

PROPSTS IN AMERICA

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FOREWORD

Why did I write this? My name is Brobst, which derived from Probst. But not Propst. So what's the connection?

Well, not much, that I can see. Other than the similarity of names! But when I started to research my own family Brobst, and found that the earlier Swiss and German name was Probst, I also found many references to the name "Propst". At first, I assumed they were all just different spellings of the same name. 'Twas not to be, however.

The problem arose when I found two Johann Michael Probsts who arrived in Philadelphia about the same time 1732 and 1733. Early research had confused the two. One of them, born in 1701 and who arrived in 1732 on the "John and William", was the brother of my own ancestor, Philipp Jacob Probst. They settled in Berks and Northampton (now Lehigh) Counties, in eastern Pennsylvania. He had come from the Palatinate, where he had been living in the little town of Minfeld, near Kandel. When he arrived with his brother, the English clerks who spoke no German just wrote down the phonetic spelling of the name, and it came out "Brobst" for Philipp Jacob, but remained as "Probst" for Johann Michael, although many of Johann Michael's descendants took the name Brobst. He married Anna Maria Kerr in Northampton County.

The other was Johann Michael Propst who had come from Bonningheim, Wurttemberg, Germany, in 1733 on the "Samuel". The confusion was increased when the Samuel's papers showed a clear signature "Probst", not "Propst". Other related documents just as clearly showed "Propst", which has since proven to be the case. With his parents and sister, he settled first in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he married Anna Maria Keller! Later, after she died and he remarried, the family then moved southwest to found the village of Propstburg, in Pendleton County, West Virginia.

So Johann Michael Probst (1701) became part of a long line of Brobsts in America, and Johann Michael Propst (1712) started a long line of Propsts in America. Anna Maria Kerr and Anna Maria Keller? Holy Mackerel, no wonder there was confusion!! And other immigrant Probsts and Propsts followed over the next 150 years, adding further to the confusion.

After a few years, I found that I had put together more Probst and

Brobst data than any other researchers, and I became Curator of the Brobst Family Historical Registry, with tens of thousands of names of Probst/Brobst ancestors. We have our own website for the Brobst Registry: <http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~brobst/>, with the entire mass of genealogical data available on-line.

In the process of trying to put together all the pieces of the Probst jig-saw puzzle, I collected a great deal of Propst information as well, along with my Probst and Brobst data. As more of each came in, I just added it to the monstrous puzzle. (Imagine trying to assemble a large such puzzle with a lot of extra pieces from other puzzles thrown in!) Pretty soon, I was getting Propst inquiries, as well as Probst and Brobst ones. I even had a separate appendix in The Brobst Chronicle relating to the Propsts. And I began to realize more and more that the two families were not related at all! One was of Swiss origin, the other of German origin. The names were similar, relating to the profession of the family members back in the 1300s to the 1500s.

I found that I had almost as much information on the Propsts as I did on the Brobsts! It was becoming more than I could handle. As the confusion went on, and the amount of data I collected on Propsts, Probsts, and Brobst grew exponentially, I was able fortunately to find a most gracious and generous lady who agreed to take over the collection of Propst data, and leave me to my own ancestors. Dianne Camp of Charlotte, North Carolina, is now the Curator of the Propst Family Registry. Her collection of Propst information is also posted on her Propst website: <http://CampD.tripod.com>. (Be sure to take a look! And if you ever get to West Virginia, be sure to visit Propstburg and the Old Propst Church near Brandywine.)

And yet, I still had in my possession a lot of background information and understanding of the Propst family history. What to do with it? Here it is. And with the self-publication of this little book, I bow out of Propstology, and retreat into my own world of Probstology and Brobstology! But feel free to come back to me with questions on the Propsts; I may be able to direct you to someone who can provide you with the answers.

Happy Hunting!

Bill Brobst
February, 2000
Entstehungsgeschichte der Name Propst

Which is just another way of saying "Origin and History of the Name Propst".

