

An Alsatian Family Farm in Western New York

Introduction

In November 2023, *Généalogie Alsace* published two articles in which I explored emigration from Lower Alsace during the period between 1825 and 1855. The articles focused on the causes of emigration and discussed the effects of sustained population growth, differential employment opportunities, and an expanding North Atlantic economy.¹

Although historians generally agree that these factors had a profound impact on the rate of emigration from Lower Alsace (and from other parts of Central Europe), these factors do not tell us why some people chose to emigrate while others chose not to emigrate. It seems clear from the historical record that, in the first half of the Nineteenth century, relatively few people emigrated compared with the large number of people who were affected by the forces of social and economic change. The historian Dudley Baines framed the issues with these words: “In one sense the more important question is not what factors caused people to emigrate but what caused so few people to emigrate.”²

My family emigrated from Lower Alsace in the early 1840s and resettled in a frontier region of Western New York. As I learned more about the history of these immigrants, it became clear that their story corresponded closely with a narrative put forth by the historian Mack Walker. Walker claimed that, in the years between 1825 and 1855, Central European emigrants went to North America to “regain and conserve” a way of life which the “new Europe seemed determined to destroy.” Many of those who chose emigration “felt their roots being torn up, and sought a place to sink them again, for they could not contemplate living in another way.” They “wanted to escape rootlessness (or mobility, if you prefer).” Walker claimed that those who chose emigration were “people who traveled thousands of grim miles in order to keep their roots, their habits, [and] their united families”³ In short, emigration was a conservative act of rejecting social change.

This view is in contrast with a common view held among contemporary Americans which maintains that immigrants came to North America to build something new and different. It tells a story in which the immigrants were engaged in an affirmative act of seeking a new way of life, different from the one they left in Europe. These immigrants are said to have willingly broke with old traditions and gambled the security of their families in the hope of becoming Americanized.

The realization that Alsatian emigration was not about breaking with old traditions and seeking something new but rather the preservation of old traditions and the desire to keep their families united, lead me to ask some follow-up questions: were the immigrants successful in achieving their aims? Were their roots and habits preserved after they settled in North America? Did their families remain united? Were they able to create the future they wanted for their children?

To address these questions, I needed to understand the way of life the immigrants endeavored to conserve. I explored that issue at the *Généalogie Alsace* Blog in October 2025 under the title “Les Übelhör d’Oberroedern.” In that two-part article, I focused on a set of traditional values that would be preserved in North America. The article explored the patterns of land distribution within a single family. It showed that the household revolved around a central relationship between a nuclear family and its land. I wanted to

¹ “Challenge AZ.W : Why Did They Emigrate (1825-1855)?” (<https://genealogiealsace.wordpress.com/2023/11/27/challenge-az-w-why-did-they-emigrate-1825-1855/>).

“Challenge AZ.M : Who Were the I.M.M.igrants (1825-1855)?” (<https://genealogiealsace.wordpress.com/2023/11/15/challenge-az-m-who-were-the-i-m-m-igrants-1825-1855/>).

² Dudley Baines, *Emigration from Europe: 1815-1930*, Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 21.

³ Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885*, Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 67.

show readers that that relationship embodied a conception of the land as a “family trust.”⁴ This family trust was a tradition in which a family farm was more than an economic resource—more than a mere “factor of production.” An Alsatian farm was a long-term home and a vocation for multiple generations.⁵ The article tried to show the deep roots supporting the family structure in Alsace and how the forces of industrialization were attacking those roots and encouraging mobility.⁶ That family structure embodied the customs and habits that the immigrants wanted to preserve after they settled in North America.

After identifying characteristics about the way-of-life Alsatian immigrants endeavored to conserve, I then wanted to explore those characteristics as they were transplanted in North America. When Alsatian immigrants arrived in North America in the decades between 1825 and 1855, they found native born farmers who lacked any kind of sentimental attachment to their land. These farmers were always ready to sell their land for a profit. The Alsatian immigrants had no interest in emulating the native-born farmer or assimilating into American culture.

The Alsatian farmers who settled in North America became deeply rooted in an intimate relationship with the land they acquired, a relationship that was perceived as permanent. Their farms were an object of care and piety rather than an object of speculation. The Alsatian farmer slowly built up the capital to expand operations and to support a growing family. The deepest desire of the Alsatian farmer was to leave the farm debt free to succeeding generations.⁷

The current article focuses on an Alsatian family that immigrated to Western New York, established a family farm, and passed that farm to the next generation. The article explores this nuclear family and its relationship with its land, focusing on the transplanted “family trust” as it was expressed by this single family.

