

Ludwig Mensinger of Mifflin Township, Columbia County His Origins and Some of his Descendants

By Janet Rupert

In 1950, census enumerators identified 125 people living in Columbia and adjacent counties with the Mensinger surname; that number has undoubtedly increased in the decades since. Most of them probably descend from Ludwig Mensinger (also spelled Menzinger or Mentzinger) who, by the late 1780s, had settled in what is now Mifflin Township. He sired at least four sons who would carry the surname forward, as well as six daughters who intermarried with other German families in the area. This article summarizes what I have learned about this family's origins in my three decades of researching them. Another article will tell the tale of our visit to the town in Germany where this line of Mensingers originated.

Leonhart Mentzinger arrived in Philadelphia on the ship *Neptune* and took the Oath of Allegiance on 24 September 1751 (Strassburger & Hinke: *Pennsylvania German Pioneers, Volume I*, p. 468). Presumably his wife and young children accompanied him, but they were not required to take oaths on arrival and do not appear in the arrival records. Leonhart's son Ludwig, who eventually settled in Columbia County, was age five at that time. Also onboard was Caspar Kessler, married to Leonhart's sister Margaretha.

Annette Kunselman Burgert's book, *Eighteenth Century Emigrants, The Northern Kraichgau* (p. 255) connected this Leonhart Mentzinger to records in the Reformed Church book of Eppingen, located in today's southwestern German state of Baden-Württemberg. An *Ortssippenbuch Eppingen im Kraichgau* (local family book for Eppingen in the Kraichgau), compiled by Karl Diefenbacher, transcribed information from Eppingen church records and grouped the information by surname and family. This proved key to tracing the Mensinger family roots and connecting them to the other Eppingen residents with whom they intermarried. Here is a summary from those records:

- Johann Leonhard Menzinger, son of Martin, was baptized 31 January 1711 at the Reformed Church. Leonhard married Elisabetha Bär on 27 October 1734, and they had five children:
 - Ludwig, born 28 March 1736, died 13 November 1740
 - Johann Leonhard, born 18 July 1738
 - Margarete, born 4 July 1739
 - Catharina, born 30 March 1742
 - Ludwig, born 8 January 1746
- Leonhard's wife Anna Elisabetha, born 22 October 1711, was the daughter of Elias Bär/Bähr (born about 1680, died 28 May 1734), a linen weaver, and his wife Anna Catharina Braun (26 November 1682 - 2 July 1713); that couple married 19 March 1705 and had three children, of whom Anna Elisabetha was the youngest. The *Ortssippenbuch* provides additional generations back for Elias and Anna Catharina.
- Johann Martin Mentzinger (28 October 1675 - 24 March 1745), Leonhard's father, married Anna Margarete Bauer (28 August 1683 - 17 April 1745), and together they had

seven children, 6 girls and Leonhard. The Bauer family migrated from Switzerland in the mid-1600s.

- The *Ortssippenbuch* provides two additional generations of Mentzingers in Eppingen: Johann Leonhard, a cooper, (25 November 1641 – 26 January 1690) and wife Anna Margarete (about 1643 – 23 January 1690) were Martin's parents; clearly he named his only son for his father. The elder Leonhard was the son of Caspar who died 17 September 1675 at age 88, meaning he was born about 1587, and his wife Catharina who died 26 February 1671, age 65.
- Another grandson of Leonhard the elder migrated to Pennsylvania about two years after Leonhard the younger. Hans Jacob Conrad Menzinger, who was born 29 September 1714 to Jacob Menzinger (21 December 1673 – 16 April 1719) and Anna Margarete Triegel, arrived in Philadelphia on the ship *Edinburg* in 1753. He settled in what is now Annville Township, Lebanon County, and died there in 1800. Jacob was Martin's older brother.

We don't know what inspired Leonhart to leave the community where he had such deep roots to brave the perilous journey to the new world. Records at the Stadtarchiv Eppingen document his April 1751 sale of three properties in and around the city (a field, a vineyard, and a town lot), presumably to liquidate his assets in preparation for the journey and to raise cash to cover the costs. His brother-in-law, Caspar Kessler, who traveled with the Mentzingers, appears in those same registers, as he also prepared to depart.

Leonhart disappears from known records after he arrived and took the Oath, making it difficult to determine where the family settled during their first few decades on these shores. Caspar Kessler apparently settled first in what was then Germantown Township, Philadelphia County, then migrated north to Lower Saucon Township, Northampton County where he died in 1778. However, research has yet to find Leonard in those areas. Nor does he appear in or near the areas of what was then Lancaster County where his cousin Conrad settled. Perhaps Leonard died and his widow remarried, meaning the family would appear under that unknown new name.

