josef Fuchs married Anna Roth in her hometown. Anna's father, Johannes Roth, was a Soufflenheim burger and shoe mender in the town. Because Josef married the daughter of a burger, he became a burger himself and thereby a citizen of Soufflenheim with the rights and privileges of a citizen.

Josef Fuchs and Anna Roth had nine children—and two sets of twins. There were five girls and four boys in the family tree. Two of the boys died as infants, the other two, Philip and Martin, will get married in Soufflenheim.

Children of Josef Fuchs and Anna Roth

	Born	Married	Died
Marie Anne	10 January 1783		
Bernarde	27 August 1784		
Catherine	6 December 1785	16 January 1815, Beinheim	
Joseph (twin)	24 December 1787		17 September 1788
Barbe (twin)	24 December 1787		
Joseph	13 November 1792		13 November 1792
Phillip (twin)	30 April 1795	21 May 1814	31 January 1838
Magdalena (twin)	30 April 1795		
Martin	12 November 1797	11 April 1818	26 March 1871

Josef worked as a day laborer and a field hand, which put him near the bottom of the town's social hierarchy. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries social status and respect were closely aligned with the occupational hierarchy. More than half the workers in Soufflenheim were engaged as craftsmen. As such they possessed specialized skills acquired through years of training. A craftsman produced a product, like a pair of shoes or a ceramic pitcher, he acquired the inputs he needed for his craft and he sold the finished product to a buyer. This afforded the individual a high degree of independence which translated into a higher level of social status.

⁶⁴ The Soufflenheim Baptism Index, (<http://www.smithancestry.com/places/souff/ixs.htm>).

⁶⁵ This information was found in the "Jean Marc Schneider family tree," posted at Geneanet, (<https://gw.geneanet.org/sjm58?lang=en&v=FUCHS&m=N>).

By contrast, a day laborer did not own the product he produced, nor did he own the tools he used at work. A day laborer worked for another person, was paid a wage, and was obliged to obey the directions of his employer. In this historical period, to become a day laborer was to lose independence and its corresponding social status. Although Josef Fuchs was a burger with the rights of citizenship, he would have been classified among the poor of the town because his economic welfare depended on the regularity of employment.

Among the nine children born to Josef Fuchs and Anne Roth, the youngest child was named Martin. He was born November 12, 1797. The French Revolution was in its final phase and Napoléon Bonaparte's 1799 *coups d'état* was just around the corner. For the next 15 years France would be almost continually at war with its neighbors.

When Martin Fuchs was 20 years old, he married Madelaine Beck. The wedding day was April 11, 1818. The bride was the daughter of Michel Beck (1761-1845) and Marie Anne Mey (1762-1826). According to the wedding record Martin was a day laborer like his father and Michel Beck was a "*labourour*," which meant he owned a plow and team of draught animals. Both of Martin's parents had died by the time of his wedding. Josef Fuchs had died February 26, 1815 at the age of 59 years. His wife Anne Roth had died January 3, 1818 when she was 58 years old. Martin's wedding was three months after his mother's death.

Records indicate that Martin Fuchs and Madelaine Beck had eight children. Their son Joseph was the immigrant to Erie County, New York. Born in May 1824, Joseph Fuchs was the family's third child. He had one older brother, two younger brothers, and four sisters.

Martin Fuchs and his family were found in the 1836, 1841, 1846, and 1851 Censuses of Soufflenheim.⁶⁶ In both the 1836 and the 1841 Censuses all the children were living at home. When the 1846 census was taken, Joseph Fuchs had left for the United States and his brother Mathias had also left home. Mathias was only 19 years old in 1846, and his marriage record was found at St. Nicholas Parish, Manhattan, New York. The date of the marriage was on August 13, 1848.⁶⁷

By the time the 1851 Census was taken, Michael Fuchs had married and moved out of the family house. Catherine and Barbe had also moved out of the house. Catherine and Barbe were not found elsewhere in Soufflenheim's 1851 Census, nor were death records found for them. Their whereabouts is unclear.

⁶⁶ Martin Fuchs, 1836 Census, (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7464#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7464-78751>).

Martin Fuchs, 1841 Census, (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7465#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7465-78814>).

Martin Fuchs, 1846 Census, (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7466#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7466-78872>).

Martin Fuchs, 1851 Census, (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7467#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7467-78939>).

	1836		1841		1846		1851	
	Present	Age	Present	Age	Present	Age	Present	Age
Michael	Yes	17	Yes	22	Yes	27	No	32
Catherine	Yes	15	Yes	20	Yes	25	No	30
Joseph	Yes	12	Yes	17	No	22	No	27
Mathias	Yes	9	Yes	14	No	19	No	24
Marie Anne	Yes	7	Yes	12	Yes	17	Yes	22
Magdelaine	Yes	4	Yes	9	Yes	14	Yes	19
Martin	Yes	1	Yes	6	Yes	11	Yes	16
Barbe			Yes	4	Yes	9	No	14

⁶⁷ Kleindeutschland, (<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c0db0dfe-27d2-4632-889f-eeb26fbb14e1/downloads/Kleindeutschland.pdf>).

Children of Martin Fuchs and Madelaine Beck

	Born	Married	Died
Michael	7 August 1819	23 November 1846	
Catherine	15 October 1821		
Joseph	14 May 1824	1854, Lancaster, NY	21 December 1896
Mathias	19 February 1827	13 August 1848, Manhattan, NY	
Marie Anne	28 September 1829	7 April 1853	25 November 1888
Madelaine	12 April 1832		18 May 1882
Martin	17 October 1835	30 March 1861, 4 July 1874	
Barbe	24 December 1837		

In the period following the Napoleonic Wars, especially after 1820, the social situation in central Europe produced increasing economic hardship. Soufflenheim did not escape the difficulties. First, the population of central Europe was increasing rapidly. In the more densely populated regions like the upper Rhine river valley this population growth placed great pressure on the agricultural resources. Most importantly, the growth of population led to a decline in the amount of land an individual could farm, which made it more difficult for families to earn a living in agriculture.

The problem of declining farm size was complicated by the lack of non-agricultural opportunities. In principle, when a farm was divided among family members, one member could sell their land to another family member and take a job outside agriculture. Or an individual could supplement their reduced income due to their smaller farm by doing part-time work at some nonfarm tasks. We think Anton Nuwer may have been a part-time farmer and a part-time textile weaver for some of this period in Soufflenheim. Thus, between 1820 and 1860, the population faced a choice between accepting a fall in their standard of living, finding alternative employment, or migration.

In the upper Rhine river valley, however, good alternatives to working the land did not exist until the last part of the nineteenth century. Before mid-century many crafts and trades faced significant competition from lower-cost British and Prussian goods, and for this reason opportunities outside of agriculture were very limited here. As more and more Britain and Prussian goods were imported into southern Germany and eastern France, workers who used the older domestic methods of production were forced out of work.

We read in *Soufflenheim, A city in search of its history* that “due to the lack of employment, many persons are threatened with hunger. The municipality is obliged to make efforts to alleviate misery.” Efforts made by the commune were cited for 1823, 1827, and 1828.⁶⁸ At one point in the late 1820s we are told that “the [town] council accounts for high costs of life, misery and lack of work, it votes a credit of 5,000 francs to the workshop charity. The commune has to suspend a project of having a new organ installed, which would have cost 9,000 francs.... The workshop charity must operate as swiftly as possible.” It appears this economic distress continued well into the next decade. Soufflenheim records from the 1830s state

⁶⁸ Lucien Sittler, Marc Elchinger, and Fritz Geissert, in conjunction with the Societe D'Histoire et D'Archeologie du Reid Nord, *Soufflenheim, A city in search of its history*, (1987). Translated by Marie-Odile Peres. Excerpts available here: (<https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/c0db0dfe-27d2-4632-889f-eeb26fbb14e1/downloads/Soufflenheim%20Une%20Cite.pdf>).

that “a fifth of the population is poor,” and in 1838 “the municipality of Soufflenheim is searching for methods to improve the economic situation.”⁶⁹

Due to the economic distress between 1820 and 1860, many residents of Soufflenheim left the town for North America. Some were young individuals like Martin Fuchs’ son Joseph who was 20 years old when he left in 1843. Others were families with a head of household in their 40s or 50s and children in their teens and 20s, like, for example, the family of Jean Kieffer, who we have discussed in a different essay. Anton Nuwer, who was 48 years old when he emigrated, and his Margarethe Ludwig also fall into this group.

In 1841 Martin Fuchs was 44 years old and had worked his entire adult life as a day laborer. He and his wife, Madelaine Beck, had eight children ranging in ages from 22 to 4 years old. None were married. He surely felt the economic distress engulfing Soufflenheim in the 1820s and 1830s. Economic opportunities and occupational mobility for his family were very limited. Their oldest son, Michel, worked as a day labor just like his father and grandfather. Martin Fuchs had every incentive to move his family to North America.