The following pages show that this immigrant farmer was able to preserve traditional values supporting family continuity with the land. The core value of the farmer was an emphasis on assisting all his children with an early start in farming. As in Alsace, direct family aid played a crucial role in encouraging each member of the next generation to continue farming in the township. The traditions of land as a “family trust” were transplanted from Alsace and they were used to enhance the children’s ties to the local community which thereby reduced their mobility (or enhanced their rootedness, if you prefer).

Georg Pautler of Bremmelbach

Georg Pautler was born in the Alsatian town of Bremmelbach on 1 November 1809. His father, Bernard Pautler (21 March 1759 – 24 October 1835), was also born in Bremmelbach. Historical records show that Georg Pautler had at least one brother, two sisters, and five or more half siblings. Georg was the youngest of his father’s children.

Like the Uebelhoer family of Oberroedern, Georg Pautler was born into a world in which most peasants engaged in subsistence agriculture. Bremmelbach was a very small village. The census of 1836 counted

⁴ The “family trust” notion is from the work of the historian Kathleen Neils Conzen. See “Peasant Pioneers: Generational Succession Among German Farmers in Frontier Minnesota,” in Steven Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., *Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation*, University of North Carolina Press, pp. 259-292; Kathleen Neils Conzen, “Making Their Own America: Assimilation Theory and the German Peasant Pioneer,” German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., Annual Lecture Series No. 3; and Kathleen Neils Conzen, “A Saga of Families,” in Clyde A Milner, II, Carol A O’Connor, and Martha A Sandweiss, eds., *The Oxford History of the American West*, Oxford University Press, pp. 315-357.

⁵ “Vocation” is used here to mean a calling or feeling of purpose toward a particular type of activity like farming. In this sense, a vocation is more than the social role ascribed to a job or profession. It is the deeply personal passion that forms the underlying purpose of the activity.

⁶ “Les Übelhör d’Oberroedern (1)” (<https://genealogiesace.wordpress.com/2025/10/11/les-ubelhor-doberroedern-1/>).

“Les Übelhör d’Oberroedern (2)” (<https://genealogiesace.wordpress.com/2025/10/25/les-ubelhor-doberroedern-2/>).

⁷ Conzen, “Peasant Pioneers,” p. 266.

263 residents. The village was, in effect, the Catholic enclave of the larger town of Cleebourg, which contained a bit more than 800 residents. Cleebourg was 85 percent Calvinist while Bremmelbach was 95 percent Catholic.

When Georg Pautler was 28 years old, he married Magdalena Schweigert. The wedding took place in Bremmelbach on 25 November 1837. A marriage announcement made in Bremmelbach on 20 November 1837 and the marriage certificate that was dated five days later, identified Georg Pautler as a plowman (*laboureur*). As a plowman, Georg Pautler was also the owner of farmland. The Cadastre land registry shows that Georg Pautler was the owner of 1.2 hectares of farmland (2.9 acres) when he married in November 1837. Almost all that land had been transferred from his father.

Bremmelbach's Cadastre land registry was created in 1825. At that time, Georg Pautler's father was 66 years old. For this reason, the Cadastre does not give us a comprehensive account of Barnard Pautler's farm. It is likely he distributed farmland to his older children before 1825. Nevertheless, the Cadastre is useful for documenting land transfers made from Barnard Pautler to his son George.

Georg Pautler was 16 years old when the Cadastre was created in 1825. He was living with his father (his mother had died in 1813), and he owned no land. His Cadastre folio tells us that he became a landowner in 1831. In that year, Georg was 22 years old, and his father transferred four parcels of farmland to the family's youngest child. The land totaled 43.2 square meters. Barnard Pautler died in 1835 at the age of 76 and Georg inherited another six parcels of land totaling 56.85 square meters.

When Georg Pautler married Magdalena Schweigert, he was the owner of 12 parcels of farmland which totaled 1.2 hectares (2.9 acres). Magdalena Schweigert had been born in the village of Hermerswiller on 15 March 1817. Hermerswiller is only eight kilometers (five miles) south of Bremmelbach. Hermerswiller was also a small place. Its population was 223 in 1836. Hermerswiller was a predominately Lutheran community with Catholics comprising only 17 percent of population.