Where did the name "Propst" come from? The surname "Propst" is occupational in origin. The Swiss name "Probst" and the German names "Probst" and "Propst" all have the same occupational meaning: a prelate, pryor, abbot, estate manager, overseer, or lay administrator or superintendent of a Roman Catholic Church diocese (kn Germany) or a Lutheran synod (in Switzerland). "Probst. A provost, superintendent, or official head of an institution." In Schwabia and Bavaria, and often elsewhere in Germany and Switzerland, the b's and p's used to be (and still are, to some extent) phonetically interchangeable, so there might be some relationship there as well. And, since many of the Germans pronounced their "b" and "p" pretty much the same, there were many cases of interchanged spelling. Propst became Probst, Probst became Propst. In the early-1600s, after the Thirty Years War, in the repopulation movement, many Probsts moved from Switzerland to southern Germany and to Alsace, France; similarly many Saxon Propsts moved south. The Probsts emigrated from the Probst homeland in Kanton Bern, Switzerland, into both the Bavarian Allgäu and the Pfalz, Germany, and into Alsace, France. (The Bavarian Probsts who came to America probably came originally from Switzerland.) The Propsts had emigrated southward from Saxony into Bavaria and the Palatinate, adding to the mixture of names. The Propsts and Probsts may have had a common origin prior to the 1500s, but that has not been determined.

In Saxony, the name Propst also was in many cases changed over the decades into Prast, Prahst, Praast, and Pragst. Further, many early Pennsylvania records use the names "Propst", "Probst", and "Brobst" interchangeably. Brobst sometimes appears, as do Probsts and Propts. A single person's name might go through several name changes in different records. More confusion, at least for genealogists.

"Provost" is defined by Webster as "The highest official in certain collegiate churches or cathedrals", thereby retaining the original Saxon definition. But Webster also defines it as the keeper of a prison!

The corresponding French name is "Prevost" or "prévôt", and in Latin it is the ponderous and preposterous term "praepositus", from whence the other words derive! Propst, Probst, Prevost, and Praepositus were the medieval titles for the clerical offices, and even for the secular office of mayor (mostly in France).

Note: The German word "Obst" means "fruit". (An "Obstgarten" is an orchard.) There does not seem to be any known relationship between "Obst" and "Probst", however.

Another problem is that most of the documents in those days were written in old German script, very difficult to read for a non-German,

and so often transcribed erroneously, by the English-speaking clerks who probably didn't even understand the new settlers. The agents spoke English, the immigrants spoke German. Combine this language barrier with children squalling and squabbling, dogs barking, clerks often inept or drunk, and the result was chaos.

In America, in 1727, the inflow of people became so great, the Provincial Council of the Colony of Pennsylvania decided upon certain regulations which required the newcomers to subscribe to an oath of allegiance to the Monarchy of Great Britain, as required by the British Crown. The ship's captains were required to have passenger lists. Upon arrival in Pennsylvania, the new citizens were required to sign an agreement to live up to the rules and regulations of the Colony. Thus there were three lists of the passengers. Unfortunately, they rarely agreed in the spelling of the German family names! The English clerks just didn't understand either written or spoken German.

Note: Interestingly, the German immigrants emigrated through Holland on English ships to America, and swore allegiance to the British queen, all in the interests of seeking freedom!

The Probsts who arrived in 1732 on the ship "John and William" were all listed on the captain's manifest by the name "Proops", and were initially registered in Lehigh County, some as "Probst", and some as "Brobst". It appears that by 1750, just about all of the descendants of Philipp Jacob had made the change from "Probst" to "Brobst". By 1756, on the tax rolls in Albany Township, Berks County, most of them were listed as "Brobst." Most of the descendants of Philipp Jacob's younger brother, Johann Michael, had also made the same switch, although a few of them dropped the "r" and became "Bobst", and some of them retained the name "Probst". Some Pennsylvania census reports list the name also as Bropst, Brobzt, Brobtz, Brobts, and Propts. Another common spelling is "Brobft"; this apparently arises when the German script "s" is used. (Zum Beispiel, the word "possession" is, auf alt Deutsch, written "poffeffion"!)