But Martin Fuchs did not leave Soufflenheim. The only member of his family to emigrate was his 20-year-old son, Joseph. We don’t know why Martin Fuchs decided not to emigrate, but historians have suggested some general aspects of emigrants in this period. They point out that the decision to emigrate involved more than distress from poor economic conditions. Emigration was expensive, especially in the antebellum period, and the people who were most affected by economic distress were often too poor to emigrate.⁷⁰

Thus, in his account of south German emigration, the historian Mack Walker maintained that the immigrants were those who had property that could be turned into cash to fund the trip. They were individuals under pressure but not yet in full distress.⁷¹ The situation was no different for the Alsatian immigrants. As Nicole Fouche states, “It would be a mistake to think it was always the poorest Alsatians who emigrated.”⁷² Day laborers didn’t typically have much property that could be turned into cash. And emigration was much riskier for those who had just enough to pay their passage and the overland journey. Furthermore, the risks to a poor family of eight or ten were much greater than the risks to a young, single member of that family. These concerns could have very well influenced Martin Fuchs’ decision to stay in Soufflenheim.

We know that Joseph Fuchs arrived in New York City on board the sailing ship *Catharine* on May 29, 1843. At that time the journey generally took between 45 and 90 days, which meant that Joseph probably left Soufflenheim sometime between late February and early April. Joseph Fuchs did not travel alone. In fact, genealogists have identified 38 people on the *Catharine* who were from Soufflenheim. It is likely they all traveled together.

The ship’s manifest tells us that its European port of departure was Le Havre, France. This was the primary continental port for passenger traffic to the United States. Scheduled passenger service was not available in those days. For the most part, passengers filled empty space after a ship delivered its primary, non-human cargo. Le Havre was the main port for raw cotton deliveries to the continent. Vessels

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

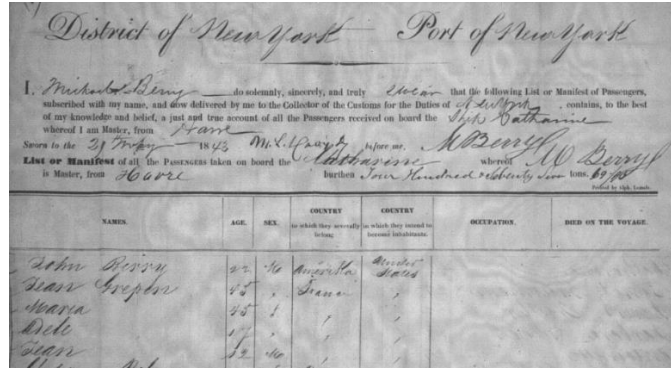
⁷⁰ Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930*, (1991).

⁷¹ Mack Walker, *Germany and the emigration, 1816-1885*, (1964). And Raymond L. Cohn, *Mass Migration Under Sail: European Immigration to the Antebellum United States*, (2011).

“A great many heads of households sold their little house with its patch of land to raise the money for the departure and they thus cut themselves off from any hope of return if things went wrong.” Thomas Walker Page, “The Causes of Earlier European Immigration to the United States,” *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 19, No. 8 (Oct., 1911), pp. 676-693.

⁷² “It would be a mistake to think it was always the poorest Alsatians who emigrated. To take the example of the Bas Rhin from 1828 to 1837, it was found that 35% of the families took with them large sums of money which probably enabled them to settle in the United States under good conditions. 7% of people asking for passports took even larger sums with them and this brings the number of families able to settle in America without any problem up to 42% from the financial point of view. The remaining 58% had just enough to pay their passage and the overland journey. It is obvious that for those people emigrating was much more risky. They are generally poor rural laborer’s, the ones who had got left behind by a changing economy.” Nicole Fouche “Alsatian Emigration to the United States 1815-1870,” *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, 1985, (http://amct.pagesperso-orange.fr/migrants_eg.htm).

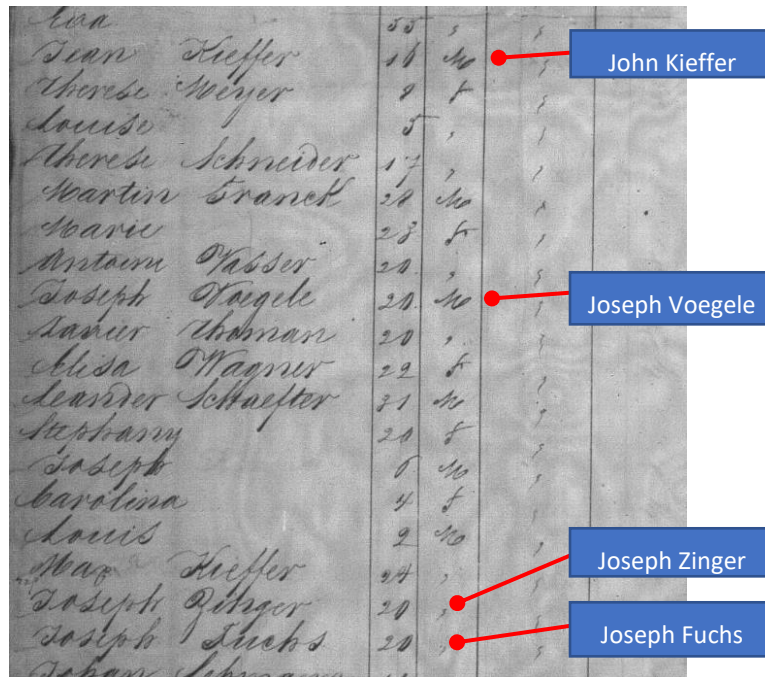
from the United States were delivering raw materials for cotton-textile factories in France. The owners of these vessels then sought revenue from the return trip to the United States and were willing to carry passengers. Since the cotton trade from the United States originated in New York City or New Orleans, these were the two ports that received the most immigrants.



I *Michael Berry* do solemnly, sincerely, and truly swear that the following List or Manifest of Passengers, subscribed with my name, and now delivered by me to the Collector of the Customs for the Duties of New York, contains, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a just and true account of all the Passengers received on board the *Ship Catharine* whereof I am Master, from *Havre*

Sworn to the *29th May 1843*

List or Manifest of all the passengers taken on board the *Catharine* whereof *M Berry* is Master, from *Havre* burthen *Four Hundred Seventy Seven tons*.⁷³



⁷³ "New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1891," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939V-5FF6-G?i=1057&cc=1849782>).

Le Havre was about 430 miles from Soufflenheim. So, the first leg of the journey was by foot and cart to the port city on the English Channel.

German immigrants from south and southwest Germany, located just across the border from Alsace, would ... travel [to Le Havre] by covered wagon or, if sufficiently wealthy, stage lines.... By coach in 1785, it took four to five days from Strasbourg to Paris, and then another day or two to Le Havre. For immigrants who moved their possessions in covered wagons, the journey to Le Havre took several weeks. Then, upon reaching the coast, the immigrants often had to wait anywhere between one and six weeks for an available ship.⁷⁴

When immigrants arrived in Le Havre they had to deal with “runners,” individuals who would meet the arriving groups and try to steer them to particular boardinghouses. These could be unpleasant and costly encounters. When an immigrant arrived at the boardinghouse the rates actually charged were often higher than the runners had promised. Sometimes, prepaid tickets were not honored, or the immigrants were told they needed to pay more on fully paid tickets. These practices made the trip more troublesome and more expensive than it needed to be.

The *Catharine*'s passenger list totaled 191 names. The countries of origin were Bavaria, Prussia, Baden, and France. Those from France are assumed to have been Alsatian. About 20 percent of the 191 passengers were from Soufflenheim. This group was divided almost equally between males and females, with 18 male and 20 female travelers. Of the Soufflenheim passengers, 35 out of 38 were under 40 years old and 12 were children under 10 years old.

In general, immigrants faced a long journey once aboard the sailing ship. Although we don't know how long it took the *Catharine* to reach New York City, the average length of a voyage from Le Havre to New York was about forty-four days.

Onboard the ships ..., at least until the 1850s, the immigrants were only provided with water and “bread, salt meat, and a few other supplies.” They had to bring the remainder of their food.... If the immigrant ran out during the voyage, he or she might have to buy food from the captain at exorbitant rates. In fact, sometimes the immigrants were told to carry less than they needed, so that exactly this situation would result.⁷⁵

The *Catharine*'s manifest does tell us that three of the passengers died on the voyage. One was a two-year-old child. The other two deaths were older men, one was 60 the other 61 years old.

After arriving in New York City, immigrants encountered another set of runners, who also tried to steer the individuals to certain rooming houses. Alternatively, if the immigrant had a prepaid ticket for another destination in the United States, he or she might again be told the ticket was not good or not fully paid.⁷⁶

From New York City, the Soufflenheim immigrants traveled to western New York via the Hudson River and Erie Canal. Travel on the Hudson River to Albany was made by sidewheel steamers, and by 1840 it took less than 12 hours to complete this 150-mile leg of the trip. From Albany to Buffalo passengers traveled on 70-foot packet boats pulled by horses at a pace of about ten mile per hour. This part of the journey took five or six days.