Georg Pautler and Magdalena Schweigert made their home in Hermerswiller for the first few years of their marriage. In 1838 Georg Pautler sold his farmland in Bremmelbach and purchased land in Hermerswiller. The Hermerswiller Cadastre shows that Georg Pautler acquired five parcels of farmland totaling 92 square meters (2.3 acres). This was an above average size farm for landowning farmers in Lower Alsace, and Georg Pautler could be described as the owner of middle-sized farm.

In Hermerswiller, Magdalena Schweigert gave birth to her first child on 20 March 1839, a son named George.⁸ A year later Georg Pautler sold his Hermerswiller farmland and the family of three immigrated to the United States. When they left Alsace, Georg Pautler was 30 years old, his wife was 23 years old, and their only child was one year of age.

In the spring of 1840, the Pautler family of three journeyed to the port of Le Havre on the northern coast of France. There they secured passage on a ship named *Baltimore* and sailed to New York Harbor. The ship arrived on 8 July 1840.⁹ The family then journeyed from New York City to Erie County in Western New York via a Hudson River paddle boat and an Erie Canal barge boat. When they arrived in Erie County, the young family was met by Magdalena's brother, George Schweigert, who had emigrated from Hermerswiller in 1836.

At the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, Western New York was part of the agricultural frontier of the newly formed United States of America. Vast tracks of undeveloped land attracted native-born farmers from the eastern seaboard who began settling in this region. The story of the numerous towns that compose Erie County, New York began in 1792 when a syndicate of Dutch investors from Amsterdam

⁸ Birth record of George Pautler, Jr. Hermerswiller - Etat civil - Registre de naissances 1839 (https://archives67.alsace.eu/ark:/78665/1959247/img:FRAD067_0098NUM19302210_2).

⁹ Ship's manifest, July 8, 1840 (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:939V-55LF-Z?i=683>).

purchased most of the western part of New York State. The area comprised the westernmost 13,200 square kilometers (3,250,000 acres) of New York State, which is now known as the Holland Purchase.

To make the land attractive to settlers, the syndicate built a network of roads and conducted a massive land survey that divided the region into townships and the townships into real estate lots. The Holland Survey laid out the land from the Pennsylvania State line in the south to Lake Ontario in the north in a simple grid and thereby created the location of townships throughout the region. When land sales began in 1801, most of the towns had no villages and no settlers. The Dutch syndicate hoped to sell the land rapidly at a great profit, however, sales were slow until the Erie Canal was completed in 1825. The Canal was the first navigable waterway connecting the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes, and Erie County (specifically, the city of Buffalo) effectively became the gateway to the rich agricultural lands around the Great Lakes.

The Importance of Land Ownership

For an Alsatian immigrant, land ownership in their new home was central to the preservation of traditional values. Land ownership was seen as necessary for the establishment of a family's permanent home. In addition, land ownership was a means to encourage ones children to continue farming in the local community and thereby avoid wage-labor, the factory, and life in an urban center.

In 1841 Georg Pautler and his brother-in-law George Schweigert purchased land in the town of Lancaster, New York.¹⁰ Historical documents tell us the exact parcel of land that was purchased. Georg Pautler and George Schweigert acquired over 40 hectares of land (100 acres) on the main road between the cities of Buffalo and Batavia. The land was purchased from the Farmers Loan & Trust Company (the successor of the Dutch syndicate in Erie County, New York). The land was undeveloped and had never been cultivated. The new owners had to drain the soil and clear the fields for plowing and planting. Everything had to be built by hand.¹¹

Although a deed of sale was not found in the Erie County public records, information drawn from subsequent transactions allows us to piece together this farm. The purchase price for the farm can be estimate from the price of nearby land. In the same year that Georg Pautler purchased his land, an immigrant neighbor named Johannes Knauber purchased 49 hectares of land (121 acres) from the same Farmers Loan & Trust Company.¹² Knauber paid 896 dollars for his land (7.40 dollars per acre). Georg Pautler and George Schweigert would have paid a similar price, probably around 740 dollars. There was no mortgage on the land, and so Georg Pautler would have financed his 370-dollar share of the farm (about 2,006 francs) with money that was brought from Alsace.¹³

¹⁰ Town of Lancaster, Erie County, New York, "19th Century Deed Map Lists, first landowners" (<http://wnyroots.tripod.com/index-lan-19.html>).

¹¹ The two brothers-in-law purchased their farm as "tenants in common," which meant they both owned an equal share of all 40 hectares of land. In March 1844 Georges Pautler and George Schweigart created a "divided interest" in the land and each took sole ownership of specific parcels. Georges Pautler took the western parcel, with 19.4 hectares (48 acres) while George Schweigart took the eastern parcel with 20.3 hectares (50 acres).

