

# From Erwin Hochstättler, Cologne, Germany

[This letter from Elwin Hochstättler to J. Virgil Miller, in response to Virgil's questions, is based on Elwin's research of primary documents in Europe over several decades. Here Virgil translates and summarizes part of the Feb. 17, 2002 letter, and makes additional observations in the accompanying article. Some explanations are given in brackets. The personal pronoun "my" in the first line and elsewhere refers to Erwin, not Virgil. In reading this letter you will want to refer back to the map on page 3 of the March 2002 *Newsletter*. For Elwin's previous article on the European background of the immigrant Jacob Hochstetler, see *Newsletter*, Sept. 1989, p. 3ff.]

**O**n my map of Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, Alsace and vicinity, there is a place called "Rauenthal" parallel to the "Leberthal" [Valley of Lièvre] about two kilometers from it. The "Cense du Prey" [leased land called "The Meadow"] was in the neighborhood of La Petite Lièpvre, where Jacob Hochstetler, Sr. was living on July 21, 1714. It could have been on the ridge between the two valleys. His residence at the "Cense," which can also mean "dairy," could explain that he had had a business selling cheese, in which he had a total of 345 L.T. [local currency, Livres Tournois—see Robert Baecher, *Souvenance Anabaptiste*, 1987, p. 74]. In 1717 Jacob's address was given as "Petite Lièvre."

Muesbach, only 6.5 km. away, was the home of the Waglers. Perhaps Joannis H., my ancestor, met his wife Anna Wagler there. During 1697 and in the years following, Echery was given as the home village of Jacob Hochstetler, Sr. There was a pastureland called the Prince's Meadow [Le Prince Prey] which he leased for 157.10 L.T. It was at the lower end of the Noblemen's Forest. He then made a lease with Jean Anthenas and his wife Otilie Meyer in a rent and lease agreement concerning the house and farm operation of her deceased father, in La Petite Lièpvre.

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Apparently Jacob H., Sr. had been mainly engaged in farming, for in 1712 his possessions included one house, eight cows, four young cattle, one pig, and one goat. Jacob Amman, who then also lived at La Petite Lièpvre, in 1712 had only two cows and three goats in his possession, and no house. On May 16, 1709, Jacob H, Sr., still lived in Echery, at least until May 16, 1711, when he bought a dilapidated farm at Petite Lièvre for 900 L.T.

It is a puzzle that Jacob H., Sr.'s dwelling was still in Echery on Oct. 10, 1712, and yet on the same day sold a "Maison Seize" [House 16 ??] with a garden for 300 L.T., also a wooden shed for 300 L.T. and a pasture for 150 L.T., "below J. Amman's place," although Jacob H. had also rented a house and farm building in La Petite Lièvre and got a lease for it. The pasture Jacob obtained on Sept. 30, 1697 from Anne Freyly, the widow of Jean Weis, was called "The Prince's Meadow." On April 15, 1713, Jacob H. signed a rental agreement for a house in La Petite Lièvre with Jean Anthenas, the son of his deceased landlord, at the cost of 140 L.T. a year, possibly because the previous one of 1707 had expired. In 1714 it appears that the rental of the "Cense du Prey de Raue" was on more favorable terms or just more desirable. One must wonder why Jacob H., Sr. was still making rental agreements, even though in 1712 the order had been given for the Anabaptists to leave.

At any rate Jacob H. had sold his residence in Echery for 750 L.T. It is surprising in these documents, there is no mention of a wife (that is, if he was married). On the other hand, in a list of 21 Anabaptists in the year 1732, 19 had no wife listed. There is naturally the question of who the "Veuve Hochstette" mentioned in the list for La Petite Lièvre was. She wasn't listed in the "List of Anabaptists," but as the

family head in a general list. The same way of spelling the name makes me wonder if she was the mother of the "Pierre Hochstette who was on the way to Breisach with two loaded wagons." Besides him, the widow could have been the mother of Vrena Hochstattler, who was living with her sister and brother-in-law Michel Blanc and his wife in 1741, when she died single at the age of 25. At that time Michel Blanc was living at the "Landhaus," that is, the main house of a larger estate. [It might mean that he was the estate manager, or steward (cf. Fortelbach Cemetery List in *Mennonite Family History*, Jan. 1995)].

In connection with the "Landhaus," it is interesting to note that already on July 20, 1708, Melchior Schowalter, an Anabaptist, was in charge of the Noblemen's Dairy. On April 4, 1754, Ulrich Sommer and Anna Blanc, his wife, gave up the management of an estate, in favor of his son-in-law, Nicholas Roth: the farm was called "auf der Matte" and Ulrich lived thereafter by himself a bit higher up from the farm. In a document (SR. # E 2014) found in the Colmar Archives, there is a notice that: on Feb. 14, 1774, Johannes Roth was born in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines, and married the daughter of an Anabaptist at

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Weinberg in Val de Villé. The parents must have lived there at the same time as Joannis Hochstettler [Elwin's ancestor: father of Isaac (DJH woo), and brother of the immigrant Jacob]. From 1742 to 1744 Johannes Roth and his father-in-law Nici Blanc were the lease-holders of the Royal Sheep Ranch at Heidern Heithern and on the "Hattenschlag."

