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Rhinebeck is a county in New York, USA, on the banks of the Hudson River.



History of Rhinebeck

DOCUMENTARY EMBRACING

Biographical Sketches and Genealogical Records of Our First Families and First Settlers,

A HISTORY OF ITS CHURCHES AND OTHER PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

EDWARD M. SMITH.

RHINEBECK, DUTCHESS COUNTY, N. Y.

1881

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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BENNER FAMILY.

We find among the earliest settlers of Rhinebeck a branch of the Benner family, of which the descendants in this county are somewhat limited. Yet the name and family are largely

represented in the United States, especially in the States of Maine, Pennsylvania and Virginia. It is perhaps one of the largest German families ; and in the early Baronial times had a remarkable history. The ancestors are described as being of great size and muscular strength ; and many of them were distinguished as bold and gallant knights in the days of chivalry. The following is an abstract from a work on chivalry and the armorial bearings of families in central Europe, in the library of Vienna, in Austria :

The Benner family is a very old and widely extended one in Upper Bavaria and along the Rhine ; and among the many distinguished men from this family, the first mentioned was a knight by the name of Oluf, who is described as living on the Benner estate, in Upper Bavaria ; and his name is preserved in a chapel nearby, called "Chapel of Oluf der Benner," on account of the munificent gift which he made for its erection, in the year 1053.

Gurth der Benner, while still a youth, joined the army of the Crusaders under Godfried de Bouillon, in the year 1079, and on the approach to Antioch, in the early dawn, when the morning stars were waning, he encountered and slew a knight of the enemy, who is said to have been of great size and strength ; and for which heroic deed he was at Antioch made and called "Knight of the Morning Star," and ever after wore a star in the centre of his shield. He returned safely, and settled on the banks of the Rhine ; and from him the family was there widely extended.

Odo der Benner was a lineal descendant of the distinguished knight ; and as a knight himself was engaged in the tournament held at Maintz, in the year 1263, and was awarded the first prize for his bold and dextrous exploits on that occasion.

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Waldemar der Benner, in the year 1322, was one of the leaders of the RebelHon which was formed on the Rhine against King Ludwig, and so distinguished himself at the battle of Muhldorf that he afterwards received from the government not only its highest honors but a large tract of land, extending towards Bergennes, as the reward of his gallantry. Waldemar at his death divided this large estate between his four sons and

the Cloister of Holy Laurentius, at Colle.

From this time onward the wealth and fame of the Benner family began to decline, and four of the above named five sons entered the Venetian army, and but one of them returned. This was Wernker der Benner. He returned to his home, sold what remained to him of his father's estate, and in the year 1362 entered the Cloister of Saint Laurentius, to which his father had been such a liberal benefactor. How long he remained in the Cloister does not appear, but he left one son, Dietselm der Benner, who appears to have returned to and cultivated the land of his ancestors.

Ulrich der Benner was a son of Deitselm, and in 1387, we are told, he went to Hohlstein and greatly improved his social and pecuniary condition. But at the same time it is said his descendants became numerous and poor, and were obliged to pursue the ordinary avocations of life for their support.

Eustachias der Benner is the next name in the consecutive history of the family. In the year 1435 he is mentioned as a Stadholder of one of the provinces, and, it is said, he held the office many years on account of the faithful and upright manner in which he discharged his duties.

After this, in 1520, the Bavarian wars set in, and the family became very much scattered, and for a time lost to history.

Dietrich der Benner is the last named in history who bore the armor of a knight, and claimed to belong to the Royal lineage. He lived on a small estate in Bavaria, and on small means, but still maintained the dignity and character of Royalty until 1628, when he was appointed a Field Marshal of a division of the Bavarian army, and so ably discharged his duties that he became very distinguished, and received an addition to his estate. On his shield he bore a rampant unicorn, on a ground of o-reen and gold.

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This Dietrich der Benner was a Protestant from Protestant Bavaria, and was no doubt the General Benner who figured so conspicuously in the History of the Huguenots. It is said that all the Benners were notably Protestants.