Real property deeds for Erie County, New York are found at "Deeds, Erie County, New York, 1808-1927" (<https://www.familysearch.org/en/search/catalog/koha:228192>). The specific deeds referred to in this article are referenced in a manuscript at this link: (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/13DoYZvScpNzS9kOvv3QSKdq3W25xAePu/>).

¹² John Knauber and his family immigrated from the town of Rechtenbach which is only 12 kilometers (7.5 miles) north of Bremmelbach.

¹³ One US dollar was equal to 5.42 French francs. Nicole Fouché, *Émigration alsacienne aux États-Unis 1815-1870*, Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1992, "Chapitre IV. Les causes structurelles de l'émigration," <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.psorbonne.49333>.

The historian Nicole Fouché has noted that, “a great many heads of households sold their little house with its patch of land to raise the money for the departure.”¹⁴ The historian Mack Walker added that the increasing price of land in Europe not only enabled an emigrant “to liquidate his inadequate holding at a price enabling him to cross the sea to America” but it also enabled him to “buy a larger farm.”¹⁵ This appears to be exactly what Georg Pautler did when he arrived in North America.

A Growing Family and An Expanding Farm

Georg Pautler and Magdalena Schweigert added three children to their family while living in the town of Lancaster. Their second child, Magdalena, was born in 1841, then Jacob was born in 1844, and Ignace (who used the name Nelson) was born in 1845. At this time St Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church in Lancaster was only a crude barn-like structure and there was no permanent priest assigned to the parish. So, Magdalena was baptized at St. Louis Catholic Church in the city of Buffalo while Jacob was baptized at SS Peter and Paul Catholic Church in the village of Williamsville. We are still looking for Nelson’s baptismal document.

Children of Georg Pautler and Magdalena Schweigert

	Born	Wedding	Spouse	Died
George	20 Mar 1839	7 Jan 1864	Anna Maria Amann	10 Jul 1917
Magdalena	20 Jul 1841	25 Jun 1866	Simon Adolf	28 Aug 1871
Jacob	11 Jul 1844	3 Apr 1866 13 Dec 1899	Maria Kyre Isabella Kyre	10 Oct 1920
Nelson	15 Jun 1845	1866 18 Apr 1871	Maria Anna Margaret Bornschlagel	10 Sep 1933
Joseph	21 Jul 1848	8 Nov 1870	Magdalena Staebell	16 Jul 1926
Michael	8 Jun 1851	24 Apr 1877	Rose Kieffer	12 Apr 1900
Mary	Jun 1854	5 May 1885	Martin Wagatha	8 Jul 1936
Catherine	1 Apr 1857			1915
Bernhard	25 Sep 1860	6 May 1884	Christina Nuwer	12 Feb 1903

The year 1847 was a pivotal one for the Pautler family. After farming his Lancaster land for six years, Georg Pautler sold that land and moved to the neighboring town of Alden. On 17 December 1847 Georg sold his 19.4 hectares farm in Lancaster for 1,100 dollars (a net earnings of almost 200 percent), and on 28 December he purchased more than twice that amount of land, 52.6 hectares (130 acres), in a place that would become the hamlet of Millgrove in the town of Alden. Like his first farm in Lancaster, Georg Pautler bought this second farm directly from the Farmers Loan & Trust Company. The purchase price was 1,027 dollars.

In 1847 Millgrove was not yet an actual hamlet. There was a sawmill and a flourmill on Ellicott Creek, but there was no cluster of families living in the vicinity. In 1848 Moses Case, who had lived there since 1817, built a general store and established a post office.¹⁶ The store and post office encouraged families to cluster in that hamlet which changed Georg Pautler’s opportunities for the land he had just acquired.