I hope I haven't dwelt too long on details about Ste. Marie, but as I went through your questions, I was surprised that some of my notes, which seemed unimportant at the time, become important to show the relationships between the Hochstettler, Blanc, Roth, Sommer and

Wagler families, as well as to know the settlements like Markirch (Ste. Marie), Weinberg, and in the Palatinate.

The border between Lorraine and the domain of the Lord of Rappoltstein and Alsace went through the middle of Markirch and led through the streets from Selestat on the Rhine to the west. It would thus be very simple for a person to cross the border into Lorraine. I haven't seen any account that said Jacob, Sr. ever used that way to escape. Rather, I suspect that his house in La Petite Lièpvre was so out-of-the-way that he felt rather safe there.

## **New Insights Concerning the Family of Jacob Hochstettler, Sr.**

By J. Virgil Miller, DJH 5684

[This is a discussion of the Feb. 17, 2002 letter from Erwin Hochstättler, Cologne, Germany. The reader may want to refer to the map on page 3 of the March 2002 *Newsletter*.]

**T**he information in the above letter establishes Jacob Hochstettler, Sr. as a neighbor and colleague of Jacob Amman, the leader of the Amish wing of the Anabaptists. They lived near each other in Ste. Marie-aux-Mines (German: **Markirch**) in Alsace. Another leader, named even before 1700, as early as 1697, was Nicholas Blank. The central place for the Anabaptists at first was at Echery, a part of Ste. Marie, but they kept moving out in the direction of La Petite Lièpvre. This is where both Jacob Hochstettler, Sr. and Jacob Amman were living in 1712, the approximate year of the birth of our ancestor the immigrant Jacob Hochstettler. Nicholas Blanc was living farther out, perhaps in Lorraine territory at a place called Daumon-goutte.

As we will see, the fortunes of Blanes and the Hochstettlers were intertwined until a much later period. Erwin questions why Jacob, Sr. went to the trouble of leasing a new property in 1714, since the edict for all Anabaptists to leave French territory had been made in 1712. The fact of the matter is that many Anabaptists stayed after that date. It is possible that Daumongoutte lay outside the Alsatian frontier in Lorraine. We do not know the status of the "Cense due Prey du Raue," though it might also be missed, because of its out-of-the-way location. If our ancestor Jacob was born in 1712, and his brother Johannes ca. 1710, it maybe an added reason why Jacob the father wished to get further away from the town. Nicholas Blanc seems to have been Jacob's constant source of help.

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The 1720 document about Jacob Hochstettler of Winterkraut in Canton Bern says that the Lehrer (minister) Jacob Hochstettler secretly came back from Markirch to Bern territory to see about the emigration of some Anabaptist women. (See *Newsletter*, March 2000). We don't know whether he was successful, or whether the women included his own wife and daughters. One could speculate that his wife had died in Switzerland, and his older children were married and did not choose to leave. He may have married again in Ste. Marie (daughter or sister of Niki Blanc?), which would account for his having young children, as he had already been in Alsace since 1697. The children that Erwin says may be his were: the WIFE of Michel Blanc, and VRENA, a single daughter, born in 1716, who died single in 1741, as well as JOHANNES, Erwin's ancestor, and our ancestor JACOB.

There is a "Veuve Hostette" listed in 1732 in a general list. Erwin asks if she could have been the mother of "Pierre Hochstette, who was transporting goods to Breisach in Baden," or even the second wife of Jacob, Sr., now deceased. Michel may have been the son of Niki Blanc, which could have been the bond between Niki Blanc and Jacob, Sr. By 1732 Johannes Hochstettler (father of Isaak, ancestor of Erwin) would have been 22 years old, and could well have been seeking a wife among the daughters of the Wagler family of Muesbach. Both Johannes and Jacob our ancestor, age 20, would have been old enough to leave home, especially under an order of expulsion.

The next place Erwin's ancestor Johannes appears is Weinberg, or the Val de Vile in French, a community about fifty miles north of Ste. Marie. The record we have of Johannes Hochstetler and wife Anna Wagler is the record of the birth of a child in 1747. At that time the father was about 37, and his brother Jacob the immigrant had already been nine years in America. So in spite of new facts about our family there remain large gaps in our knowledge of the family in Europe. The record we have of Johannes Hochstetler and wife Anna Wagler is the record of the birth of a child in 1747. At that time the father was about 37, and his brother Jacob the immigrant had already been nine years in America. So in spite of new facts about our family there remain large gaps in our knowledge of the family in Europe.