

**NAME:** JOHANN GEORG "GEORG" HAHN (Family Search I.D. # LH2H-LL9)

**BIRTH:** 6 Oct. 1819 in Gersdorf [1], Kirchheim, Hersfeld, Hesse-Nassau, Prussia Germany

**PARENTS:** Johann "Jacob" Hahn (1788-1838) & Anna Margarethe Stiebing (1795-1861)

**GRAND PARENTS:** Johann "Adam" Hahn (1761-1808) & Anna Katharina Sauer (1767-1814)

**SIBLINGS:** Christina Hahn (1816-1896)  
Johann "Adam" Hahn (1817-1854)  
Johannes Hahn (1833-1833)

**RELIGION:** Lutheran

**MARRIAGE DATE:** 1 February 1849

**SPOUSE:** Elizabeth Herber (1830-1918)

**OCCUPATION:** farmer

**CHILDREN:** William Hahn (1850 – 1910)  
Lewis Hahn (1852 – 1945)  
Jacob Hahn (1854 - 1946)  
Henry Hahn (1856 - Oct. 1937)  
John Hahn (1857 - 1926)  
George H. Hahn (1860 - 1950)  
Mary Hahn (1863 - 1955)  
Christina Hahn (1864 - 1910)  
Conrad Hahn (1867 - 1955)  
Ernest Henry Hahn (1869 -1945)  
Andrew Hahn (1871- 1955)

**DEATH:** 15 Nov. 1889 in Wellesley Township, Waterloo County, Ontario (70 yrs., 1 month, 9 days)

**CAUSE OF DEATH:** stomach cancer

**BURIED:** St. John's Cemetery, Bamberg, Wellesley Township, Ontario

### **GEORG HAHN'S STORY**

**Georg** Hahn was born 6 October, 1819 in Gersdorf, Kirchheim, Hersfeld, Hesse-Nassau, Prussia Germany, to parents Johann Jacob Hahn and Anna Margarethe Stiebing. He was the third of four children. His father was 31 years old and his mother 24 when he was born.

Four days after his birth, on 10 October 1819, he was christened at the church in Frielingen, Kirchheim, Hersfeld, Hesse-Nassau, Prussia Germany. Like his grandfather, father, and brother before him, he was given the first name Johann.

All of these males would be known by their second names on legal documents. This is because the first name, Johann, was traditionally given at baptism and was not used thereafter. However, if a child was named Johannes, like **Georg's** brother born in 1833, then John was recognized as his true name. [2]

The tradition of giving male children the name Johann at baptism was started in the Middle Ages. Possibly because the biblical interpretation of the name John is, "the grace or mercy of the Lord." The Hebrew meaning of Johann was, "Jehovah has been gracious/has shown favor." [3]

Notably, **Georg** was born three years after the Year Without a Summer in 1816. This was the year his sister Christina was born, followed in 1817, by his brother Adam.

The Year Without a Summer is described as a volcanic winter. This was because of the extreme discharge of volcanic ash from the eruption of Mount Tambora in April 1815 in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and the 1814 eruption of Mount Mayon in the Philippines.

Described as "the worst famine of 19th-century mainland Europe" [4] crops failed because of the lack of sunlight and extreme cold. Food shortages were a major issue as food prices rose sharply. Previously, rye had cost 87 marks per ton, but by 1816, it was sold in Prussia for 164 marks per ton, and in 1817, rose to 214 marks per ton. Hungry mobs demonstrated and riots, arson, and looting took place in Germany as well as in other parts of Europe.

To make matters worse, between 1816 and 1819 a major typhus epidemic occurred in parts of Europe. It is thought to have been precipitated by the "malnourishment and famine caused by the Year Without a Summer. More than 65,000 people died as the disease spread out of Ireland and to the rest of Britain." [4]

The Hahn family was spared the worst, but likely these were lean years for **Georg's** father and grandfather, who were both an Ackermann (farmer). Perhaps they ate their livestock, preserves, and what little they could grow to feed themselves. They would have had to mend shoes and clothes and make do without all non-essentials.

There is evidence that Jacob Hahn (**Georg's** father) was a Schueltze (village mayor). It is doubtful that this provided any source of income, but rather it gave him a strong voice in local politics and provided networking advantages.

On 22 March 1838, Jacob (age 50) died. **Georg** was 18 years old, and presumably living at home.