About this time the name of this great family began to be indifferently written Bender, or Benner, in different localities. And it is supposed that the former authography arose from the fact that large numbers of them located in different towns and cities, and engaged in the same mechanical work, which required binding, or tying together, such as book-binders and coopers ; and from this circumstance they were as a family or class called Binders, or Benders. In the same way the aristocratic Dutch of our own State, particularly at Albany, who had individual names, were yet as a class called Knickerbockers, from the circumstance of having nearly all been employed in the making and baking marbles for the children. The name is derived from Knicker, a marble, and Bakker, a Baker. Knickerbakker, from which the transition to Knickerbocker was easy.

In the records of the German Reformed Church here, Rev. Johan Casper Rubel always wrote the name, Benner ; while Rev. Gerhard Daniel Cock, who came after him, always wrote it Bender.

The first family of the name in the town of Rhinebeck, of which we have any tradition, was that of Valentyn Bender and Margaret, his wife, who, with their two sons, Johannes and Henrich, came to Rhinebeck from Upper Bavaria, in the beginning of the 18th century. He obtained of Col. Henry Beekman the usual life-lease of a farm on the Hudson River, about three miles north of Rhinebeck Landing, being the same farm afterwards long the residence of Gen. Armstrong, and now owned by the heirs of his son-in-law, Wm. B. Astor. The site selected by Bender was too fine to leave him long at rest. Col. Beekman and his family soon discovered that this was the finest situation on the banks of the river, and wished to possess it again without delay. He, therefore, proposed an exchange, and offered for the surrender of the life-lease a like quantity of land in fee, in any part of his lands. This proposition was accepted by Valentyn Bender, and eagerly by his wife, who, by

the tradition of all her descendants, was a somewhat remarkable woman, possessing an energetic character, and a keen eye to the future. Col. Beekman thereupon executed a deed for a piece of land situate about one mile southwest of Lower Red Hook village, which forms a part of the farm which became the Benner homestead, and which, from the time Valentyn Bender took possession, under his deed, until about four years since,

was uninterruptedly owned and occupied by the Benner family. The deed from Henry Beekman bears date, January 25, 1721, and describes the lands as " certuating on a large plaine, being part of a tract of land formerly obtained from Coll. Peter Schuyler, on the east side of Hudson's river, in the above said County, lying northward from ye town of Rinbeek, and joins partly to ye southeast end of a meadow called Peek's Vly, and so northerly where it begineth by a stony point, which is over against where a small rune of whater comes from Countryman's fountaine, and intersax with a small rune of whater that comes out of the aforesaid Peek's Vly." This is the only deed we have seen in which the land laid out for the High Butchers, is called the " Town of Rhinebeck." It shows that Valentyn Bender was not one of the settlers for whom the land was laid out.

Valentyn Bender died soon after he took possession of this farm, and left him surviving his widow, Margriet, his two sons, Johannes and Henrich, and three daughters, Anna Maria, Catharina, and Margriet. It was now that his widow Margriet displayed her energy and perseverance. She managed the household and the farm ; brought up the children in habits of industry and frugality ; made large additions to her possessions ; and, before her death, owned over three hundred acres of good land. She lived to see all her daughters well married, and, at the close of her life, divided her land between her two sons, giving to Johannes the old homestead, and to Henrich that portion of her acquired land which became the possession of Jacob Chowell, is still owned by his heirs, and which was sold by Henrich some time after his mother's death.

Valentyn Bender certainly left two sons and two daughters, and there may have been a third son and daughter. The

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daughters of whom we have knowledge were : Anna Maria, who married Zacharias Schmidt, and Catharina, who married Henrich Tidter, whose families are recorded on another page.