A 1772 tax list for Lehigh Township, and another one for Penn Township, Northampton County, contain the earliest records located for this Mensinger family after their arrival. Ludwig, about age 26 by this time, was taxed for 150 acres of land, two horses and two cows. It appears the tax assessors were confused about the township boundaries, as Ludwig and several others appear on lists for both of these townships. However, other documentation established that his property and residence were in what was then Penn (now West Penn, Schuylkill County).

Ludwig, along with many of his German neighbors, served in the county militia. The published *Pennsylvania Archives* (Series 5, Vol. VIII, p. 228 & 444) lists his May 1778 service as part of the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Company, 7th Class and again in same company and class (and most of the same men) as part of the 6th Battalion in October 1780. He likely served other years, but these are the lists that have survived.

Ludwig and family remained in Penn Township, and he continued to pay taxes on 150 acres throughout the 1780s, although he did not legally own the land, at least not in accordance with Pennsylvania's rules for acquiring property from the Commonwealth. This was not uncommon in those frontier areas. In December 1786 he started the official process with an application for 50

acres of vacant land “adjoining his other land” and received a warrant for survey. However, that survey wasn’t completed until April 1790, and those 50 acres, and the adjacent 100 acres that Ludwig claimed, were surveyed for, and patented to his neighbor, Jacob Daubenspeck. It looks like Ludwig sold whatever rights or interest he had in those tracts around that time and moved north into what is today Columbia County.

According to the 1790 census for Northumberland County, Ludwig Mensinger’s household consisted of two males 16 and over and two under 16, plus six females. Enumerated on either side of him were George Gilbert and Christian Bowman, probably the men with those names who served with him in the Northampton County militia. The page includes other names that match those on the militia list, including Jacob & Conrad Mertz, suggesting that several families trekked north together from Penn to the Mifflin Township area. A closer comparison of the tax and militia lists might reveal how large a group migrated.

Ludwig began to build his land holdings shortly after arrival, and as in Penn Township, legal records of those acquisitions are hard to find. His earliest deed, located in Northumberland County (Deed Book L, p. 204) and dated 5 June 1799, recorded his purchase of 214 acres from Michael and Christina Smith, “contiguous to & adjoining other land of the said Mentzinger whereon he now liveth.” No deed for that adjacent parcel could be found, but the 1808 Triennial Tax Assessment for Mifflin Township reported that Lewis Mensinger, yeoman, had 350 acres of land with a house and barn, 4 horses and 3 cattle, so he claimed title to more real estate than described in official records. Reviewing the original warrants and surveys at the Pennsylvania State Archives site (<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/>) and studying other maps of this area confirmed that the land was located on what is today Peewee Hill by the intersection with Houck Hollow Road (arrow at the upper left corner of the township on this map from 1860).



In 1800 the census enumerator recorded ten people in the “Ludwick Mansinger” household: five males (one under 10, one 10-15, two 16-25, and one 45+) and 5 females (two under 10, two 16-25, and one over 45), suggesting the family grew by three in the decade, and perhaps one or more of the older daughters had married. The configuration of the “Lewis Minsinger” household a decade later seems odd for a couple in their sixties. While the three children recorded as age 10-15 could match those under 10 in 1800, Ludwig’s wife, already over 45 in 1800, is not likely mother to the five children listed as under 10. Perhaps these were grandchildren in the couple’s care.

Ludwig's will, written 5 May 1817 and presented for probate two weeks later, provided for his "beloved wife Magdalena" and made bequests to their children. In an era when women had few property rights, he clearly wanted to ensure that Magdalena's needs were met for her remaining years. Her legacy reads a bit like a shopping list: each year during her natural life, she was to receive a variety of farm produce (six bushels each wheat and rye, 150 pounds of good pork, ½ bushel good salt, 15 pounds good, ratcheted flax, six pounds clean washed wool), plus defined quantities of sugar, coffee, allspice, pepper, potatoes, and lamp oil, one pair of new shoes, and \$4.00 cash each year. She also had the right to continue living in the house (bequeathed to son Ludwig), and keep the bed, bedstead, and chest.

Presumably Ludwig, Magdalena, some of their children and other descendants were buried in the now-lost Mensinger Cemetery. The 1799 deed described above stated that 1½ acres was set off for a "Religious Society" to build a meeting house. Local histories report that a small Lutheran and Reformed church, known as Mensinger Church, once stood on that property, with a graveyard next to it. The cemetery remained after the building burned, but *The Morning Press* on 25 August 1915 reported that Elias Hons, supposed caretaker (and a Mensinger descendant through his mother), tore down the fence around the graveyard and removed the more than 100 tombstones that once stood there. He planted potatoes and wheat over the graves. Family and friends of those whose resting place was desecrated sued Hons, but the damage was done. The information that those stones might have provided about Mensinger family dates had gone.