As was the custom, Jacob's body would have been washed, dressed, and laid out in the parlour. Neighbours and relatives would come to pay their respects and say farewell within a 24-72-hour window before last rites and burial took place.

As a symbol of mourning/silent grief ("stille Tauer"), his German widow would have worn black clothes for one to five years for the rest of her life, depending on how the death had affected her. His parents, children and in-laws, out of respect, would also wear black for one year and any grandchildren were dressed in black for six months.

We have no documentation of the cause of death because, in Germany in the 1800s, "most people could afford to only bury their dead without elaborate ceremonies and have the death registered in the local church book. Many of these entries consist of one line, giving very scanty information." [5]

The following year, 1839, **Georg** made the monumental decision to leave the familiar — his country, customs, language, family, and friends — and accept the challenges of life in an under-populated land across the ocean. At age nineteen, **Georg** migrated from Bremen to New York City, United States. Although we do not know the exact reasons compelling him forward to North America, much is written about this period in Germany.

"By 1830 German immigration had increased more than tenfold. From that year until World War I, almost 90 percent of all German emigrants chose the United States as their destination. Once established in their new home, these settlers wrote to family and friends in Europe describing the opportunities available in the U.S. These letters were circulated in German newspapers and books, prompting "chain migrations." By 1832, more than 10,000 immigrants arrived in the U.S. from Germany." [6]

Also, immigration was legalized in 1825 in Prussia and the state went so far as to pay the cost of ship passage to the New World of the poor. The economic reasons for this support "included overpopulation and a lack of resources to feed and house people, years of crop failure and previous famines and crop failure." [6]

The New World offered hope for land acquisition and a better life for German immigrants. [6]

**Georg's** traveling companions were his brother, Johann Adam Hahn and Hans Heinrich Pfaff (of Willingshain, Hessen) who was the brother of the husband of Georg's sister, Christina. They arrived in New York City on 21 August 1839 aboard the brig Estafette.

As iron-built boats didn't exist until 1850, Georg and his party crossed the Atlantic in a wooden ship with sails. It was no doubt an arduous journey. "The conditions on immigrant ships at this time (middle 1840s) were unbelievably bad. Owners sold their excess ship space to agents whose only interest was to fill it with as many passengers as possible. The immigrants were crowded together into unsanitary quarters for voyages of 6 weeks or more & were particularly susceptible to the ravages of disease." [7]

Stormy seas were common and treacherous. "The confusion above deck & the tramping around frightened those in steerage almost out of their wits. The air was foul, the hatches had been battened down for a week. With each roll of the ship the people in the crowded berths were bumped & bruised as they were hurled from side to side against the rough partitions, and there was real danger of crushing the children to death. Water leaked through the decks in such quantity that the beds were soaked & the floor ankle-deep. Candle lanterns could not be lighted, nor had there been cooking for days." [7]

**Georg's** future wife, Elizabeth Herber, had arrived in Canada seven years earlier with her brother, mother and father, after a three-month voyage. In contrast to **Georg**, she was a two-year-old toddler and would not have remembered the voyage.

**Georg** conversely was a young adult. He would need to learn quickly the currency, language, laws, prejudices and norms in this new land or be taken advantage of by unscrupulous individuals. He would need to weigh his opportunities if he were to get beyond meeting his basic needs for shelter and food.

**Georg** likely left New York City to find work in the country as a field hand, eventually travelling to Canada, where he may have worked again as a field hand before applying for 100 acres of Crown land.

**Georg's** decision to head north may have been influenced by Canada's advertising for newcomers, loyal to the crown, to settle its land. The War of 1812-1814 provided the impetus to quickly establish Canadian settlement of land especially along the American-Canadian border and deter future American invasion. "The elite governing class of the new colony, Upper Canada, was heavily

weighted with United Empire Loyalists and the British Crown was relying on them to hold and expand the territory. Beginning very early on and running right up into the twentieth century, advertising campaigns were staged to attract more settlers." [8]

**Georg** would meet Elizabeth Herber in Waterloo County approximately 10 years after leaving Germany. Perhaps they met while attending a German language church service or via a common acquaintance. They were married on 1 February 1849 in Waterloo, Waterloo County. (Georg's brother, Adam was witness to the marriage.) **Georg** was 30 years old and Elizabeth was 19 years old. Such an age difference between bride and groom was not uncommon at the time.