Henrich, son of Valentyn Bender, married Catharine Betszer (now Pitcher), and had children as follows : Anna Margreda, baptized May 6, 1741, married Jan. 20, 1761, Zacharias Volandt ; Catharina, baptized Aug. 12, 1744, married Feb. 7, 1762, Fred-

erick Streit, Jr. ; Annatjin, baptized Jan. 27, 1752, married Oct. 10, 1774, Phillip Mohr ; Christina, married Dec. 16, 1770, Petrus Mohr ; Magdalena, baptized May 18, 1755; Henrich, baptized Sept. 10, 1758, married Catharina Pitcher, probably his cousin. There were other children in this family, probably born between 1744 and 1752, of whose baptism the book before us contains no record. '

Johannes, son of Valentyn Bender, married Magdalena Streid (now Streit), and had children as follows : Hans Velden, in other words, Valentyn, the son of Hans, born Dec. 26, 1741, married, 1st, Alida VVeitman, 2d, Lydia Feroe, widow, 1st of Conrad Lasher, 2d, of Benjamin Van Steenburgh ; Catharine, baptized Aug. 12, 1744; Henrich, baptized Aug. 16, 1751, married Marytjen Sagendorf ; Johannes, baptized Oct. 1753 ; Jacobus, baptized Feb. 15, 1756; Anna Maria, baptized Aug. 13, 1758; Petrus, baptized Dec. 11, 1763, married Jenneken Waldorf; Ludowick, baptized Jan. 29, 1766. There were other children in this family, also, of whom the book before us contains no records.

Henry Bender, Jr., and Catharina Pitcher, had children as follows: Catharine, baptized May 27, 1780, married, Nov. 8 1801, Garret Cock ; Henry, baptized June 29, 1783, married Jan. I, 1805, his cousin, Anna Moore ; Maria, baptized Oct. 9, 1785, married, Jan. 8, 1804, John Knickerbocker; Elizabeth, baptized Dec. 8, 1788, married Cyrus Burnap ; Christina, born May II, 1799, married Capt. Samuel Nelson.

Hans Felten Bender and Alida Wietman had children, as follows: Hellena, born Dec. 19, 1775, married Capt. David Sipperly ; John, born Aug. 20, 1797, married, Sept. 8, 1808, Hannah Schryver ; Elizabeth, born Oct. 13, 1789, married Jacob Sipperly ; Jacob, born Sept. 27, 1791, married Dec. 25, 1810,

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Margaret Feroe ; Wilhelmus, born March 2, 1794, married Helena Ostrander ; Amy, died young.

Peter Bender and Jenneken Waldorf had children, as follows : William and Maria, twins ; William married Elizabeth Feller ; Maria married George J. Pultz ; Lena, married Frederick Havener ; Elizabeth, married Peter Hevenor ; Anna,

married Phillip P'raleigh.

Of Hans Felton Benner's children we have the record of Jacob and his wife, Margaret Feroe. They had children, as follows: Lydia Maria, born December 8, 181 1; Henry, born Feb. 19, 18 1 5 ; Robert, born Feb. i, 18 18; Jacob Benner's wife, Margaret Feroe, died in 1824. He married, for a second wife, Helen Moore, by whom he had one child, a daughter, Margaret.

Jacob Benner was an industrious and successful farmer, and the last Benner owner and occupant of the homestead in Red Hook. He held several ofices of public trust. He was Supervisor and Justice of the Peace in his town, and for several years Justice of the County Court of Sessions. He died, Nov. 5, 1869. The Hon. Augustus Martin married his daughter, Lydia Maria, for a first, and her half sister, Margaret, for a sec-ond wife. The latter survives her husband. His son, Henry, is now, and has for many years been a resident of the city of Newark, N. J. His son, Robert, is a practicing lawyer in the city of New York, and has for many years had his residence at Astoria, L. L He married, Oct. 10, 1848, Miss Mary Van Ant-werp Shaw, by whom he had sons, Franklin, Charles, and Willis, and a daughter, Mary. His wife dying, June 10, 1867, he mar-ried, for a second, Miss Helen Stanly Brown, Feb. 21, 1871.

UNKNOWN BENNERS.

We find among a number of Benners whose lineage we are not able to trace, a George Emerich Benner ; a Frederick Ben-ner, with Neeltje Heermance for a wife ; a Johannes Benner, with Catharine Enck for a wife ; a John Jacob Benner, with Margaritha Tidtmor for a wife ; and a Henrich Tidtmor, with an Elizabeth Benner for a wife. The last parties were the parents of John, Susanna and Daniel Tidtmor, persons w^ho have descendants still living in Rhinebeck and Red Hook, and other places.