



OFA Bulletin

Published Semi-annually by the Overholser Family Association
Summer 2023 ISSN 0742-8472 Vol. XXXXII No. 2

Oberholtz Uberholtzer Overholser Oberheuser
Overhults VanHulser Overhuls
Overhalser Overhalt Atherholt Obold
Uberholser Overholtzer Overholt
Overhulster Oberholser Oberholtzer

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Greetings OFA Members,

What a mess this last two years of COVID Pandemic has turned out to be! The disruption of our living patterns has forced us to reevaluate our priorities. Getting back into a "normal" reunion pattern can prove challenging.

Unfortunately, we could not acquire the old spot at St John's Church. So we will be meeting this year at **Yoder's Restaurant from 9 AM to 2 PM on Saturday August 5th, 2023.**

Coffee & snacks are free for early arrivals. Lunchtime meal can be purchased as buffet or menu. We hope that members could ease back into the old habits of attendance in the first week of August. I would like to see us take the chance and get back face to face. I would like to see us rekindle our archival conversation and find a way to have a closer relationship with the other Pennsylvania German family associations that compete for reunion time in the summer. Our association is very vital and I request you all stay tuned for news on our reunion plans.

At this year's Reunion, Dennis Oberholtzer will be speaking on **the ties between the Oberholzer, Hans Herr and Lottscher** families from the Crusader Years to the 15th century during the Old Zurich War.

Yours Truly,

Michael Martin

President- Overholser Family Association

**Overholser Family
Association Bulletin**
Vol. XXXXII No 2 Winter 2023

Editor - Dennis L. Oberholtzer
49 Paradise Lane
Paradise, Pa. 17562
717-687-6950

©2023 Overholser Family Association
49 Paradise Lane, Paradise, PA 17562
ISSN 0742-8472

CONTRIBUTIONS
Please send all contributions to:
Geoffrey Martin, Treasurer
7 Edgewood Dr
Holmdel, NJ 07733

CORRESPONDENCE
Earline Oberholtzer
49 Paradise Lane
Paradise PA 17562-9654
717-687-6950

Welcome New OFA Members!!!

New Way to CONTRIBUTE!

You can support the OFA by visiting our website
at www.overholser.net and clicking the Donate button.

We have PayPal for your convenience. Please e-mail
gmartin@overholser.net if you have any questions.

References from Homesteading Growth on Oberholz Mountain

** Annual Book 1498 of the Parish of Wald

Page 18 ^ Referendum of 1430

Page 18 REF: Robert S Oberholtzer, 9/1999, *Das Alte Oberholz und die Familie Oberholzer*

Page 15 2nd paragraph: *translated from Leben im Grenzbereich*, Alois Stadler 2007

Page 18 ~ REF: translation by Dennis L Oberholtzer, from *Leben im Grenzbereich*, Alois Stadler 2007,
page 14-17

- Village history goes back to 1601 in the Hinwil District of Zürich (Gruenigen).

Full color pictures of this Bulletin are on the Overholser.org website.

Emigration of the Weidertaufers



Original House in Oberholz built in the 1500's, as it appeared in 1986



Original Oberholz house and barn behind walls of firewood, creating an entrance and shed in forefront of house. - Picture on L & R by Will Overholtzer, 1986

The Farmer alp hof, west of the village of Oberholz, was founded in the Late Middle Ages as a year round farm, similar to Ger and Boo. It came into possession of the Rapperswil infirmary in 1593 and was then used as a summer alp for 12 cows.

After centuries of persecution for being true to the Holy Scriptures, and being hated by the ignorant establishment of both government and church, it was time to find a new home. The killing spree of the 17th century in Switzerland was as bad as anywhere in Europe. Isn't that the way of the world. Cowardly anger likes to pick on the non-combative. They do not have enough patience to sit and listen to another's point of view. Just kill them and go on with life. And don't forget to take what is not yours. It really comes down to greed, does it not?