Obviously, economic factors affected marriage opportunities for men. **Georg** could not marry until he could support a wife and children. The choosing of a younger bride may have been a preference for optimizing child bearing years, or just a factor of the times. High immigration always led to men outnumbering available women and it may have been the case that the women of **Georg's** age were already married.

In this early time in Upper Canada history, companionable unions were formed between couples of the same religious and ethnic backgrounds residing within reasonable geographic proximity. [9]

The 1851 census places the young couple two years after marriage in Wellesley Township with one-year-old William. Thus, we surmise they had settled onto the 100 acres affronting Hessen Road that would eventually be legally registered in **Georg's** name. According to an article entitled, Crown Land Grants & Purchasing: Understanding the Crown Land Granting Process: "If the settler took up residence on the land and fulfilled certain settlement duties, he or she would have ended up owning the land." [10]

The settlement duties included:

*"The Locatee shall clear thoroughly the half of the Road width, opposite to the front of his lot, by burning or totally removing all the Timber, Wood and underwood of every kind therefrom. He shall cut down the stumps for the space of ten feet from the centre of the Road, so low, that a Waggon Wheel may easily pass over anything that stands within that space, and he shall sow with Grass-seed the Road so cleared.*

*Upon proof that this has been done, and that some person has been constantly resident upon the Lot for the space of two years, a Patent may issue without other condition of Settlement Duty. But in cases where the Lot has not been so occupied, a Patent shall not issue until the Locatee, in addition to the Road Duties, above prescribed, shall have wholly cleared the Timber from the front of his Lot for the space of one chain.*

*That he shall enter upon the said Lot immediately and occupy it continuously, and shall, during the first five years, clear thereon at the rate of not less than five acres annually for every hundred acres, and build a dwelling house, not less than eighteen feet by twenty-six feet.*

*That he shall not cut any of the growing wood on the said Lot, except for the clearing of the ground, for fuel, buildings and fences thereon, nor dispose of it in any manner, until the land has been paid for in full and Patented." [10]*

"In the early days of settlement, it was not uncommon for women and children to help with the heavy tasks of clearing land, planting and harvesting crops." [11] Elizabeth would be with child every

other year and her household duties would be extensive. Thus, it was fortuitous that **Georg** would father five boys: William (1850); Lewis (1852); Jacob (1854); Henry (1856); John (1857) within eight years of marriage and before his legal ownership of 100 acres on 17 July 1860. His land is identified on the 1861 Tremaine Map of the County of Waterloo. The farm's location is the Wellesley Township, East Section, Concession 6, East Half of Lot 6 close to the hamlet of Bamberg, (today, 4195 Hessen Strasse, Wellesley, Ontario N0B 2T0).

That same year (1860) a sixth son, George (his namesake) was born. Three years later (in 1863) the first girl arrived. She was named Mary and was soon followed by a second girl Christina (1864). Then three more sons rounded out the large German settler family — Conrad (1867), Ernest Henry (1869) and the ninth and last son Andrew (1871). When the last child was born, Georg was 52 years old and Elizabeth was 41.

As a Crown land farmer, **Georg** had to concentrate his energy on clearing and cultivating land, erecting a dwelling of a minimum size, building needed farm buildings, and tending to livestock. He would have toiled in his fields with the oldest of his boys. Each would acquire the skills and knowledge of how to work the land and decide if it was to be his future occupation.

Because their Lutheran faith was important to **Georg** and Elizabeth, they designated a piece of their property on Hessen Road for a cemetery and a log church. Granddaughter, Verna Hahn described a shed for horses behind the church and an apple orchard near the cemetery. The church, identified as the Hahn church, burned down around 1872-3. Work was begun soon after on a new church constructed of stone across the road and renamed St. John's Lutheran Church. The new church was built on property belonging to Katherine Reichart. This church is recognized as a historic building under the Ontario Heritage Act. It celebrated its centennial in 1973. [12]

Verna Hahn said that **Georg** made hard cider from his apples which he enjoyed drinking. Whether this accelerated his death from "stomach cancer" we will never know. He died on 15 November 1889 and was buried in Grave 10-1 in his own St. John's cemetery in Bamberg. His tombstone inscription reads: Hier ruhet/**Georg Hahn**/geb. 6 Oct. 1819/gest. 15 Nov 1889/im Alter von 70 Jah. 1 Mo. 9 Tage (*Here lies Georg Hahn, born 6 Oct. 1819, died 15 Nov. 1889, age 70 years, 1 month, 9 days*). [13]

Today, **Georg** Hahn and Elizabeth Herber Hahn, early 1800s German immigrants, have many descendants spread throughout Waterloo region, other parts of Ontario, and across the United States.