Many Soufflenheim emigrants settled in a place called New Germany, in Waterloo County, Ontario, Canada. Today, the village is called Maryhill. The genealogist Brian Smith has assembled a comprehensive list of Soufflenheim emigrants and found that about 70 percent of them settled in or near Waterloo County and about 25 percent settled in Erie County. Other genealogists have identified 22 of the 38 Soufflenheim passengers on board the *Catharine* who went to New Germany. They would have disembarked from the canal boat in Lockport or Tonawanda and proceeded another 100 miles overland to their final destination. Among those who settled in New Germany was Joseph Zinger. Joseph's family

⁷⁴ Raymond L. Cohn, *op. cit.*, chapter 6.

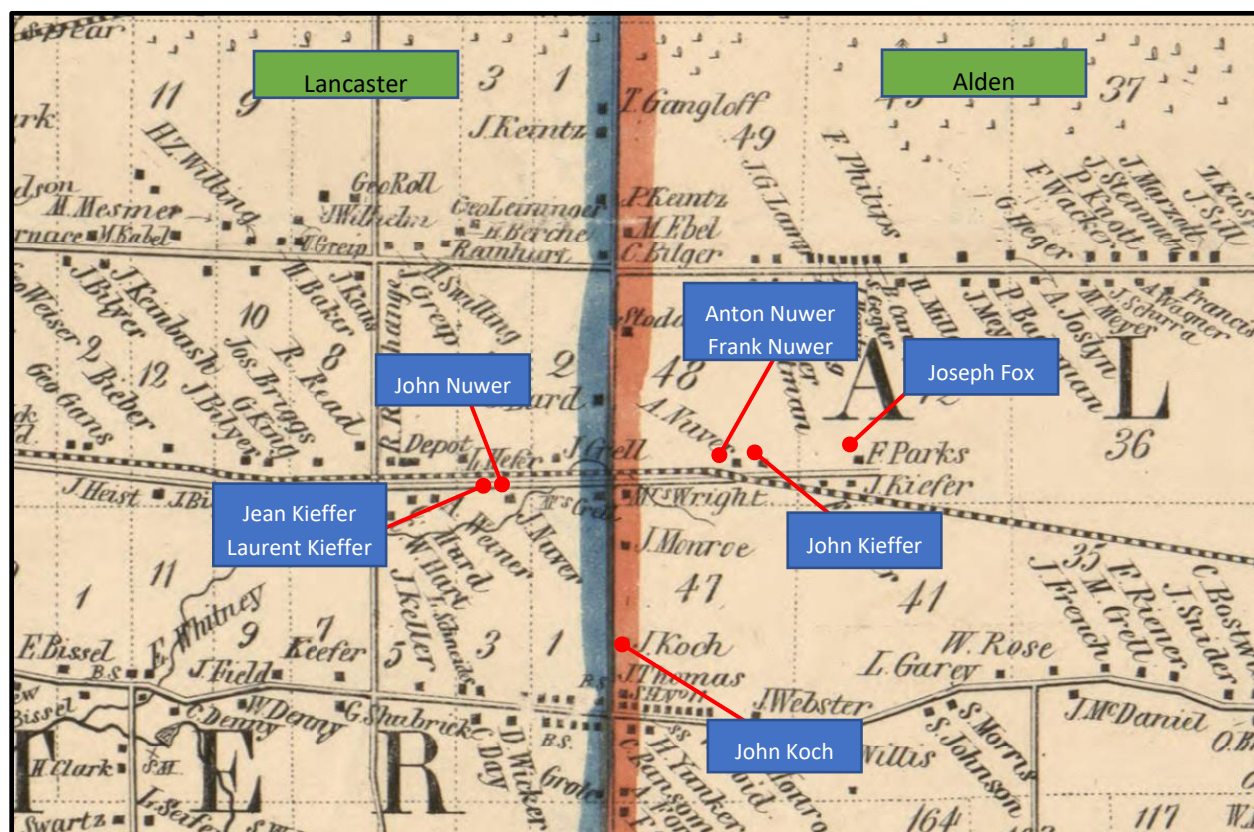
⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

will follow him in 1847, making the Atlantic crossing on board the *Exchange* which will also transport Joseph Voegele's family.

Others from the *Catharine* walked to locations in and around Buffalo. Among those who stayed near Buffalo were Joseph Fuchs, John Kieffer, and Joseph Voegele. We know that John Kieffer's entire family will arrive in Lancaster four months later and that John's father will purchase farmland in Lancaster. We also know that Joseph Voegele will return to Soufflenheim before 1846—he appeared with his family in the 1846 Soufflenheim census—and then in 1847 return to Lancaster with his entire family. They too purchased farmland in Lancaster.

Between 1843 and 1850 as many as thirteen former residents from Soufflenheim were living on Erie road in the towns of Lancaster and Alden. These were the Jean Kieffer family, the Anton Nuwer family, and Joseph Fox. (After arriving the United States, "Fox" became the standard spelling of the Fuchs family name. I adopt that spelling here.) The 1850 Census reports Joseph Fox as a member of the Frederick Parks household.⁷⁷ It appears that he was working on the Parks' farm which was directly across the road from John Kieffer's farm. Additionally, after 1847, the Joseph Voegele family was not far away working a 40-acre farm on Schwartz road.



Erie Road Farms, Lancaster and Alden, 1843-1850

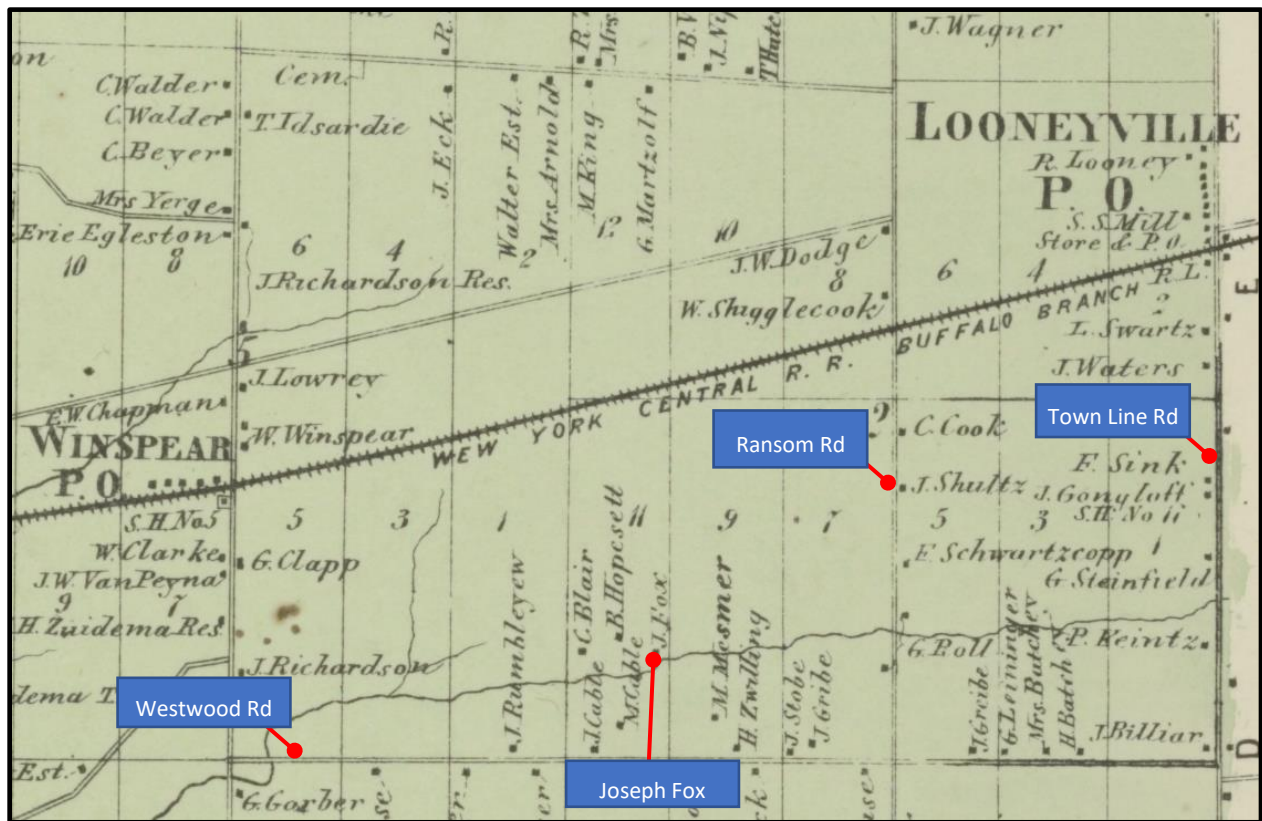
John Kieffer married Celestina Nuwer in 1849. And in the 1850 Census he was listed as the owner of a farm in Alden. Information found in the 1850 Census of Agriculture reports that John Kieffer's farm was 71

⁷⁷ "United States Census, 1850, Joseph Fox in household of Frederick Parks, Alden," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCYW-DSD>).

acres of land of which 38 acres were improved land. According to the same Census, Frank Nuwer owned a 90-acre farm, with 62 acres of improved land.