The Protestant Oberholzer families in Aa, and some in Wald, had to decide. Am I a *weidertaufer*? Is it time to seek out a new home? Martin Oberholzer waited too long. He was drowned in the river. His family got the message, packed their belongings as quick as possible, and headed for the Palatinate. The "authorities" stayed and stole the property, and all that was left.

"Exit records in the Zürich Archives show Oberholzers leaving Switzerland for the Palatinate or Odenwald during 1650 - 1663". ~~~ "Some Oberholzers came [to the Palatinate] as tenant farmers to Sinsheim in 1654, and settled in 1661. The Elector lived in a castle with a central tower 100 ft. high and walls 16 feet thick. He was a Protestant surrounded by Catholics... Six families came from Zürich, Only one family, widower (JL Line) Jacob Oberholtzer with two children came to America." - John L. Overholt

1731 - Martin & Jacob Oberholtzer appear as members of the Mennonite Congregation on the Herr Hof (farm), in the Upper Palatinate, whence they came from Switzerland in earlier days.+++

Why So Many Martin Oberholtzer Immigrants?

From 1710 to 1712 there were three Martin Oberholtzer Immigrants. On the 1710 Warrant document for Conestoga, which became Lancaster County, Penn's Woods in 1729, there was a Martin Mathew (MM1) Oberholtzer and a Martin Michael (ML) Oberholtzer. And his son (ML1) Martin who hunted furs in York Co.; and (ML21) Martin died in Bethel Twp. Then there was a Martin (MC7) in Chester County.

The (JF) Jacob of Franconia family had a brother Martin who likely remained in Europe. Immigrant Samuel in 1727 brought along a young son Martin (SL2). Also, (MT3) Martin Overholt lived in Plumstead Twp in Montgomery County PA.

All these Martins in the 18th century hearken back to the memory of their ancestor Marti, who was drowned in the river for being an Anabaptist. While we forgive the past, let us also retain the memory that our ancestors died for a cause which gives eternal life.

Homesteading Growth on Oberholz Mountain



Winter time view of Oberholz, Switzerland, shows the forest and mountains surrounding the village. Oberholz lies in the center of the picture, just east of a ridge that separates Canton Zurich from Canton St Gallen. Picture by Will Overholtzer 1986

Oberholz Homestead: Formerly a fiefdom of the Counts of Toggenburg, A 1430 Witness Report stated the founders of the Oberholz farm were migrated owners from the Counts of Toggenburg. This was witnessed by the elders of the mountain, as handed down from their parents. A fiefdom is an estate held by a feudal lord, in this case the Counts of Toggenburg. The tenure of the land was subject to feudal obligations, including a fee charged for oversight. In addition, the Catholic Church charged a tithing which amounted to one-tenth of the production of the land. The Oberholz farm was obviously very productive in order to sustain such costs. Today, Toggenburg is part of the Canton of St Gallen.

Locations in the Valley of Oberholz:

The Valley of Oberholz rises from Wald in the southwest to Vorderwald toward the west and Hittenberg to the south. Above Vorderwald is Nyderholz (*Nydergeheyst*). As the mountain continues to climb, the village of Oberholz sits in the middle of the valley. The *hof* (farm) of Oberholz expanded to a hamlet sometime in the 13th century, prior to the establishment of the Ger hof. Oberholz sits at 855 meters above sea level. About 950 meters just to the west of Oberholz are the ruins of Frundsberg. To the east is also a narrow passage between the mountain ridges to a Boden Hof, and onto Farner which lies 200 meters (1055) above Oberholz. Just above Farner lies the Ruti. But by 1435 there were still only four family homesteads above the grove of trees in the center of the mountain.**

"After the hamlet of Oberholz was founded, clearing and land development continued. Now living quarters were built outside the hamlet as early as 1300, first the Hindergage farm, which was still called Ussergadem (building outside the hamlet) in 1452. As the name suggests, this farm bordered the hamlet of Oberholz and was also *Geheyst* (part of the dark forest). The age of this cleared forest is indicated by a tithing dispute in 1464. The Pastor of Wald stated at the time that the farm in *Geheyst* had been delivering tithes to the church in Wald for around 100 to 130 years." Thus, as early as 1334, this farm was an independent home that owed one tenth of its grain cultivation as church tax to the parish of Wald. - translated into English from *Leben im Grenzberreich* by Alois Stadler, page 14