The Propsts who arrived on the ship "Samuel" in 1733 -- Hans Michael and wife Barbli, and their children Johann Michael (1712) and Barbara -- were registered on board as "Prospts"! In 1732, it was "Proops". (Note that in German the "oo" is pronounced as a long "o".) On another list, the men were listed as "Probst", but the women as "Brobst"! Elsewhere, Johann Michael Propst's sister Barbara was listed as "Brofpts". (It should be noted that the German script "s" often appears to be an "f".) Their Propst family went to West Virginia and retained the spelling Propst to this day. Other Propsts and Probsts who emigrated to America after 1733 retained the German or Swiss spelling of their name. None of them became "Brobst".

Many early German records of these Propst families show the spelling as "Propstin". As far as can be determined, these are all the same people. The German language structure is such that for many surnames, the letters "-in", "-en", or "-n" are added to an unmarried woman's surname, although rarely to a man's. For example, Johann Michael Propst's first wife was often referred to as Anna Maria Kellerin before her marriage, even though Keller was the name of her first husband, not her married name. Susanna Schneider would have been Susanna Schneiderin. If the family name ended in an "e", the suffix "n" was added. Similar confusion exists with regard to the spelling of first names. Phillip is sometimes spelled as Philipp, Philip, or even Phillipp. Marie/Maria, Anne/- Anna, Michael/Michel/Mickell, Johan/Johann/Johannes/Jean are other examples.

A HISTORY OF THE EARLY PROPST FAMILIES IN AMERICA

The Propst name is of Germanic origin, primarily from the region of Saxony in northern Germany. The name itself refers to a profession, much as Schmidt or Schneider. A propst was a lay leader of a diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, comparable to a vicar or a prior. One of the Saxon evangelist Martin Luther's friends was a Jacob Propst, or Jacob the Propst.

The Probst name is of Swiss origin, primarily from the region of Kanton Berne in northwest Switzerland. The meaning of the name is similar, for the comparable position in the Lutheran or Reformed synod.

There were some Pennsylvania Propsts who went from Philadelphia and Lancaster to West Virginia after their immigration, many without even passing through the Alleghenies of eastern Pennsylvania, or perhaps lingering there only for a short time. Other Propsts moved directly into southern North Carolina after their arrival in America, and some others went directly to southwestern Wisconsin.

THE WEST VIRGINIA PROPSTS

The first known immigrant Propst family was Hans Michael Propst (1679) (age 54) and his wife Barbara (1670) (age 53), with their two children Johann Michael (21) and Anna Barbara (8). They arrived in America on Aug 17 1733 in Philadelphia on the ship "Samuel", Hugh Percy, Master, coming out of Rotterdam. On the ship's papers, the names were shown as Michael Propts, Barbli Bropts, Johan Michal Propts, and Barbara Bropts. On one set of immigration clearance (arrival) papers, the names were

shown as "Michael Probst" and "Johs. Michall Probst." It is noted that the signature of Johann Michael Propst on the immigration and oath of allegiance papers is in the name of "Johann Michael Probst", rather than Propst. His father was apparently illiterate, for the clerk signed his name for him, as "Michael Propst". The differences in spelling of the last name is noted, but no explanation of the difference has surfaced, other than the difficulty of the English clerks in understanding the German language. The family name historically has been Propst, but Johann Michael evidently preferred Probst.

Shortly thereafter, they went to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, but apparently spent little time in that part of Pennsylvania (and none in the Allemaengle), but instead migrated quickly southwestward, into what is now Lancaster and York, then, in the early 1750s, across the Susquehannah River, and through Maryland down into the Shenandoah River Valley of northern Virginia into what was originally Rockingham and Augusta County, Virginia, and which later became Pendleton County, West Virginia. They lived in the Lancaster area until 1745 before moving on into Augusta County. Whether Hans Michael stayed in Lancaster or moved into Virginia with Johan Michael is not known.

Hans Michael Propst's origins are uncertain. What does seem certain is that he was not related to the Swiss/German Probsts, although he may have been living in the Palatinate. Hans Michael's birth year was determined to be 1679 from the ship's manifest which listed him as being 54 years old in 1733. (And how accurate were the ship's records?) They were just a few of the tens of thousands of Germans who emigrated to America in the 1700s to settle in "Penn's Sylvania", a land opened up to immigrants looking for a new life free of political and religious persecution. Records in Frederick Co, MD, state that Johann Michael Propst and his father Hans Michael Propst came from Wurttemberg, Germany (Bavaria), but a search of the records of Wurttemberg immigrants failed to list them. So it is not known for sure from whence in Germany they came, but it appears most likely that they came from Bonningheim, a small village near Wurttemberg. Hans Michael was the son of Hans Michael, and the grandson of Johannes Propst.