Joseph Fox married Maria Anna Koch in 1854. Maria Koch was the daughter of John and Barbara Koch. According to her obituary, she was born February 2, 1837 in Lorrain, France, and emigrated to Erie County with her parents in 1847. The family of three was found in the 1850 Census living in Alden⁷⁸ and a land map (reproduced above) identifies the property on the Alden side of Town Line road, south of Erie road.

After their wedding Joseph Fox and Maria Koch moved to Lancaster. The 1855 Census lists the newly married couple, along with Maria's parents John and Barbara Koch, living together in Lancaster. The Agricultural Census for 1855 shows the farm was 28 acres and the land map reproduced below shows the property was on Westwood road, just west of Ransom road.



Joseph Fox Farm, Lancaster, 1855-1870

The information reported in the 1855 Agricultural census suggests that Joseph Fox was just starting this new enterprise. Only eight acres were being farmed and the only crops were two acres of oats and some hay. No potatoes and no other grains were reported. Joseph owned two milk cows, but there was no butter reported. The 1860 Agricultural Census is a useful contrast. Joseph Fox still reported 28 total acres, but in 1860 20 of those acres were being farmed. Joseph was also growing wheat, corn, potatoes, peas, and barley. His cows produced milk for 300 pounds of butter.

⁷⁸ "United States Census, 1850, John Rouch, Alden," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCYW-JCW>).

Joseph Fuchs, John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer were each born in Soufflenheim and immigrated to Erie County when they were in their early twenties. The three young men were virtually the same age. Frank Nuwer was only five months older than Joseph Fox, and John Kieffer was one year, nine months older. All three were single when they immigrated to New York.

The main difference among the immigration experiences of these three young men was that Joseph Fox made the journey without his parents and siblings while John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer's parents and siblings also immigrated to Erie County. The significance of this difference is that the families of John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer were able to sell their property in Soufflenheim and use those funds to make a new start in New York. Joseph Fox did not have the same head start.

Thus, seven years after arriving in New York, both John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer were the owners of a farm. John Kieffer owned 71 acres of land which had a cash value of \$800 in 1850. Frank Nuwer owned 90 acres of land which had a cash value of \$1,200. Joseph Fox had been in the United States the same amount of time, but, in 1850, he was not the owner of a farm. Instead, he was working as a farm hand and saving money to buy land.

When Joseph Fox did acquire a farm in 1854, it was smaller than what his two friends were working. Joseph's farm in Lancaster was 28 acres of land, while both John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer were farming more than twice that amount of land. In addition, the economic head-start John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer had over Joseph Fox generated greater wealth. In 1855, when Joseph Fox was 31 years old, the value of his farm was \$750. In the same year the cash values of John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer's farms were \$3,000 and \$4,000 respectively, which is four to five times more wealth.

Joseph Fox and Mary Koch were found living in Lancaster in the 1860, 1865 and 1870 Censuses.⁷⁹ Mary Koch's father, John Koch, had died in 1858. St. Mary's records indicate he was buried July 28th and that he was then 54 years old.⁸⁰ At the time of the 1860 Census, Joseph Fox was 36 years old, and Mary was 24. They had three young children and Mary's mother, Barbara Koch, was living in the household. The Census confirms that Joseph was working as a farmer.

Children of Joseph Fuchs and Mary Koch ¹⁸

	Born	Wedding	Spouse	Died
Madeline Fox	20 February 1856	30 April 1889	Felix Trenkel	
Barbara Fox	23 October 1857	3 May 1881	John Roll	1924
Martin Fox	27 January 1860	Nov or Dec 1887	Helena Christina Kegler	1932
Mary Fox	30 December 1861	22 May 1888	Henry Kieffer	
Margaret Fox	7 May 1864	7 February 1888	Michael Bauer	
Joseph Fox	25 January 1867	11 April 1893	Elizabeth Kieffer	1942
Theresa Fox	15 October 1869	signal in 1896		
John Fox	3 September 1872			
Francis Fox	9 December 1874	27 April 1898	Celestine Roll	1944
Rosa Fox	14 January 1877			15 February 1892
Henry Fox	16 March 1880			31 August 1880

⁷⁹ "United States Census, 1860, Joseph Fox," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCW2-VD9>).

"New York State Census, 1865, Joseph Fox, District 01, Lancaster," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVNN-GV96>).

"United States Census, 1870, Joseph Fox," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8FR-5L1>).

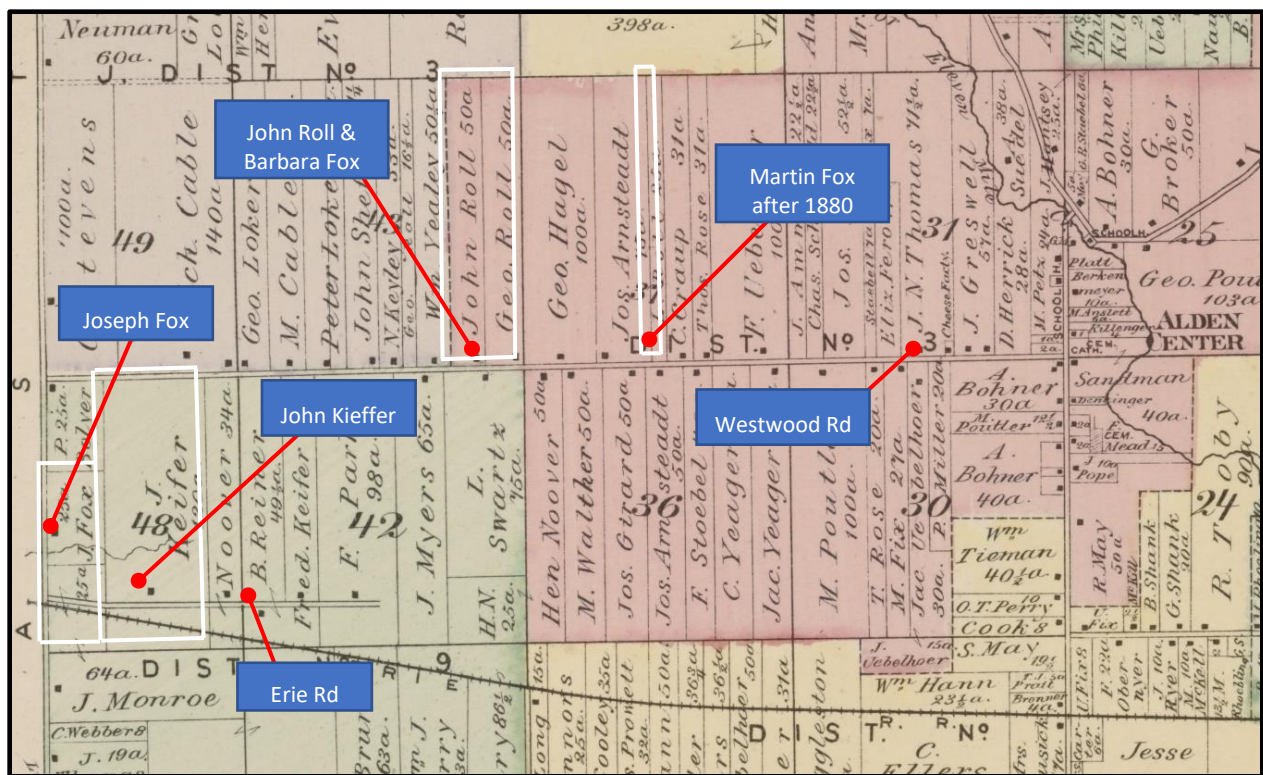
⁸⁰ St. Mary's Church records, (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3Q9M-CS4G-M7VC-S?i=391&cat=24234>).

Ten years later, in 1870, the family had four more children, otherwise little had changed. Joseph was 46 years old and Mary was 34 years old. They were still farming the same land, and Mary's mother was still living with the family. The four oldest children were between the ages 14 and 8 and they were attending school. The three youngest children were still at home.

Sometime between 1870 and 1875 Joseph Fox sold his farm in Lancaster and purchased land in Alden. The 1875 New York Census finds Joseph and his family living in Alden. The household was composed of nine children and Mary's mother was still living with them.⁸¹

There is not enough information to determine in which year the family moved to Alden. Two children were born in the interval between the 1870 and 1875 Censuses, but there is no record of their place of birth. Although the family was living in Alden, they attended church at St. Mary's in the Village of Lancaster, and both children, John and Francis, were baptized there. In fact, all eleven of the Fox children were baptized at St. Mary's, even Rose and Henry who we know were born in Alden.

The Agricultural statistics included in the 1875 Census tell us that Joseph's Alden farm was 25 acres and it was valued at \$700.⁸² Over the next five years Joseph Fox added a second parcel of land. In 1880 Joseph was 53 years old and he had been married and farming his own land for 26 years. Nevertheless, the economic slow start he experienced as an immigrant with very little capital and the economic head start his friend John Kieffer received was still apparent.



Select Farms in Alden, New York

⁸¹ "New York State Census, 1875, Joseph Fox, Alden," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VNV1-YM9>).