"It is not known which Toggenberg dominion the settlers came, whether from Toggenberg itself, or from the County of Uznach, or from the area of Bubilkon. The fact that the Goldingers were able to extend their common property from the southeast to the vicinity of the hamlet of Oberholz supports the assumption that the forest-cleared farmers in Oberholz also came from the county of Uznach."

- translated into English from *Leben im Grenzberreich* by Alois Stadler, page 12

The Schmittenbach is a steep hill just east of Oberholz which runs to the summit ridge. In the center of the valley the road above Oberholz carries homes ecstatically to Hindergaden. The Hof of Ger is on the same elevation just above Hindergaden. Going with the rising of the mountain brings Wolfsgruueb, Marchstein, and farthest up the valley is Unter Boo at 1086 and Oberboo at 1203 meters. The high Tosstock mountain range separates the Zurich Oberland from the Appenzell, home of the dwarf miners of old.

As stated above, "as early as 1300 the Hindergadem Hof was in existence, and in 1452 was still called *Ussergadem* (the building outside the hamlet)". The Hindergage Hof bordered the hamlet of Oberholz and was later called *Geheyst*. Thus the hamlet of Oberholz was already established before 1300. And farming would have had to occur almost immediately in order for the Oberholzer Hof to annually exist. Thus clearing in the central part of the valley was already underway by the 13th century. The farm in the dark forest (*Geheyst*) was paying tithes since about 1330 CE.

Growing the Hof at Oberholz would have and did take time. The foundation of the house had to be laid. Water is most important, so a spring had to be made into a year-round source of unfrozen potable water. Stakes had to be cut, de-branched, and holes dug for them, to keep livestock from running off. Wild animals had to be killed or pushed away by guarding. And then spring planting meant digging up root-laden ground, moving rocks from the soil, and burning piles of roots and branches. Then planting seeds for crops, and spreading grain seeds. A century is not a long time to get a farm in the forest to become productive. Many hands make work go quicker, but in a mountainous region where labor is scarce, funds are almost non-existent, and almost half the children died by the age of twelve; time moves much faster than human effort. A barn had to be made for both animals and grain storage over the long winter months.

In the 14th century, names begin to appear. A year round homestead was the

Nydergeheyst^ [1350-1400], which was later called Ger, and was one of the earliest above the grove of trees. " The lowest part of this cleared forest, which lies on the rightside (Southside) of the Schmitteback and was called *Nydergeheyst* in the late Middle Ages, was separated as an independent home as early as 1400 and kept the name *geheyst* to this day." ..."The upper part of the *Geheyst* cleared forest occupied the sunny dump between Smittebach and Marchstei. It separated from Nydergeheyst around 1400, and also became an independent farm and was named Ger in the 16th century."

As mentioned before, Hans Huppi 1380 - 1410 as Captain, led a group from Wald to fight in the Sempach War in 1386. The German text by Alois Stadler is not clear as which farm he lived. But the brothers Reudi and Clewi Oberholzer did sell the Ger hof. It is my assumption that Huppi was a grandfather of Ruedi and Clewi. With the lack of many people in the area, it could be assumed the farm stayed in the family for at least a couple generations. The next documented person was a Wiseman who lived there in from about 1410 to 1430. Only a decade later brothers Reudi and Clewi Oberholzer were living there with their mother. It could be assumed mother Adelheid was married to Wiseman. Alois does mention how only Oberholzers lived on the mountain in the early years. The brothers lived on the hof for at least 22 years, then sold it to the Rapperswil Hospital in 1452 for pasturing cattle.