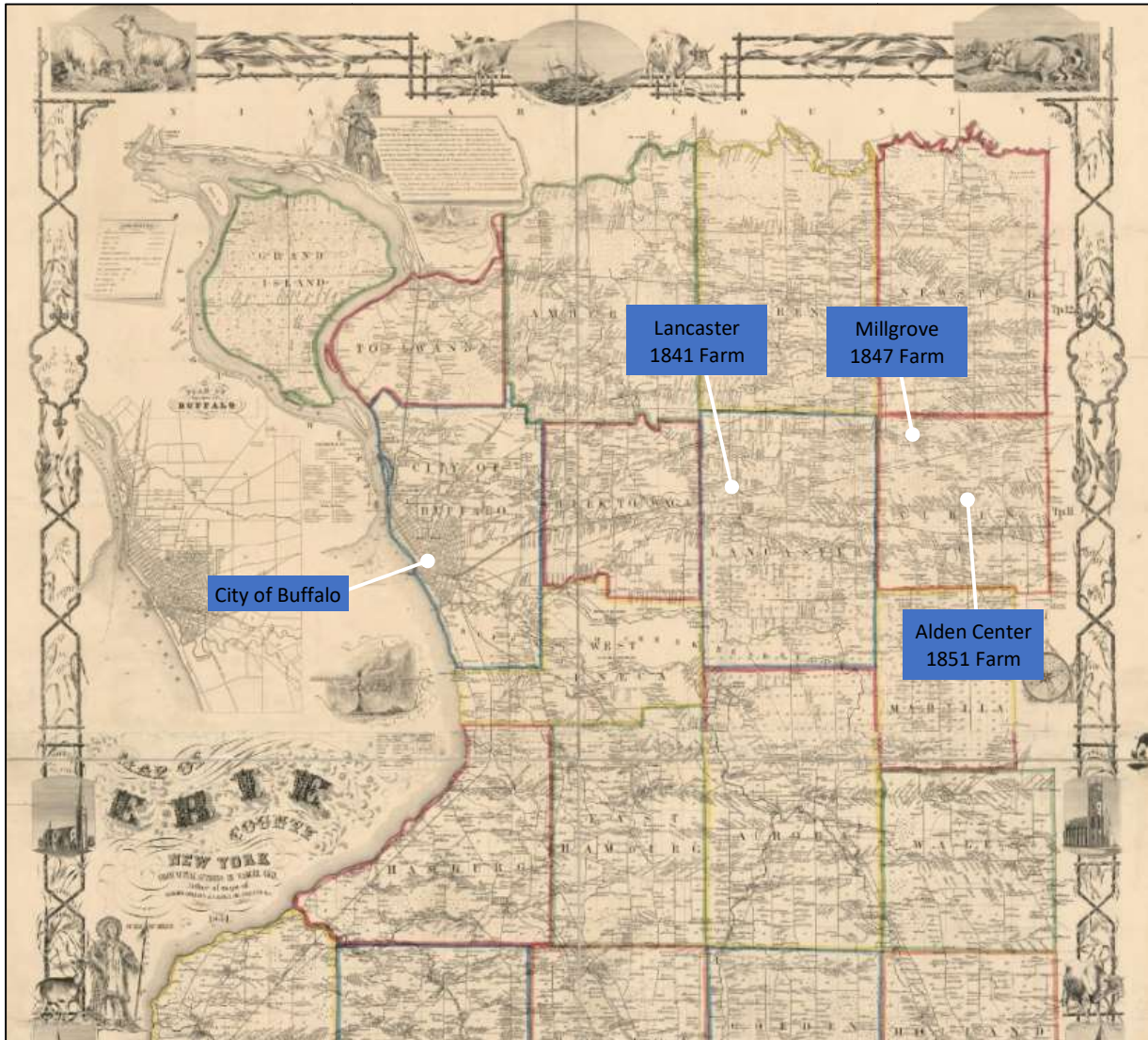
In the fall of 1849 Georg began selling his 52.6 hectares of land in small parcels. He sold his farm as nine separate parcels, seven of which were four or fewer hectares of land. Georg sold the parcels for a combined sum of 2,738 dollars, creating net earnings of 1,711 dollars over his original purchase price.

¹⁴ Nicole Fouché, “L’émigration alsacienne aux Etats-Unis (1815-1870),” *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse*, No. 797 (July 1985), pp. 55-64.

¹⁵ Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885*, Harvard University Press, 1964, p. 49.

¹⁶ Henry Perry Smith, *History of the city of Buffalo and Erie County*, 1884, p. 449.

The 1850 United States Census of Population found Georg Pautler and his family living in the town of Alden, probably on the land in Millgrove. By the summer of 1850 when the Census was taken, more than half of that farm had been sold and Georg was looking for another farm where he could raise his family.



Map of Erie County, New York, 1854

source: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3803e.la000493/>

The next spring Georg Pautler purchased land in a hamlet called Alden Center. He would live on this farm for the remainder of his life. Georg Pautler was 41 years old in the spring of 1851. He had been a resident of Erie County for ten years and his family included five children with a sixth on the way. Georg bought the Alden Center land from Alonzo Farnsworth on 22 April 1851. The property was 41.7 hectares (103 acres), for which he paid 3,150 dollars.