⁸² "New York State Agriculture Census, 1875," (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:S3HY-XXZ3-LSF?i=19&cc=1918735>)

In 1880 Joseph Fox's Alden farm contained 57 acres of land, of which 41 acres were improved land. He owned two horses, three milk cows and 30 chickens. The cash value of the land and buildings was \$3,100 and the livestock was valued at \$150. By comparison John Kieffer's farm was larger in every way. His farm contained 121 acres of land, and all were improved. He owned four horses, 12 milk cows and 80 chicken. The cash value of the farm was \$6,000 and the livestock was valued at \$630. These two farms produced a similar combination of products, but the value of John Kieffer's products was much greater than the value of Joseph Fox's products. While John Kieffer sold \$826 worth of farm products, Joseph Fox sold products that were worth only \$328.

Table 1
Two Neighbors in 1880

	Joseph Fox	John Kieffer
Improved land	41	121
Horses	2	4
Milk cows	3	12
Chickens	30	80
Butter (lbs.)	150	600
Hogs	4	4
Calves sold	2	6
Hay (tons)	5	20
Grain (acres)	14	39
Potatoes (acres)	1	4
Eggs (dozs.)	120	400

1	THE NAME.	TENURE.			IMPROVED.		UNIMPROVED.		9	10	11
		Owner.	Rents for fixed money rental.	Rents for shares of products.	Tilled, including fallow and grass in rotation, (whether pasture or meadow.)	Permanent meadows, permanent pastures, orchards, vineyards.	Woodland and forest.	Other unimproved, including "old fields" not growing wood.			
					No.	No.	No.	No.			
1	Monroe James	/			32	5	2	1860			
2	Miller Peter	/			13	7		1400	100	133	
3	Ballist Phillip	/			21	4		1875	100	125	
4	Kieffer John	/			89	32		6000	100	630	
5	Reiner Warrnhart	/			33	13		2700	200	375	
6	Kieffer Friedrich	/			32	13		2700	125	150	
7	Parkes Friedrich	/			82	16		6080	350	775	
8	Fox Joseph	/			28	13	16	3100	50	150	
9	Reinman John	/			64	17	28	6455	250	550	

Selected entry Agricultural Census, 1880

Joseph Fox lived the remainder of his life on his Alden farm. When the 1880 Population Census was taken, Joseph Fox had seven of his eleven children still living at home.⁸³ His oldest son, Martin Fox, was found in the 1880 Census working as a farm hand for Henry Beck.⁸⁴ Martin was married in 1888 and acquired a 25-acre farm on Westwood Road in Alden. Martin Fox was found in the 1892 and 1900 Censuses.⁸⁵ He died in 1932 at the age of 72 years and his farm was transferred to his son-in-law, Lester Nuwer.⁸⁶

In 1888 Mary Fox married Henry Kieffer, who was the son of John Kieffer, Joseph Fox's lifelong friend from Soufflenheim. Mary Fox and Henry Kieffer lived on John Kieffer's farm.

Joseph Fox's wife, Mary Koch died November 1, 1892. The *Lancaster Times* printed the following obituary:

"Mrs. Joseph Fox died at her home at Town Line on Tuesday, November 1st, after an illness of three weeks of congestion of the lungs, aged 55 years, 9 months and 1 day. She was born in Lothringen, France, and emigrated to America with her parents in 1847. In 1854 she was married to Mr. Joseph Fox who, with nine children, survives her. The children are Mrs. Felix Trankle, Mrs. John Roll, Mrs. Henry Kiefer, Mrs. Michael Bauer, Miss Theresa Fox, and Martin, Joseph, John and Frank Fox. She was a good wife and kind mother, and was highly esteemed by all knew her. Her death is a great loss to the surviving members of her family. They have the sympathy of the community. The funeral will be held at St. Mary's Church Friday morning at ten o'clock. Rev. V. Scheffel's will officiate."⁸⁷

The following year, Joseph Fox, Jr. married Elizabeth Kieffer, who was the daughter of John Kieffer. Joseph Fox, Jr. became the owner of his father's farm and worked it until his death in 1942. Joseph Fox, Jr. and Henry Kieffer were, like their fathers, longtime friends and neighbors.

Joseph Fox, Sr. died in December 1896. The *Lancaster Times* printed the following on obituary:

"Mr. Joseph Fox, an old and highly respected citizen of Town Line, died on Monday, December 21, 1896, at 8 p.m., aged 73 years, 8 months and 23 days. Mr. Fox was born in Alsace, Germany, in 1824 and came to America in 1843, accompanied by Mr. John Kieffer. His wife and youngest daughter died in 1893. Nine children survive him—Mrs. Felix Tenable, Miss Theresa Fox, Mr. John Fox and Mr. Frank Fox of Buffalo, Mrs. John Roll and Mr. Martin Fox of Alden, Mrs. Michael Bauer of East Lancaster, and Mr. Joseph Fox, Jr., and Mrs. Henry Kieffer of Town Line.

"Mr. Fox was a good neighbor, a kind husband and loving father, and will be greatly missed by a large circle of friends as well as by his family. The funeral took place at St. Mary's Church in this village this morning at 10 o'clock, the Rev. V. Seheffels officiating."⁸⁸

Joseph Fox immigrated to Erie County in 1843 while the other members of his family—his parents, brothers and sisters—remained in Soufflenheim. This had implications for Joseph Fox's opportunities in western New York. His start in Erie county was slower in some important way compared to other Soufflenheim residences who migrated at the same time. Compared to John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer, he

⁸³ "United States Census, 1880, Joseph Fox, Alden," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZZP-YK4>).

⁸⁴ "United States Census, 1880, Martin Fox in household of Henry Beck, Lancaster," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZZR-CGV>).

⁸⁵ "New York State Census, 1892, Martin Fox, Alden Town, E.D. 02," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQSV-B82>).

"United States Census, 1900, Martin Fox, Alden Township (northern part)," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MSX3-GC6>).

⁸⁶ Martin Fox's farm on Westwood Road is the same land Lester Nuwer owned. Martin Fox is shown as the lot's owner on a 1909 map; Lester Nuwer is shown as the owner on a 1938 map.

⁸⁷ Lothringen is the German spelling of Lorraine. It was not Mary's hometown. *Lancaster Times* November 3, 1892, (https://fultonhistory.com/Newspapers_23/Lancaster_NY_Times/Lancaster_NY_Times_1888-1894/Lancaster_NY_Times_1888-8_9_1894_5-31_452_2.pdf).

⁸⁸ *Lancaster Time*, Thursday, December 24, 1896, (https://fultonhistory.com/Newspapers_23/Lancaster_NY_Times/Lancaster_NY_Times_1894-1899/Lancaster_NY_Times_1894_-_7_1899_12-28_284_1.pdf).

had to wait a longer period of time before buying a farm, and when he did buy a farm, it was smaller and had a lower cash value than his compatriots' farms.

I highlight this difference to emphasize some hidden characteristics of the Kieffer and Nuwer families' immigration experience. First emigrating as a family group enabled Jean Kieffer and Anton Nuwer to turn their Soufflenheim property into cash which both funded their journey to the United States and provided capital to purchase land, livestock and tools in Erie County which lead to successful commercial farms. Second, given the amount of land they purchased immediately after arriving in Erie County, it appears that this initial capital was substantial for both families. Finally, the generational head-start for John Kieffer, Frank Nuwer, and John Nuwer followed them through their adult lives.

In my last essay we met Joseph Fox and found that he migrated to Lancaster in 1843 while the rest of his family—his parents, brothers and sisters—remained in Soufflenheim. Immigrating as a young, single person had implications for the economic opportunities open to Joseph Fox when he arrived in the United States. In many important ways he got off to a slower start in Erie County compared to other Soufflenheim residences who migrated at the same time. Compared to John Kieffer and Frank Nuwer, Joseph Fox had to wait a longer period of time before buying a farm. When he did buy a farm, it was smaller, and it had a lower cash value than his compatriots' farms.

The present essay explores two more immigrant families, both from Soufflenheim. The families of Joseph Voegele and Martin Halter left Soufflenheim in 1847. They traveled together, and both families settled in Lancaster, New York.

THE VOEGELE AND HALTER FAMILIES

Chapter 5

Joseph Voegele (1790-1868)

Joseph Voegele was born in Soufflenheim on July 14, 1790. He was six years older than Anton Nuwer and six year younger than Jean Kieffer. Joseph Voegele married Catherine Miller in February 1821 and the family had eleven children, seven of whom survived to adulthood.⁸⁹

The birth records of these children tell us Joseph's occupation when the respective child was born. The first three children were born between 1821 and 1825 and their birth records identify Joseph as a "*laboureur*." His wedding record also identifies him as a "*laboureur*." Many others in Soufflenheim were "*laboueurs*," including, for a time, Jean Kieffer and Anton Nuwer. Under the Old Regime and into the nineteenth century, the occupation "*laboureur*" carried status and respect within the village. The occupant was a farmer who owned the land he cultivated, at least one horse or pair of oxen, and a plow.

The fourth child in the Voegele family was born in 1827 and that birth record identifies Joseph as a "*charbonnier*." This occupation was listed on the birth records of all eight children born in or after 1827. It was also Joseph Voegele's occupation in the 1846 Census of Soufflenheim.