This assumption allows for Farmer Oberholzer to be Bauer of the hof at Oberholz, which is noted in 1438. Very likely a relative and probable brother to Adelheid, they were spreading the family across the valley in order to make larger fields. They also could send more trees down-hill to Wald for use as lumber at the Oberholzer Corporation. Church benches were thick in those days, sawn by hand with a pit saw, then planed by hand for smoothness and proper sizing.

The other three farms homesteaded after Oberholz but before 1450 were the Vordergeheyst (below the forest), the Hindergeheyst (secluded forest), and the Nydergeheyst (enjoyable forest). The documents from 1452 to 1464 do not yet reveal the court names of Ger

Continued on Page 11

Time Heals - All In the Family



From left to right:
Will Overholtzer of
California with
1st wife Betty
John L Overholt of
Virginia with wife Peg
Johanna Oberholzer
and Rosie Oberholzer,
both of Oberholz Inn
at the village in 1986.

It takes time to heal old wounds. Today, we know that we don't know as much as we think we do during a conflict. We know we can't fix things by legislating a bunch of laws. It may take time for the rest of the world to catch up to the Oberholzers, Overholzers, Oberholtzers, Overholtzers, Overholts, and the rest of us. But we know that LOVE CONQUERS ALL!!!

Enjoy the day! Give thanks to Jesus Christ, the Creator of this magnificent Universe! And be kind and patient with all who you come in contact with. Remember, not everyone knows their right hand from their left.

Let us hear from you!

*Send us or bring your stories so others can enjoy
our rich history and heritage!*

Overholser Family Reunion 2022 Yoder's Restaurant, New Holland PA

From left: Lee Wanaselja, Linda Wanaselja, Michael Martin, Dennis Oberholtzer, Earline Oberholtzer, Jean O Schaffer



Let's add a few states in 2023! Families that are stretched across the country come here to get together and enjoy the scenery, take in some family history, and get to meet new friends in brotherly love! Come Join US!

OFA OFFICERS FOR 2023

President	Michael Martin	732-713-0332 832 Richard Blvd, Rahway, NJ 07065-1833
Treasurer	Geoffrey Martin	geoffiethkid@gmail.com 7 Edgewood Dr, Holmdel, NJ 07733
Website	Kris Overholt	http://www.overholser.org Austin, TX
OFA Bulletin	Dennis L Oberholtzer	717-687-6950 Leave Message 49 Paradise Lane Paradise, PA 17562-9654

Continued from Page 8:

and Boo. The reason is that the two farms were originally part of the larger *geheyst* forest, which extended from Oberholz to Tosstock. The forests which were cleared in these areas were large and became crop fields, meadows, pastures, and were surrounded by forests. By the mid 15th century these mountain edge farms were being sold to outsiders. On the opposite side of the valley, "in the Late Middle Ages, forest clearing was occurring on the gentle mountain slopes of Farmer. A document from 1452 calls it Varnern." ~

By 1436 the last Count of Toggenburg, Frederick 7th, died and no longer had jurisdiction of the Oberholz mountain lands. This led to the Old Zurich War between Zurich and the Counties of Uznach and Glarus, which we read in the last Bulletin.

Quotes translated into English from *Leben im Grenzbereich* by Dennis Oberholtzer



The Second printing of

***The Oberholzer Book,
1995 by Barbara Ford***

is now available. Price of \$40.00 includes shipping. It includes the first five known generations of Oberholzers in America and Canada.

Contact Geoffrey Martin, Treasurer for purchase information.

This is the picture of Rosy Oberholzer which her daughter Johanna sent the editor a month after her passing in Oberholz, Switzerland.

She was 100 years old.

OFA REUNION, Southeastern PA,

**August 5th, 2023 from 9 AM to 2 PM at Yoder's Family Restaurant
in New Holland, Lancaster County Pennsylvania**

Check out the OFA Website: <http://www.overholser.org> or Contact Us at info@overholser.net

If you need more information, contact one of the OFA Websites, or one of the OFA Officers.

Send us your O meeting place and date so we can post it here in our Bulletin.