## **NOTES**

[1] "Gersdort, during the many years that the Hahn family lived there, pertained to the Landgraviate of Hesse-Kassel, then the Electorate of Hesse (Kurfürstentum Hessen, or Kurhessen), and later to Hessen-Nassau in Prussia. Today it is in the state of Hessen, Germany."

[2] German Given Names Traditions from Family Tree magazine  
<https://www.familytreemagazine.com/premium/understanding-german-language-and-surnames/#and>

[3] "John" Origin and Meaning  
<https://nameberry.com/babyname/John>

and

[\(https://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/john/\)](https://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/john/)

[4] Year Without a Summer

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year\\_Without\\_a\\_Summer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Year_Without_a_Summer)

[5] Germany Funerary Customs and Practices

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany\\_Funerary\\_Customs\\_and\\_Practices](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Germany_Funerary_Customs_and_Practices)

[6] Library of Congress on Immigration. GERMAN the new surge of growth: Reasons for German immigration to North America

[https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Historical\\_Events\\_and\\_Their\\_Impact\\_on\\_German\\_Research](https://www.familysearch.org/wiki/en/Historical_Events_and_Their_Impact_on_German_Research)

and

CHAPTER XII- Migration Across the Frontiers of Germany by Oberregierungsrat Dr. F. Burgdörffer Member of the German Statistical Office.

<https://www.nber.org/chapters/c5114.pdf>.

and

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German\\_Americans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_Americans)

and

<https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/german4.html>

[7] Transatlantic Crossing

[https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Michigan\\_Material\\_Local/Beaver\\_Island\\_Helen\\_Collar\\_Papers/Subject\\_Cards/EmigrationandImmigrantLife/Pages/Transatlantic-Crossing.aspx](https://www.cmich.edu/library/clarke/ResearchResources/Michigan_Material_Local/Beaver_Island_Helen_Collar_Papers/Subject_Cards/EmigrationandImmigrantLife/Pages/Transatlantic-Crossing.aspx)

[8] Upper Canada (Article by Roger Hall; Updated by Richard Foot; Published Online February 7, 2006; Last Edited-June 7, 2019)

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/upper-canada>

[9] History of Marriage and Divorce; Article by Peter Ward; Updated by Richard Foot; Published Online February 7, 2006; Last Edited April 7, 2016

<https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/history-of-marriage-and-divorce>

[10] Crown Land Grants & Purchasing: Understanding the Crown land Granting Process

<http://hwtproject.ca/the-township/crown-land-patents/>

[11] Upper Canada Village 1860's life

[https://www.uppercanadavillage.com/1860s-](https://www.uppercanadavillage.com/1860s-life/agriculture/#:~:text=Farming%20began%20in%20this%20area,arrival%20of%20the%20Loyalist%20settlers.&text=By%20the%201830s%20farming%20was,surpluses%20which%20farmers%20could%20produce.)

[life/agriculture/#:~:text=Farming%20began%20in%20this%20area,arrival%20of%20the%20Loyalist%20settlers.&text=By%20the%201830s%20farming%20was,surpluses%20which%20farmers%20could%20produce.](https://www.uppercanadavillage.com/1860s-life/agriculture/#:~:text=Farming%20began%20in%20this%20area,arrival%20of%20the%20Loyalist%20settlers.&text=By%20the%201830s%20farming%20was,surpluses%20which%20farmers%20could%20produce.)

[12] Canada's Historic Places

<https://www.historicplaces.ca/en/rep-reg/place-lieu.aspx?id=9722>

[13] Waterloo Wellington Branch, Ontario, Genealogical Society, Kitchener, 1990 has published that Findagrave.com has Georg erroneously buried in Emmanuel Lutheran Cemetery, Petersburg. He is buried in Bamberg.

**DRAFT 8: September 7, 2020**

**WRITTEN by Dianne Wittig**

**EDITS by John Rogers and Dan Schneider**