Johann Michael Propst

In Lancaster, in Dec 1733, in the Muddy Branch Lutheran Church in Cocalico Township, Johann Michael Propst (b. 1712) married Anna Maria Keller, widow of Peter Keller; ceremony by Rev. Johann Caspar Stoeber. They had four children - Philip, Daniel, and Leonard, and Johann Michael, Jr (I). What happened to Anna Maria is not known for sure, but

she probably died as a result of childbirth in July 1738 with Johann Michael, Jr., who also died as an infant..

(Note: the family history of the Kellers has not been revealed. There were Kellers living in Lancaster at the time, although no Kellers were found among the names of immigrants from 1720-1735.)

(Note: For many recent years, it had been assumed that Anna Maria's husband Johann Michael was the brother of Philip Jacob Probst, who had arrived in Philadelphia a year earlier, and then moved to Lynn Township, Northampton (Lehigh) County to rejoin the families of his brother and sister. That now seems highly unlikely, and it is much more likely that it was Johann Michael Propst who married Ms. Keller. Johann Michael Propst signed his name Johann Michael Probst.

It didn't take Johann Michael, Sr., long to recover from her death, for while still in Lancaster, Johann Michael married Maria Margaretha Corell in Lancaster County on Dec. 3, 1738, again by Rev. Stoever. They had four children while living in New Holland, Lancaster County - John George, Frederick George, Johann Michael Jr (II), and Margaretha Barbara.

From "Index and Abstract of Deeds in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania": In 1735, John Smoze of Leacock Township, Lancaster Co, sold 153 acres of land there to Michael Probtz, a tailor, for 78 pounds. In 1741, Michael had also bought some land on King Street in Lancaster. On July 1 1743, the Smoze land was resold by Michael and wife Margaretha to John Fierre for 82 pounds.

Maria Margaretha apparently died around 1745, for shortly after the birth of their fourth child, he married Catherine Elizabeth (last name unknown). They had six children -- Catharina Barbara, Maria Elizabeth, Frederick George, George Peter, Maria Eva, and Heinrich. It is possible that some or all of those six children could have been the offspring of Maria Margaretha Corell, and the marriage to Catherine Elizabeth took place later.

According to one history, Johann Michael either was or may have been a Moravian, and probably passed through the Moravian community of Bethlehem on the way to Lancaster. On the other hand, he and Anna Maria Keller were married in the Muddy Creek Lutheran Church by Rev. Johann Caspar Stoever, a Lutheran minister. So the question of whether he was Moravian or Lutheran is still open. Later, he was to found a Lutheran church in West Virginia. That same history records that Johann Michael had:

".... in the year 1749 entertained in his home along the South Fork

certain Moravian missionaries from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, who he had previously known in that area before his moving to the Pendleton County area."

There are Propsts buried in the Strasburg Mennonite Cemetery, the Mellinger Mennonite Cemetery, the Millersville Cemetery, and the Mt. Eden Lutheran Cemetery, all in the Lancaster area. By 1778, there were no more Propsts in the Lancaster area.

Sometime after the birth of Margaretha Barbara in 1745 (recorded in Lancaster County), after selling his land in Lancaster County, and before 1749, he and his family left the Lancaster area and migrated southwestward. They probably followed one of the two most common routes: (1) the Old Philadelphia Wagon Road, which ran westward from Philadelphia to Gettysburg, and then headed south into Maryland (through what are now Hagerstown and Frederick) and on into Virginia and North Carolina, or (2) The Moravian Trail, a more easterly parallel route.

While enroute to Virginia, they passed through Frederick County, Maryland, for there are records there showing their presence. Those records show Johann Michael and his father Hans Michael; no mention is made in the one Frederick County record found to date of any of the children other than Philip. (Two Brobsts are shown in Frederick County as well, but they were of the immigrant sons of Christophel Probst from Kandel [John Brobst, b 1768 in Berks Co, and Daniel, b 1796 in Berks Co]).