A "*charbonnier*" was someone who made charcoal, the English translation is "charcoal burner." Charcoal was an energy source made from wood. The advantage of burning charcoal rather than wood was that the absence of water and other components allowed the charcoal to burn at higher temperatures. Charcoal was the traditional fuel of a blacksmith's forge and in Soufflenheim, charcoal fired the pottery, ceramic, and brick ovens. In 1837 Soufflenheim had 55 pottery workshops, many of which needed charcoal. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, charcoal was seldom used as a cooking fuel, nor was it used for home heating.

⁸⁹ The genealogist Brian Smith is a direct descendent of Joseph Voegele, and Smith website contains the family tree data used here. (<http://www.smithancestry.com/>).

Making charcoal was a craft that required skill, training, and experience. Logs were arranged in a pile and covered with an airtight layer of grass and earth. The pile was then ignited to start a carbonization process, which took six to eight days. "The charcoal burner had to control the draught (by piercing small holes and resealing them), being careful neither to allow the pile to go out nor let it go up in flames. By observing the smoke exiting the kiln, the charcoal burner could assess the state of the carbonization process. If the smoke was thick and gray, the wood was still raw; thin, blue smoke indicated good carbonization."⁹⁰

There is little doubt that Joseph Voegele was a member of Soufflenheim's middle class. His was a lifestyle based on pride, training, and traditions of the independent freeholders and artisans. The German and Alsatian emigration which proceeded between 1830 and 1850 included a high proportion of such people: skilled, educated, and semi-prosperous members of the middle class.

However, in the first half of the nineteenth century the pottery, ceramic and brick makers of Soufflenheim were threatened by low cost competition from mechanized industrial producers. Since charcoal burners were dependent on the potters of Soufflenheim buying their charcoal, they too were being squeezed by industrial competition. In the words of the historian Mack Walker, "The new technology and finance of industrialization were destroying the old ways and many of the people dependent on them." This meant a growth in the "numbers of people largely unnecessary to and unincorporated into the social and economic patterns of the time, which also meant unemployment."⁹¹

In this time and place, however, economic distress was probably not the ultimate cause of emigration. Although some people facing this economic distress emigrated, most did not. The cause of emigration was more complicated. Nevertheless, the poor and deteriorating economic conditions planted the emigration idea across many towns in the upper Rhine river valley. Some people acted on the idea, others did not. In the words of the logician, economic distress might be a necessary condition of emigration, but it is not a sufficient condition.

1918	Voegeli	Joseph	Carabomin	1				12	ij
1916	Voegeli	Alberrin	Sefferrin			1		18	ij
1915	Voegeli	Joseph	Lureufaut	1				22	ij
3 7/1 1911 1916	Voegeli	Henry	ij	1				18	ij
1917	Voegeli	Harin	ij	1				16	ij
1918	Voegeli	Jean	ij	1				12	ij
1919	Voegeli	Madelaine	ij			1		11	ij
1918	Voegeli	Ma Anna	ij			1		9	ij

Joseph Voegele Family, Census of 1846⁹²

The youngest child, Marguerite, is not in the image as she is listed on the next page of the document.

⁹⁰ "Charcoal Burner," Wikipedia, (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charcoal_burner).

⁹¹ Mack Walker, *Germany and the emigration, 1816-1885*, (1964). Chapter 2.

⁹² Image source: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7466#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7466-78891>).

Martin Halter (1796-1879)

Martin Halter was born in Soufflenheim on November 28, 1796. He was virtually the same age as Anton Nuwer, his birth date was only four months after Anton's birth. When he was 27 years old, Martin Halter married Richarde Schmuck. The wedding was in November 1823, and she was 24 years old. They had eight children, five of whom survived to adulthood. They will all immigrate to Erie County.⁹³

Martin Halter's first child was born in 1824 and the birth record identifies him as a "*journalier*," which translates as day laborer or farmworker. This occupation is distinct from a "*cultivateur*" which translates as farmer or cultivator. Anton Nuwer was identified as a "*cultivateur*" in 1819 and Jean Kieffer was identified as a "*cultivateur*" before 1816. They were never identified as a "*journalier*" or farmworker.

The name cultivator was used as a synonym for peasant or farmer. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, farmers operated a small agricultural property. In Soufflenheim a farmer cultivated about 10 to 20 acres of land. By contrast, a day laborer meant someone who worked as an agricultural laborer. Contemporary historians refer to this occupation as a "poor peasant," one who sells his labor power by the day to a landowner or farmer entrepreneur. Martin Halter was also identified as a "*bêcheur*," which meant field worker. The 1836 and 1841 Soufflenheim censuses used this designation for Martin Halter's occupation. Although Martin Halter did not own land in the Soufflenheim commons, he probably owned a house and a garden in the village, and he may have been able to rent land or sharecrop someone else's land.

In 1839 when his last child was born, Martin Halter was identified as a "*garde*," which meant a forester or forest guard. As noted in my previous essay on Joseph Fox, the village of Soufflenheim hired foresters to care for the commune's forest and they also sponsored public works projects to help alleviate unemployment among the town's residences. It is possible that Martin Halter received some of this public assistance in 1839. In the 1841 census, however, Martin Halter was again identified as a field worker ("*bêcheur*").

2181	Halter	Martin	Laboureur	1				18	if
2182	Schmuck	Richarde	Le femme			1		17	if
2183	Halter	Isr	L'ancien port			1		15	if
413 431 2184	Halter	Martin	if	1				16	if
2185	Halter	Louis	if	1				7	if
2186	Halter	August	if	1				11	if

Martin Halter Family, Census of 1846⁹⁴

Antonio Halter, Martin's son, was not listed as living in the household nor was he found elsewhere in the census, but he will immigrate with his family to the United States.

Although a day laborer, Martin Halter also faced the central problem of a growing wage-labor class. Across the agricultural communities of southwest Germany and the upper Rhine river valley, land was the main productive resource and the high population density of the region permitted little expansion. Moreover, this was an area of divisible inheritances, and thus agricultural lands had been divided and subdivided to match the increasing population. "The family plot decreased in size," writes Walker, "and remained

⁹³ Genealogical information for Martin Halter and his family is taken from the FamilySearch online database, (<https://www.familysearch.org/tree/person/details/LTDW-52K>).

⁹⁴ Image Source: (<http://archives.bas-rhin.fr/detail-document/REC-POP-C468-R7466#visio/page:REC-POP-C468-R7466-78895>).

marginal or submarginal in terms of its capacity to support those who depended upon it, so that in Baden, Wurttemberg, the Rhenish Palatinate, Rhenish Prussia, and the Hessens a large part of the landowning population stood perpetually on the verge of hunger.”⁹⁵ This was also true for the lower Alsace.

Because the population was growing faster than society could absorb them, those without agricultural land increasingly faced the threat of unemployment. This added to the numbers of people “unnecessary to and unincorporated into the social and economic patterns” of the time. Most historians believe that it was the threat of these declining standards for themselves and their children that drove people to consider emigration as their escape. Nevertheless, and as stated above, not all who faced this threat chose to emigrate.

Why did people emigrate?

Historians have found that, for the period between 1820 and 1860, specific causes of emigration cannot be identified. One recent and comprehensive study concludes: “Overall, trying to explain changes in the volume of antebellum immigration as being caused exclusively by push factors or exclusively by pull factors, *or even by a combination of both*, appears to be an unproductive exercise.”⁹⁶ The historian Mack Walker maintains that although declining living standards drove people to emigrate, many who faced these declining standards did not leave their homes. “Economic decline could cause [emigration], but it did not have to.... In so personal a matter as this, no crude theory of economic causation will suffice.”⁹⁷

Among those Germans and Alsatians who chose to emigrate before 1860, a high proportion were middle class freeholders and artisans; the poorest families and the well-to-do families stayed behind.⁹⁸ The prospect of the freeholder or artisan being forced into the wage-labor class, the lowest he knew, was abhorrent to his pride and traditions.

And so, these middle-class freeholders and artisans “were faced with a choice between accepting a fall in their standard of living, finding alternative employment, ... or migration.”⁹⁹ We have already made note elsewhere of the employment problems in Soufflenheim, but another alternative employment option was to seek work in one of the new, growing industrial centers. The textile mills of Mulhouse, for example, began to mechanize the spinning and the calico printing process in the first decade of the nineteenth century. “Manchester-style mills began to characterize Mulhouse and its immediate region earlier than any other textile center in France. ... As Alsace industrialized, the artisanal trades burgeoned both in the countryside and in the cities to serve the expanded demand for services.”¹⁰⁰ But, as Walker observed, despite these employment opportunities relatively close to home, the middle-class freeholders and artisans were “reluctant to move to the city; better to go to America, where his hope for success *in the old ways* was higher.”¹⁰¹

For Walker the motives and the reason why many (most?) in southwest Germany chose emigration was not economic decline or even the threat of economic decline, although these were necessary precondition, but rather a cultural conservatism aimed at preserving an agrarian way of life. Emigrants from the upper Rhine river valley were not adventurer’s willingness to break with old traditions and gamble the security of their families on uncertain opportunities in America. Those who emigrated “went to America less to build something new than to regain and conserve something old, to keep the ways of life

⁹⁵ Walker, *op. cit.*

⁹⁶ Raymond L. Cohn, *Mass Migration Under Sail: European Immigration to the Antebellum United States*, (2011). Chapter 4. (emphasis added).