When the 1860 United States Census of Population was taken in September of that year, Georg Pautler was 51 years old while his wife, Magdalena, was 44. Eight of their nine children had been born, and in 1860 their ages ranged from 3 to 21 years. The Census identified Georg as a “farmer” with real property valued at 5,000 dollars and personal property valued at 1,200 dollars.

The agricultural part of the Census reported that Georg Pautler was working 54 hectares of land (134 acres). The farm employed four workhorses, four milk cows, and 50 sheep. The dairy produced 136 kilograms of butter and three hogs;¹⁷ the sheep produced 90.7 kilograms of wool; and the fields produced 3.5 kiloliters of oats, 10.6 kiloliters of potatoes, and 3.6 metric tons of hay.

The Process of Land Transfer

Magdalena Schweigert gave birth to her ninth child in September 1860. At that time her oldest child was 21 years old. In our contemporary world, most families have a small number of children who are born at relatively short intervals. Contemporary children proceed together through phases of a family life cycle. From infancy, through pre-adolescence and adolescence, overlaid with phases of the schooling process, contemporary children are socialized within the family unit. When they reach full age, children in contemporary families tend to separate from their parents' household at about the same time, leaving the parents with a prolonged "empty nest."

In most parts of Europe this type of close sibling group was not common among preindustrial peasant societies. Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder remind us that "before industrialization brought wage labor to the masses in Central Europe, large numbers of people lived in families that were domestic economic enterprises. The peasant family, ... [was a place] both of social reproduction and economic production...."¹⁸ Marriage in preindustrial peasant societies was controlled primarily by social and economic needs associated with the continuation of the family enterprise.

For the rural families of Alsace, the labor force used to cultivate the land was provided primarily by the farmer's own children. That use of the children tended to generate large families with children born over a long interval. As exemplified by Georg Pautler's family, he and his wife had nine children with the last child born at the same time that the first child was entering adulthood. Thus, Georg Pautler was training his older sons Jacob and Nelson in the art of farming years before he could train his younger sons Michael and Bernhard. For Georg Pautler and Magdalena Schweigert, training their children was a perennial activity. They were dealing with infant, pre-adolescent and adolescent children all at the same time. One result of this family structure was that the timing of children leaving the parental household to establish their own independent household was staggered across many years.

Georg Pautler and Magdalena Schweigert began planning for their children to establish independent households in the early 1860s. At that time Georg Pautler began buying farmland with the intension of passing it to his adult children. The process began in February 1861 with the purchase of 46 hectares of land (114 acres) in the town of Alden. The property was located on the south side of North Road, the same road on which the Pautler family farm was located. About two and one-half years later, in August 1863, Georg Pautler transferred half of that land to his oldest son. George Pautler, Jr. was 24 years old when he became the owner of this land and five months later, on 7 January 1864, he married Maria Amann, the daughter of immigrants from Oberroedern, Bas-Rhin.

When Georg Pautler purchased the 46 hectares farm in 1861, his son, George, Jr., was 22 years old, his daughter Magdalena was 20 and the next three children by age (Jacob, Nelson, and Joseph) were teenagers. Georg Pautler thus waited until 1865 before purchasing additional land for these children. In January 1865 he acquired 36.4 hectares of land (90 acres) on North Road and in February he acquired 10.3 hectares (25.5 acres) on Sandridge Road. Both properties were located a kilometer or less from the parental home. Georg Pautler paid 6,100 dollars for these two purchases plus the one purchased in 1861.

¹⁷ At this time, pork was a by-product of New York dairy farms. The pigs were fed with skim milk and buttermilk, which were otherwise waste products of the dairy.

¹⁸ Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, *The European Family: Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present*, University of Chicago Press, 1982, pp. 121-122.

Then in the fall of 1865 Georg Pautler transferred the land to four of his children. The transactions were each dated 27 November 1865. First, Georg transferred the 36.4 hectares of land to Jacob and Nelson, with each brother becoming the owner of half the land. Jacob was 21 and Nelson was 20 years old at the time. Although they were single when the deeds were transferred, Jacob was married in 1866 and Nelson was married in 1867. Second, Georg Pautler transferred 23 hectares of land (57 acres) to his son Joseph. Joseph was only 17 years old at the time.

Finally, Georg Pautler transferred the parcel of land with 10.3 hectares to his daughter Magdalena. She was 24 years old. The land was on Sandridge Road at the corner of Westwood Road, across from St. John's Catholic Church. Magdalena was already married at the time of the land transfer, but the deed names only her as the owner—yet another tradition transplanted from Alsace.