After leaving Maryland, they continued down into the Shenandoah River Valley of Northern Virginia into "Germany Valley", an area that was originally in Rockingham County, Virginia, which later became Augusta County, Virginia. That area is located just south of Brandywine, in what is now Pendleton County, West Virginia. His parents probably (but not proven) moved with him, as well as the six surviving children of his first two marriages, and perhaps his sister Barbara, also.

Schuyler Brossman states: "He was in Pendleton County, Virginia, now West Virginia, in the 1740s. Some of his visitors there were Moravian Missionaries who knew him when he lived in Lehigh County, Pa, before they went on to Va." Brossman evidently was referring to Hively's history of the Old Propst Church. While it seems clear that they may have passed through Lehigh County on their way from Bethlehem to Lancaster, it is doubtful that they actually lived in Lehigh County; this may have been just some confusion with the Probsts who did live in Lehigh County.

Exactly when he left Lancaster and arrived in Pendleton (then Augusta) County is not certain. One record states he was there in the 1749.

However, it is questionable whether he was actually there that early. Another record states he settled in Pendleton County in 1753, and is listed as one of the early Pioneers there. Whatever his actual arrival date, and whether with or without his father, he established the village of Propstburg, Pendleton County, West Virginia. Certainly, he arrived in that area between 1746 and 1753, and not much before 1749.

Where did his third marriage, to Catherine Elizabeth, take place? Not in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, for the Lancaster County church records which recorded his first two marriages make no mention of it. Another Lancaster County historical record also notes only the first two marriages. It must be assumed that either (1) his second wife, Maria Margaretha Corell, accompanied him southwestward, and his third marriage took place probably after their arrival in Virginia, or (2) she died in Lancaster about 1746, thereby encouraging him to leave for Virginia.

By the late 1750s, they were well settled in "Germany Valley", along a small creek leading into the South Fork. For many decades, this area was called "Propstburg". In 1756, he and William Dyer were appointed road overseers, replacing William Hevener. He was appointed a "Processioner" on the South Fork of the Potomac in 1767. In 1769, he donated 3½ acres of his 415 acre tract in Propstburg for the building of the first Lutheran Church in West Virginia. (He also owned 240 additional acres elsewhere in Germany Valley.) Today, the third "Old Propst Church" stands on that site, along with the cemetery where Michael and his wife, Catherine, are buried. The fate of Michael's parents is not known. Johann Michael died in 1786. His will, dated Dec 19, 1785, gives some details of his family.

For many decades, this area was called "Germany Valley" and the village was "Propstburg". In 1769, he and his wife Catherine sold, for 5 shillings, 3½ acres of his 415 acre tract in Propstburg for the building of the first Lutheran Church in West Virginia. (He also owned 240 additional acres elsewhere in Germany Valley.) Today, the third "Old Propst Church" stands on that site, along with the cemetery where Michael and his wife, Catherine, are buried. The fate of Michael's parents is not known. Johann Michael died in 1786. His will, dated Dec 19, 1785, gives some details of his family. The historic marker in Propstburg, WV, shows his wife's name as Catherine in 1769. Family records show that Catherine was clearly the mother of Heinrich, born between 1759 and 1764.

Morton's History of Pendleton County states: "The Pioneer Propst willed 100 acres to his son Henry and 20 pounds (\$66.67) to each of his three daughters. His son Philip was the first person to be buried in the yard of the oldest church in Pendleton. The inventory of the property of Frederick who died

in 1801, amounted to 2,321.80. The sons mostly remained around the original homestead, the locality being know as "Propstburg". The dispersion of the family has been chiefly southward and westward, the connection being especially numerous between the upper courses fo the South Branch and South Fork. The family furnished more soldiers to the Confederate Army than any other in the county. Jacob and his son John J. were noted powder-makers in their day and the product was considered of superior quality. The remains of one of the old mills is on the farm of Laban H. Propst."

Some more details about the next two generations of Propsts may be found in the "The Brobst Chronicles". Details of later generations may be found in other references., The Family History Center in Salt Lake Center has files on hundreds of Propsts, many or most of whom might well be descendants of this early Propst family.