⁹⁷ Walker, *op. cit.*

⁹⁸ According to Walker, the emigration was “decidedly a movement of what may be called the lower-middle class: neither great landowners nor harvest hands, but small farmers who cultivated their own land; not apprentices, nor unskilled laborers, nor great merchants, but independent village shopkeepers and artisans; next to no one from the larger towns and cities.” *Op. cit.*

⁹⁹ Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe 1815-1930*, (1995).

¹⁰⁰ Rebecca McCoy, “Alsace,” *Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolutions*, (<https://www.ohio.edu/chastain/ac/alsace.htm>).

¹⁰¹ Walker, *op. cit.* (emphasis added).

they were used to, which the new Europe seemed determined to destroy.” The mechanization of industry and the urbanization of towns was the primary disrupter of agricultural communities across the region. Those who emigrated “felt their roots being torn up, and sought a place to sink them again, *for they could not contemplate living in another way.*” In the hearts of the emigrants “were not so much acts of radical affirmation as acts of conservative rejection. ... They were conservatives, who acted radically in order to preserve, and who journeyed to another world to keep their homes.”¹⁰²

Joseph Voegele provided for his family by means of the craft skill and knowledge of a charcoal burner. This task was one step in the commodity chain for producing pottery and bricks, but industrialization was creating havoc for the pottery and brick makers. Joining the class of the unemployed seemed all too possible for Joseph Voegele. Martin Halter provided for his family by means of working in the agricultural fields. Population growth was creating havoc in the fields and joining the class of the unemployed seemed all too possible for Martin as well. And aside from themselves, there was the question of their children’s futures. For both families the children were at or near the age where they would be getting married and starting their own family. Would they be pushed into the wage-labor class and find their economic welfare depended on the regularity of employment? Would they be forced to find work in the impersonal cities? Like many others facing this question, Joseph Voegele and Martin Halter chose to leave Soufflenheim and make the long and expensive journey to America. But they made this choice as a way to conserve important elements of their home and community.

The decision to emigrate had two components: whether to go and where to go. As to the second component, immigrating to America seemed to be an answer for those seeking to conserve their community. From America tales of virgin soil in untold millions of acres that might be owned for a nominal price appealed to those seeking to preserve their agrarian lifestyle. For those who eked out a narrow living on small holdings which produced minimal margins, America was perceived to offer opportunities that were found in no other country. These tales and images of America came from those who “wrote back for their friends and kindred, and their letters were the most important and successful of all forms of immigration propaganda.”¹⁰³

A great many heads of households sold their little house with its patch of land to raise the money to cross the sea to America and buy a larger farm, which would absorb his and his family’s energies. And, thus, they cut themselves off from any hope of return if things went wrong.

Joseph Voegele and Martin Halter made their journey to America in 1847. We know that the two families arrived in New York City on board the sailing ship named *Exchange* on July 9, 1847. They probably left Soufflenheim in early April for a journey that would take anywhere between two and four months from start to finish. The first leg of the journey was probably by cart to the port of Le Havre. This would have taken several weeks and after arriving in Le Havre they would have waited a week or more for a ship heading back to New York City.

The *Exchange*’s manifest lists 171 passengers. Their places of origin were identified as either “France” or “Germany,” no greater differentiation was given. Martin Halter, a “farmer” from “France,” was listed as 51 years old traveling with his wife Richarde (age 49) and five children: Anthony (22), Eva (19), Martin (16), August (10), and Louis (8). Joseph Voegele, also a “farmer” from “France,” was listed as 57 years old, traveling with his wife Catherine (age 49) and seven children: Joseph, Jr. (23), Henry (20), Francis Xavier (17), Jean (14), Marie (12), Madelaine (10), and Marguerite (6).

This was Joseph Voegele, Jr.’s second trip to America. His first journey to Erie County, New York was made in 1843 with others from Soufflenheim, including John Kieffer and Joseph Fox. Joseph Voegele, Jr. returned to Soufflenheim in 1844 or 1845 (he was found in Soufflenheim’s 1846 census). His experiences from the first voyage were extremely valuable to those who traveled with him in 1847.

¹⁰² Walker, *op. cit.* (emphasis added).

¹⁰³ Thomas Walker Page, “The Causes of Earlier European Immigration to the United States,” *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 19, No. 8 (Oct., 1911), pp. 676-693.

NAMES.	AGE.		SEX.	OCCUPATION.	The Country to which they severally belong.	The Country of which they intend to become inhabitants.
	YEARS.	MONTHS.				
J Buelochin	21		m	farmer	France	Ill. Ill.
M Halter	51		"			
Richard	49		"			
Antoine	26		"			
Son	19		f			
Martin	16		m			
August	10		"			
Son	8		"			
J Voegel	57		"			
Carl	49		f			
Joseph	23		m			
Henri	20		"			
Sam	19		"			
Jean	14		"			
Mamad	12		f			
Maman	10		"			
Myst	6		"			

Martin Halter

Joseph Voegele, Sr.

Page 3 from the manifest of the Exchange.

Departure from Port of Havre, arrival to Port of New York, July 9, 1847

At this time, the Atlantic crossing averaged 44 days by sailing ship. Then, from New York City, the full Soufflenheim party would have traveled another week or so to western New York.

There was a third Soufflenheim family on board the *Exchange*. Joseph Zinger, Sr. (age 63) and his wife Catharine (62) along with their son Jean (21), their daughter Euphemia (33), her husband Mathieu Schlosser (37) and six children: Caroline (10), Therese (6), Michel (5), Jean (4), Charles (2), and Jules (1), also made the journey from Soufflenheim to western New York.

The Zinger and Schlosser families will proceed from Erie County to New Germany in Ontario, Canada (another hundred miles) and join many others from Soufflenheim already living there. Joseph Zinger's son, Joseph, Jr., had immigrated to New Germany in 1843. He was on board the *Catharine* along with Joseph Voegele, Jr., John Kieffer, Joseph Fox and others from Soufflenheim.

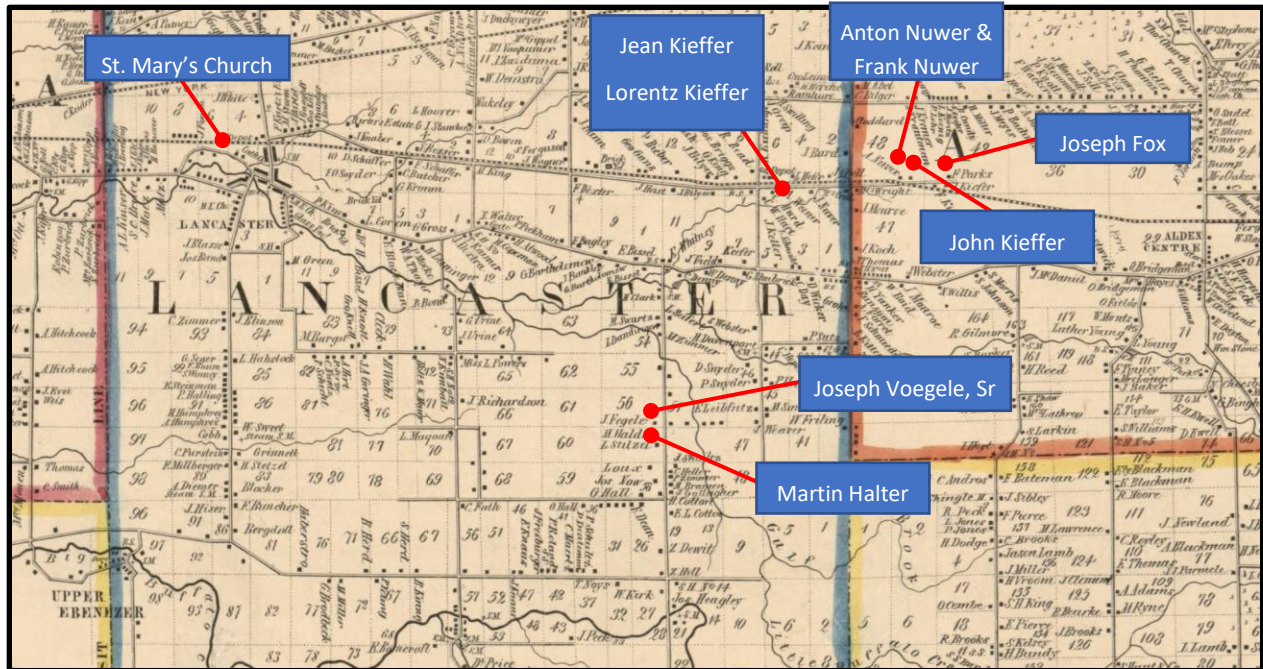
So, a total of 27 people from Soufflenheim made the 1847 journey to America on board the *Exchange*. The Voegele family of nine and the Halter family of seven settled in Lancaster while the Zinger and Schlosser families (eleven individuals) settled in Canada.

