

## EARLY HISTORY OF THE BENNER FAMILIES

*This article is clipped from a document written by Doug Benner. It references the work of Dr C. M. Benner who researched the early origins of the Benner Family. As yet most of the claims are unreferenced, but makes interesting reading.*

The most frequently cited article about early the Benner family history is from a report given by Dr. C. M. Benner, MD. This report was reproduced in part in Detective Work Among the Benner Family, published by Hannah Benner Roach. The author was able to procure a copy of the original manuscript (attached as Photo 15) of the Dr. C.M. Benner report from Dr. William J. Kelly of Tuscon, Arizona.

The following is a merge of these two sources, which do not conflict, but have some mutually exclusive sections. Roach deleted some material perhaps because it was of questionable accuracy, and perhaps because it contains extensive narrative about European history in which Benner ancestors played only a minor role. The Dr. C.M. Benner document does not cite any of its sources. The author has inserted some editing, comments, and subtitles, all in italics to enhance the readability.

### THE BENNER FAMILY ANNUAL REUNION, 1940

The 15th annual Benner reunion was held on Saturday, July 20th, 1940 at Lost Creek Community Park, McAllsterville, Pa. (Juniata Co.) President, Dr. C.M. 12

Benner; Vice-President, Mrs. Arden Mertz; Secretary, Grace I. Benner; Treasurer; W. W. Benner; Song Leader, Prof. P. S. Mitchell.

After a business and entertainment program at 2:00 p.m., and address was delivered by Rev. Robert C. Benner, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Newville, PA.

Some of the history of the Benner family from ancient records was given by Dr. C. M. Benner, MD, Taneytown, Md. A short sketch of which is given below.

The history of the Benner family is entwined with the History of Europe since 841, Asia Minor since 1095 during the Crusades to the Holy Land, and America since 1695 or earlier.

## EARLY HISTORY OF EUROPE

The family is Teutonic -- dating back to the Frankish nation, which embraced most of present Germany, France and Italy and all of Austria, Switzerland, and Belgium. It was the nation which produced Clovis, Charlemagne, Charles Martel,

the Pepins and other founders of the culture, greatness and civilization of Western Europe of today.

There is a record of an Artois Von Benner, who was a captain of armed horsemen under King Lothaire, grandson of Charlemagne in 841, and fought in Fontenailles.<sup>1</sup> (King Lothaire I of Italy, 795-8552) There was a Benner who came to England with William the Conqueror and fought with him at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 . (This sentence is out of sequence. ) In 814 upon the death of Charlemagne, Louis the Debonaire succeeds to the throne of the so called Roman Empire.

In 840 Louis dies, and his three sons, Lothaire, Louis the German, and Charles the Bald claim the succession; they war for possession of the kingdom.

In 841 there was a “battle of the brothers” fought at Fontenailles, wherein Louis and Charles defeated Lothaire.

In 843 the three rival brothers make a treaty at Verdun (Northeast France) by which the Empire is divided into three parts. Lothaire received Italy and Central Frankish territories, Louis the German accepts Germany and the Eastern Frankish lands, and Charles the Bald takes France, or the Western Frankish lands.

The Treaty of Verdun marks the beginning of the national history for the three states: Italy, Germany, and France; also, the beginning of the middle land of Lorraine.

As previously mentioned, in 841 Artois Von Benner, who was a captain of armed horsemen under King Lothaire, grandson of Charlemagne, fought under King Lothaire, at Fontenailles.

There are no records of Benner men for the next 200 years. The following two paragraphs are out of chronological sequence.

The Battle of Hastings, in England, occurred on Oct. 14, 1066. William, Duke of Normandy, called the Conqueror, triumphs over Harold, King of England, and established himself as King of England.

There was a Benner who came to England with William the Conqueror and fought under him at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

## **THE FIRST CRUSADE**

In 1095 was the First Epoch of Crusaders. Councils are held at Placenza

and Clermont by Pope Urban II. He proclaimed a Crusade of Christians for the recovery of the Holy Sepulcher from the infidel Turks who possessed Jerusalem and levied a tax on all Christian pilgrims visiting the City of Jerusalem.

In 1096 An army of crusaders, called the Chivalry of Medieval Europe, set out for the East under Godfried (Godfrey) of Bouillon, Hugh of Vermandois, Stephan of Blois and others.

Gurth der Benner, a direct descendant of Oluf der Benner, was the first Knight of the Benner family who lived on the Benner estate in Upper Bavaria along the Rhine. Oluf's name has been preserved in the Chapel near his estate, called the Chapel of Oluf der Benner. The date of his (Oluf's) death is registered as 1053.

Gurth der Benner joined the army of crusaders, while still a minor, under the guardianship of Godfried de Bouillon in 1097. He was made and called the "Knight of the Morning Star" in Antioch, the legend being that very early in the morning he rose and slew an antagonist of great size and ferocity.

In 1098 Antioch (southern Turkey) is stormed and yields (yields) to the Crusaders who in their turn are besieged but rout their foes and open the way to Jerusalem.

In 1099 Bohemoid is proclaimed Prince of Antioch, and on July 15th, Jerusalem is stormed and conquered. Godfried of Bouillon assumes the sovereignty of the city of Jerusalem. Also, the Islamites are defeated at Ascalon by Godfried and Tancred. Gurth der Benner fought under Godfried of Bouillon in all

these battles in the Holy Land and helped rescue the tomb of Christ from the Mohammedans (sic).

In 1149 the Christians, after attempting to storm Damascus, are forced to retreat, and they returned to Europe.

## **LATER HISTORY OF EUROPE**

Odo der Benner was a lineal descendant of Gurth der Benner, and was also a knight. As a knight himself, he was engaged in the tournaments of the age. It is said that at the tournament held at Mantz in 1263, Odo der Benner was awarded first prize.

The Benner family represents vast estates and great wealth at the beginning of the fourteenth century. In 1322, Waldemar der Benner was one of the responsible leaders of the rebellion against King Ludwig. The family fortune was greatly dissipated as a result of Waldemar's activities, and his four sons were

obligated to enter the Venetian Army as professional soldiers. Of these, only one returned. Waldemar entered the Cloister of Saint Laurentius, which, in his earlier youth, he had munificently endowed.

Wernker der Benner, upon his return from the Venetian Army spent a few years endeavoring to regain the lost estates of his father, and failing to do so also entered the Cloister of Saint Laurentius with his father. He had at least one son, Dietselm der Benner, who engaged in the feudal uprisings of the vassals and petty lords. Dietselm had one son Ulrich der Benner, who in the year 1387, removed to Holstein, the better to improve his pecuniary condition. He there served at court and gained certain privileges and grants which enabled him to regain some of the family's original possessions. He had a son Eustachius, whose sons and grandsons carried on the name and family in some of its old splendor until 1500.

By 1520 the Bavarian wars further diminished the fortune of the family, so that they became scattered in Germany, Upper Bavaria, Holland, Lorraine and a great many in Switzerland, and their history as a family lost for a time.

The last of the Benner name to bear the armor of a knight was Dietrich Benner, who was appointed Field Marshal of a division of the Bavarian Army in 1620. Dietrich was a Protestant and was, no doubt, the same General Benner who figures so conspicuously in the history of the Huguenots.

Among the earliest mention of the Benner name in America appears in the records of 1720 when Valentyn Benner made his residence in Rhinebeck, New York. He and his wife, Margaret, brought their eldest son with them from Upper Bavaria. Some time later, Valentyn Benner bought land below Red Hook Village where he established the Benner homestead, which remained in the Benner family for four generations. Valentyn was the father of John, Henry, Margaret, Anna and Catherine.