Anna Barbara Propst

Johann Michael's sister, Anna Barbara, did not go immediately with her family after they arrived in Philadelphia. Anna Barbara Propst, born abt 1725, stayed behind in the Philadelphia area (why?) and nine years later, at the age of 17 in 1742, she married Johan Conrad Gauger, son of Johan Georg Gaukel from Rohrbach, Wurtemberg, Germany. (What she did between 1733 and 1742 is not known.) They lived in New Jersey from 1742 to sometime between 1760 and 1768, when they left New Jersey and moved on to the Pendleton/Rockingham/Augusta County area, Virginia, where Johann Michael Propst (b 1712) had settled with his children and third wife, Catherine.

It appears that J. Conrad's father, Johan Georg, had come to America first in 1717, remained for probably twelve years, returned to Germany, and then came to America again in 1732 when J. Conrad was about 18. Upon his first arrival, he apparently moved into the area of Old Goshenhoppen, Berks Co, PA. When he returned in 1732, he apparently settled in Salem Co, NJ, but probably moved later back to the Old Goshenhoppen area. At least one of his children, J. Georg, Jr, was left behind and came to America in 1739 with his family.

Johan Conrad Gauger arrived in America, Phila, Sep 1736 with his brother George Nicholas Gauger who spent most of his life in Berks Co, PA. This was several years after the second arrival of his father, mentioned below. Johan Conrad and George Nicholas were closely associated and in 1750 they were both, along with others, engaged in reorganizing the Friesburg Lutheran Church in Cohansie, Salem Co, NJ. Conrad's son George signed for land in Hampshire Co, VA in Oct 1760.

Ten years after his father returned, in 1742, J. Conrad married Anna Barbara Propst. The Cowpers descended from this same Gaukler family. It is noted that there were several Cowper/Propst marriages in Pendleton Co, WV, one involving J. Michael Propst's daughter by his third marriage, Maria Elisabeth. The records of the Lutheran Congregation at Old Goshenhoppen, Berks Co, cited Johan George Gaugler as being a papist (Roman Catholic) of Scherreberg or Odewald in the Mainz region of Germany.

The connection between the Propsts and the Gaugers/Gaukels while in Germany is noted; they all came from the Wurttemberg area.

Interestingly, these West Virginia Propsts retained the original German spelling of "Propst", and use that spelling today. Also interesting is that their pronunciation of the name is with the German short "o" (as in "crop"), rather than the American long "o" (as in "probe"). This may be unique to the West Virginia Propsts, as most Propsts elsewhere in the United States use the long "o".

History of "Propst Country", WV

Prior to 1700, the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia was inhabited primarily by Indians, French soldiers, and wild animals. The Indians were of the Algonquin family; primarily the Senedos Tribe which was exterminated around 1732 in a battle between the Delawares and the Catawbias.

The first non-French whites to see this territory were in a party of about fifty explorers, led by the Alexander Spotswood, Governor of Virginia, in 1716. The area became colonized with European settlers in about 1732, and became known as the Augusta Territory in 1738. So the Propsts, who arrived in 1733 or 1734, were among the very first settlers in this area.

In Virginia, Augusta County was established in 1745; Rockingham County was formed in 1778 from Augusta County. In 1787, an Act of the Virginia Assembly was passed creating Pendleton County. This Act transferred the northwest boundary of western Rockingham County some 25 miles southeastward, that is, from the Allegheny Mountain to its present position on the Shenandoah Mountain. When West Virginia was created from western Virginia in the mid 1800s, Pendleton County became part of West Virginia.

The Shenandoah Valley where the Propsts settled became famous in the Civil War. On April 1, 1862, Confederate General Stonewall Jackson began his campaign in the Shenandoah Valley, disrupting Union forces

there. In September of 1864, the Valley became even more famous because of the Battle of Cedar Creek, where Union General Philip Sheridan attacked the Confederates and crushed the Southern forces in the Shenandoah Valley. The Valley remained Union for the rest of the war. Thirty-eight Propsts fought in the Virginia Confederate forces during the Civil War; over half of them were killed or wounded.

Today, this area of Pendleton County, West Virginia, is still called "Germany Valley", and lies nestled between the north and south forks of the South Branch of the "Potowmack" (headwaters of the Potomac River).