Pautler Land Transaction, 1861-1865

Land Purchase	Transfer	Transfer
February 1861 46 hectares (114 acres)	August 1863 23 hectares to George, Jr	November 1865 23 hectares to Joseph
January 1865 36.4 hectares (90 acres)	November 1865 18.2 hectares to Jacob	November 1865 18.2 hectares to Nelson
February 1865 10.3 hectares (25.5 acres)	November 1865 10.3 hectares to Magdalena	

Georg Pautler was maintaining traditional Alsatian customs when he transferred farmland to his five oldest children. In particular, the transfers were made at the time the children were leaving the parental household to form their own independent household. Moreover, the female child was included in the transfer process. These land transfers were intended to help the children get an early start in farming and family formation. With parental help, the children were encouraged to start their own family farm without needing to wait a decade or more until they received an inheritance from their father's estate. The children, therefore, acquired a farm much sooner than would otherwise be possible, and they were thus more likely to remain in the township. As in Alsace, direct family aid while the children were still young played a crucial role in encouraging the next generation to continue farming in the township.

Georg Pautler's Will

Georg Pautler's four youngest children were Michael, Mary, Catherine, and Bernhard. In 1865, they were respectively 14, 11, 8, and 5 years old. Georg Pautler aided these children with his Last Will and Testament. That Will was dated 21 January 1876. Georg died two years later, on 22 January 1878 at the age of 68 years.

The Will gave Michael Pautler a 40.5-hectare parcel of land (100 acres) on Westwood Road in the town of Alden. Georg Pautler had purchased that parcel in April 1875 for 6,000 dollars. The bequest to Michael was conditional on Michael paying his mother a yearly rent of 100 dollars during the remainder of her life and paying his sister, Mary, the sum of 3,000 dollars.¹⁹

Furthermore, the Will gave Bernhard Pautler the 41.7-hectare (103 acre) family farm, the same farm Georg Pautler had purchased in 1851. Bernhard, like his brother Michael, was required to pay his mother a yearly rent of 100 dollars and he was required to pay his sister, Catherine, the sum of 3,000 dollars.

¹⁹ Last Will and Testament of Georg Pautler (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-G9WX-3CJ8?i=535>).
New York State Probate Records (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3QSQ-89C7-4BQY?i=1116>).

When this Will was certified by civil authorities in 1878, the estate's real property was valued at 12,000 dollars which meant that each of the two farms was valued at 6,000 dollars. Although Michael and Bernhard were given rights to the farmland, they were required to compensate their sisters for half the real estate value, and thus each of the four children received an equal share of the estate. The five oldest children were excluded from the estate. Georg Pautler did this with a single sentence: "Having during my life given to my five oldest children George, Magdalena, Jacob, Joseph and Nelson so much that I think the same have received their shares."

1880 and Beyond

In 1880 George Pautler, Jr., was 41 years old. He had been married for 16 years and had five children.²⁰ George and his family were living on the North Road farm he had received from his father. The agricultural section of the 1880 Census found George Pautler, Jr., farming with three work horses and six milk cows. His dairy produced butter and liquid milk. It also produced calves and hogs as by-products. In addition to the dairy operation, the farm produced 5.3 hectares of hay, 8.5 hectares of grains, 1.4 hectares of potatoes, 2.6 kiloliters of apples, as well as eggs and firewood. This farm was valued at 3,000 dollars and it produced a total of 891 dollars of market goods.

Magdalena Pautler had married a local merchant. Her husband operated a grocery store in the nearby village of Lancaster, New York. In 1868 Magdalena liquidated the farmland she received from her father for 1,750 dollars and used the capital for activities other than farming. She died in August 1871 at the age of 30.

Jacob Pautler also sold the land he received from his father. He did not, however, leave farming. Jacob Pautler used the capital to buy his father-in-law's 22.6-hectare farm, which was directly across the road from the land Jacob sold.

Nelson Pautler also sold the land he received from his father, but he remained a farmer in the town of Alden. In the 1870s, Nelson purchased a 5-hectare farm (12.5-acre) in Alden Center and in 1883 he moved to a 25-hectare farm (62 acres). He was still farming that land in 1900.