After arriving in Lancaster, both the Voegele and Halter families purchased a farm on what is today Schwartz road in southeast Lancaster. Before 1850 Joseph Voegele, Sr. acquired 40 acres of land and in 1855 he had three work horses and two milk cows which produced oats, corn, hay, and butter. At this time (1847–1855) all seven children were living at home, including four sons who in 1855 ranged in age between 20 and 30 years old.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ "United States Census, 1850, Joseph Fagle, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCY4-HQY>).

"New York State Census, 1855, Joseph Fagle, E.D. 1, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K63T-L1H>).

Agricultural data for 1855: (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-8B5Q-83F?i=52&cc=1937366>), Line 20.



Immigrants from Soufflenheim, 1850

Martin Halter acquired a farm directly next door to Joseph Voegele. This farm was 25 acres of land. In 1855 he had two milk cows and the farm produced wheat, oats, rye, corn, potatoes, butter, and pigs. This farm was a relatively small operation and each product was produced in small quantities. Of the four Soufflenheim families who immigrated to the Lancaster-Alden area—Kieffer, Nuwer, Voegele, and Halter—Martin Halter appears to have arrived with the smallest fund of money available for making a new start.¹⁰⁵

Overall Europe immigration to the United States grew larger and larger over the period between 1827 and 1859. For the most part, the newcomers were from northern Europe; Germans and Irish predominated, but many immigrants also came from England, Scotland, Switzerland, Alsace-Lorraine and the Scandinavian countries. The four Soufflenheim families in Lancaster and Alden made their moves in about the middle of this massive event.

Most of the European immigrants were absorbed into eastern city populations and found jobs in industry. Many Irish, for example, came to Buffalo and worked on the dock. The Germans and Alsatians, however, tended more than any other group to engage in agriculture. This is a reflection of the important point emphasized by the historian Mack Walker. In order to maintain the ways of life they were used to and to conserve the old ways, this particular subgroup avoided urban work. They sought agricultural communities, even those immigrants who had been weavers, charcoal burners, or day laborers in Alsace, acquired farms when they arrived in America.

Table 1 shows the size and value of the farms owned and worked by Soufflenheim immigrants in Lancaster and Alden. By 1855 Jean Kieffer had died and his son Lorenz Kieffer had moved to Michigan; they are not included in the table. We believe that, by 1855, John Nuwer became the owner of those two farms. In 1855 and 1860 John Nuwer, John Kieffer, and Frank Nuwer owned the largest and most

¹⁰⁵ "United States Census, 1850, Martin Halter, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCY4-HQP>).

"New York State Census, 1855, Martin Halden, E.D. 1, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K63T-L1P>).

Agricultural data for 1855: (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:33S7-8B5Q-83F?i=52&cc=1937366>), Line 21.

valuable farms among those reported in Table 1. Both the Kieffer and Nuwer families appear to have relied on a considerable fund of money to make a start in the United States, funds that were raised by the sale of the family properties in Soufflenheim.

Table 1
Farms owned by Soufflenheim immigrants

	1855			1860		
	Land		Cash Value	Land		Cash Value
	Improved	Total	Land & livestock	Improved	Total	Land & livestock
Anthony Nuwer	30	50	\$2,300			
Joseph Voegele, Sr.	35	40	\$2,050	40	40	\$1,900
Martin Halter	10	25	\$850	24	24	\$1,030
John Nuwer	70	110	\$4,800	80	126	\$6,800
John Kieffer	50	106	\$3,350	80	124	\$4,220
Frank Nuwer	60	100	\$4,400	40	106	\$4,420
Joseph Fox	8	28	\$900	20	28	\$653

At the other end of the range were the farms owned by Martin Halter and Joseph Fox. In 1855 the cash value of both farms was under \$1,000. Although the two farms were larger than the average farm in Soufflenheim (which was perhaps 15-20 acres), both immigrants appear to have had the smallest fund of money brought from the old country. In Soufflenheim, Martin Halter had been a day laborer and had no agricultural land to convert into cash. He was probably limited to the funds raised from the sale of his Soufflenheim house. Joseph Fox was the son of a day laborer, and from all appearances arrived in the United States with a minimal amount of cash. He probably had to save money after arriving in Erie County and would have added to those savings his wife's dowry in order to acquire land in Lancaster.

In between these two groups was Joseph Voegele, Sr., who had been a craft worker and landowner in Soufflenheim. The sale of his house and land generated the cash he needed to move his entire family to the United States. That fund of cash also made it possible for Joseph to reproduce elements of the rural, agricultural community which was being destroyed back home.

Between 1855 and 1860 members of the Voegele family were moving out of the house. The 1860 Census identifies only three children still at home, and only one boy. By 1865 all the children were living elsewhere.¹⁰⁶ Joseph Voegele, Jr. married Catherine Ott (daughter of John Ott) in May 1859 and became the operator of Catherine's family farm in Cheektowaga. Frank Voegele married Caroline Ott (daughter of George Ott) in November 1864 and worked a farm on Main street (now called Broadway) in Lancaster. (Caroline Ott and Catherine Ott were first cousins once removed.) Henry and John Voegele journeyed together to California sometime between 1860 and 1863. According to the genealogist Brian Smith, no records have been found for Henry and John after 1864. It is not known what became of them.

Martin Halter's family had a more difficult time preserving elements of the old world in the agricultural communities of Erie County. The oldest son, Anthony Halter, was married in Erie County in 1849. Two years later, in July 1851, Eva Halter, was married and in November 1851 Martin Halter, Jr. was married. By 1855 only two of Martin Halter, Sr.'s five children were still living at home. They were August (age 19) and Louis (age 17).

Given the limited amount of capital the family was able to bring to America, they found better opportunities further to the west. Land prices in Erie county were about \$5 to \$7 an acre while western

¹⁰⁶ "United States Census, 1860, Joseph Veagel," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCW2-2FN>).

"New York State Census, 1865, Joseph Voegle, District 01, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVNN-GJX2>).

lands were half that amount. Martin Halter, Sr. could purchase only 25 acres in Lancaster, but in the west that amount of money could buy twice as much land. Thus, in about 1855 Anthony Halter moved to western Illinois. This is about the same time that Lorenz Kieffer moved west, and it is possible the two families went west together. Martin Halter, Jr. also moved west before 1860, and was living in the upper peninsula of Michigan. Then, after the Civil War, August Halter moved to Illinois, joining his brother Anthony. Martin Halter, Jr. remained in Michigan the rest of his life while Anthony and August moved from Illinois to Blue Earth County, Minnesota. In the 1880 Census all three Halter brothers were working farms in the western states.¹⁰⁷

By 1870, Louis Halter, the youngest of the four sons, took over the Schwartz road farm and Martin Halter, Sr. lived in the household until his death in 1879. In 1880 the farm was 35 acres of land and had a cash value of \$3,140. The value of this farm was about the same as Joseph Fox's 57-acre farm in Alden—which had a cash value of \$3,250 in 1880. After thirty years in the United States, Martin Halter, Sr. was running a marginal farm and that was all he had to pass onto his children.¹⁰⁸

By contrast, Joseph Voegele, Sr. was 57 years old in 1847 when he immigrated to Erie County. He died in February 1868, a little more than twenty years after he arrived in western New York. Nevertheless, his choice to relocate his family enabled at least two of his sons, Joseph, Jr. and Frank, to preserve Soufflenheim's rural lifestyle. By 1880 Joseph Voegele, Jr. was operating a 130-acre farm valued at \$9,840 while his brother Frank Voegele was farming 71 acres of land valued at \$7,688.

We can observe the same generational wealth transfer for the Kieffer family and the Nuwer family. John Kieffer received a significant head start in Erie County from his father's and father-in-law's Soufflenheim property. By 1880 John Kieffer's farm was 121 acres of land which was valued at \$6,630. In the same year Frank Nuwer owned 236 acres of land and his brother John had 300 acres. The cash value of Frank Nuwer's farm was \$15,600 while the cash value of John Nuwer's farm was over \$25,000.

¹⁰⁷ "United States Census, 1870, Auten Halder," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M6W4-MWR>).

"United States Census, 1870, Martin Halter," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MHC8-RCG>).

"United States Census, 1870, August Halder," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M6W4-M49>).

"United States Census, 1880, Anthony Halter, Lime, Blue Earth, Minnesota," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZM1-2L7>).

"United States Census, 1880, Martin Halter, Ontonagon, Michigan," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW3W-6L1>).

"United States Census, 1880, August Halter, Mankato, Blue Earth, Minnesota," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZM1-P8L>).

"United States Census, 1880, Louis Halter, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZZR-F7F>).

¹⁰⁸ "United States Census, 1860, Martin Halter," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MCW2-2FL>).

"New York State Census, 1865, Martin Hollis, District 01, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QVNN-GJHB>).

"United States Census, 1870, Martin Halter in entry for Louis Halter," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M8FR-RG5>).

"New York State Census, 1875, Martin Halter in household of Lewis Halter, Lancaster, New York," FamilySearch database with images, (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VNK9-GYY>).