The following is a summary of what we could determine about the children that Ludwig Mensinger named in his will:

1. Julian Millar was first child named in the list of bequests, so presumably she was the oldest. Based on data found for some of the other siblings and assumptions about family patterns, she was born say 1770-1773. She might be one of the six females in the 1790 household, or perhaps she was already married by that time. Her common married surname makes it difficult to identify her husband or trace that lineage.
2. Magdalena Mummy, listed second, was born say 1772-1775, and probably married by 1800, given her proposed age and the composition of her father's household in that census year. Her husband might have been George Mummy, shoemaker, whose 1810 Mifflin Township household included a male 45+ and a female 26-44. However, his apparent 1800 entry (George Murray, might be Mummy) lists only two people, both aged 45 and over, which is too old for Magdalena. More research needed.
3. Jacob, next on the list and probably the oldest son, appeared separately in the 1800 and 1808 tax lists, indicating that he was of age. His 1850 census age of 73 points to a birth year of 1776 or 1777, but he might be the other male over 16 in the 1790 enumeration, suggesting birth in 1774 or earlier. He and wife, Mary Gilbert, remained in Mifflin Township; his occupation was cooper. He died before 3 April 1859 when a quit claim deed (Columbia County Deed Book 15, p. 157) by his daughters and heirs, Catherine, wife of George P. Shelhammer; Eve, wife of Daniel Gensil; and Julia Ann Mensinger (later married to Daniel Hons) transferred property of the late Jacob Mensinger.
4. Leonard was also taxed separately in 1808, occupation joiner, estimated birth say 1776-1779. He appears in the 1810 census as a carpenter, aged 26-44, with his probable wife, age 18-25, and two children under 10, living in Sugarloaf Township, Luzerne County. He

may have died after his father wrote his will and before the 1820 census; or he might be the Leonard Mensinger who appears in Redbank, Armstrong County in 1820 and in Madison Township, Geauga County, Ohio in 1830. No potential records for him yet located after that census.

5. Elizabeth Maumy [as written in the will book, more likely Mummy], born say 1778-1781, was likely married by 1810, perhaps to Jacob Mummy, shoemaker, whose household that year included a male and female aged 26-44, plus three children under 10. More research needed to determine which Mummys might have intermarried with the Mensinger daughters.
6. Ludwig Jr. was named as one of the will's executors, bequeathed the homeplace, and given responsibility for his mother. Although records suggest that he was not oldest son, he may have been the oldest still at home then. Born between 1782 and 1786, based on 1850 & 1860 census records, he married Gertrude Rothenberger, and they settled in Beaver Township. Their son Samuel (1820-1877), my husband's 2nd great grandfather married Mary Ann Mummy, daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Klingaman Mumme.



Old marriage documents

7. Not known at this point how Samuel Mumme/Mummy might have been related to the Mummy men married to Ludwig's sisters. Other known children of Ludwig and Gertrude include John (1827-1893) and Daniel (1831-1916). Census records for 1820-1840 suggest they had an older son, perhaps Conrad, born about 1815, who was listed near or next to the elderly couple in the 1850 and 1860 censuses for Beaver Township. They may also have had two unknown daughters, born 1811-1815 and 1816-1820, who were married or deceased by 1840.
8. Barbara Gerhard's husband Peter Gerhard/Gearhart was co-executor of her father's estate. Find-A-Grave (Mifflinville Cemetery) reports her dates as 18 Apr 1788-18 Aug 1868, although the tombstone pictured does not show a date of birth or age. Her 1850 census age of 64 implies birth in 1786; 10 years later, she had aged just 6 years, suggesting a 1790 year of birth. Given the estimated birth years of other children, 1786-1788 might be correct.
9. Margaret, born say 1790, was apparently unmarried when the will was written. No information about whom she might have married or what happened to her.
10. Catherine, born say 1792, was also single in 1817. She received an extra bequest of 25 pounds, payable a year after her father's death. Perhaps she had some kind of disability or impairment which made her less likely to marry. A Catherine Mensinger appears in the 1821 tax list for Mifflin Township as a weaver. No further information yet located regarding her.

11. William was probably the youngest, and he remained on the homestead in Mifflin Township. He was born around 1794-1797 (age 56 in 1850 census, age 63 in 1860) and died before 24 October 1863 when his will was presented for probate. He and wife Hannah may have had 10 children (based on counts in 1830 & 1840 censuses), including William (1826-1885), Jacob (about 1828-after 1865), and Silas (about 1840-1890).

If any readers know more about the descendants of this family, I would be pleased to exchange information. You can reach me at jerupert2@gmail.com.