Joseph Pautler also liquidated the land he received from his father. He used the capital to purchase a 5-hectare farm (12 acres) outside the village of Alden. In addition to farming, Joseph worked at a tannery in the village of Alden. In 1880, Joseph Pautler was 30 years old and had been married for ten years. According to the 1880 Census of Agriculture, Joseph used 2 hectares of land to produce 3.6 metric tons of hay, one cow to produce 79 kilograms of butter and one hog, and 25 chickens to produce 100 dozen eggs. Joseph also planted oats and potatoes in his plowed fields and harvested the fruit from ten apple trees. In March 1890 Joseph Pautler moved to a 12-hectare farm (30 acres) in Alden Center.

In 1880 Michael Pautler was 29 years old and had been married for three years. His young family was living on the Westwood Road farm he had inherited from his father. According to the 1880 Agricultural Census, Michael farmed his land with four work horses and seven milk cows. The dairy produced butter, calves, and hogs. Michael harvested 6.5 hectares of hay and 15 hectares of grain. He also produced 1.2 hectares of potatoes. This was a large farming operation.

Bernhard was Georg Pautler's youngest child. He was born in 1860 and was 17 years old when his father died. Bernhard was found in the 1880 Census living on the 41.6-hectare farm (103 acres) that he inherited from his father. Also living on the farm were his mother and his sisters, Mary and Catherine.

Bernhard Pautler's farm produced a mix of products very similar to those found at Michael Pautler's farm. Bernhard employed three workhorses and nine milk cows. The dairy produced butter, liquid milk,

²⁰ "United States Census, 1880" (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MZZ5-MJ7>).

calves, and hogs. The fields cultivated 4 hectares of hay, 15 hectares of grain, 1.6 hectares of potatoes, and 1.2 hectares of apples.

Mary Pautler married in 1885 and at that time moved to an independent household. Her husband was Martin Wagatha, a recent immigrant from Aschbach, Bas-Rhin. Martin Wagatha and Mary Pautler purchased an 18.2-hectare farm (45 acres) on North Road in the town of Alden.

Catherine Pautler never married. In 1900, she was still living at the family farm in Alden Center with her brother, Bernhard, and his family. Catherine's widowed mother was also living at this residence in 1900.

We see here another Alsatian tradition that was transplanted to North America. All the Pautler children formed independent households when they married. Georg Pautler and Magdalena Schweigert never lived in the same household with a son and daughter-in-law. Readers saw that same pattern of independent household formation in Oberroedern among the Uebelhoer family. Similarly, the child who inherited the parental residence—Bernhard Pautler in Alden and Antoni Uebelhoer in Oberroedern—cared for their unmarried sisters and their widowed mothers.

Conclusion

An immigrant family was more likely to successfully transplant old values in their new home if they were supported by their local community. Although a full discussion is beyond the scope of the current article, we should note that Georg Pautler settled in a place where many other Alsatian immigrants also settled. This community of immigrants was sufficiently large and cultural autonomy to insulate its children from values that were at odds with those of the immigrant families. In particular, the community possessed a strong religious focus—Roman Catholic in this case. The Church supported both the community's autonomy and its commitment to traditional familial values.

The structure of rural farming in Western New York differed in several ways from the structure of farming in Lower Alsace. When Alsatian immigrants settled in the towns of Lancaster and Alden, dispersed farmsteads constructed on their own land replaced communal villages and open fields. Farmers in Alsace often had access to communal pastures, meadows, and forests. In Western New York, there were no communal resources, and the immigrants had to acquire and develop their own pastures, meadows, and woodlots. This is one reason the immigrants had to acquire larger farms in North America compared to Alsace. The immigrants who arrived with the goal of preserving their traditional family had to adapt to the different conditions of North America.

Those adaptations did not, however, necessitate the abandonment of traditional familiar values and habits. This article focused on a single family. Georg Pautler began his adult life as a plowman in Lower Alsace. As such he was a landowner and a middle-class member of the village. When he immigrated to North America in 1840, he sold his house and farmland to finance the journey. Georg Pautler was 30 years old when he left Alsace with his wife and their infant son.

Very soon after he arrived in Western New York, Georg Pautler partnered with his brother-in-law to buy a farm. His share of the purchase was funded with money he brought from Alsace, and the size of his farm was much larger than his Alsace farm. The evidence suggests that Georg Pautler transferred his family patrimony from Alsace to Western New York and then used that patrimony to acquire more farmland with the intension of transferring it to his children. The Pautler family farm was not only a means of livelihood for members of the family, it was also a means for providing an equal start in household formation for each child. Georg Pautler exhibited a commitment to property accumulation without speculation.