The original Propst lands in Pendleton County still remain today in the hands of Propst descendants. The local telephone books are full of Propsts. Propst family reunions are still held annually at the end of June (the day before Father's Day) at the Old Propst Church south of Brandywine. Other descendants of this family may be found in Catawba and Randolph Counties, North Carolina, in the area of Hickory and Lenore; there is even a Propst Cross roads near Hickory.

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The 1810 census of Pendleton County shows numerous Propsts: Adam, Christian, Daniel, George, George, Henry, Henry, Jacob, John, John, Leonard, Michael, Michael Jr. Their family name was spelled "Propts"! There were no Propsts, Probsts, or Brobsts. There were also two Propts' in Rockingham County, just across the Virginia state line: Henry and Michael. Most of the boys of the immediate first few generations down from Johann Michael (1812) remained around the original homestead, and few migrated out of Pendleton County. The Pendleton County Propsts furnished more men -- 35 -- to fight in the Confederate army than any other family in Pendleton County.

For any Johann Michael Propst researcher with access to the library of the LDS (Mormon) Church, there are two detailed books on the Propst families:

The Propsts of Pendleton County, Virginia (West Virginia), by Elvin Eston Propst and Mabel Ann Anderson Manz, December 1983. This is about 100 pages long, fully indexed by name, with many maps, photos, copies of ships' lists, European history leading up to the emigrations, and a wonderful detailed history of Pendleton Co, WV. And if you have access to Library of Congress materials, here's the ID: LibCong CS71.P9624,

81-128897, 9 29"0973--dc19

A History of the Descendants of John Michael Propst, by Walter L. Eye, December 1983. This book is 340 pages, also fully indexed by name. It is primarily a genealogical listing of lineages, with all of the begats. This is not a family history, but only a listing of individuals well up into the 1900s.

The cemetery at the Old Propst Church; many, many very old stones. The cemetery is not in good repair today.

OTHER PROPSTS

The Family History Center in Salt Lake Center has hundreds of Propsts in their detailed files, many or most of whom might well be descendants of one of these early Propst families.

Another West Virginia Propst Family

Knott Knelse Propst was born in Germany in the early- to mid-1800s. He emigrated to America sometime in the mid- to late-1800s, and settled in Pennsylvania. He died in Coudersport, Potter Co, PA. One of his children was Charles Henry Propst, born in Coudersport in the late 1800s. Lived near Charleston, WV, during logging days. He was a lumberjack and railroad engineer who worked on the West Virginia Central & Southern Railroad (Dryfork RR), and the Rowlesburg & Southern Railroad. He died in 1936 is buried in the Rowlesburg, WV city cemetery. (That cemetery is about to become a National Historic site as George Armstrong Custer's Aunt is also buried there.) Charles Henry lived in West Virginia. He moved from Cass, WV to Horton, WV, and in Franklin, WV. He had at least one known daughter, Florence Ellen. He died in Erwin, WV (near St. George, Tucker County).

Interesting: that family pronounces their name with a long "o", rather than the short "o" used by the descendants of Johann Michael Propst in West Virginia.

The Wisconsin Propsts

It is noted that a quite different Propst family immigrated in the 1700s into the New York area, and later moved west into Wisconsin.

Johann Erhardt Propst was born on July 4, 1823, in Schney, Lichtenfels, Bavaria. He came to America 1849, settled in NY, Oswego Co. While in New York, he married Wilhelmina Kreuger, and shortly afterward moved to Beaver Dam, Wisconsin.

They had four children - Frederick Wilhelm, Alfred Erhardt, Albert Samuel, and Erhardt Carl. The fate of the first three is not known to this author. Erhardt Carl (1880-1962) married Amelia Kirchberg (1880-1959). They also had four children - Wesley Lester, Florence Irene, Erhardt Irwin, and Oliver Franklin. Annual Propst reunions are held in Beaver Dam.

The North Carolina Propsts

In Catawba County, North Carolina, there are over 550 Propsts, Probests, and Propes' buried in dozens of different cemeteries. There are even a couple of Probsts! It seems clear that all of those names derived from the early German name "Propst". Other Propsts are found in Rowan, Lincoln, Cabarrus, and Anson Counties.

Dr. Henry Propst, DVM

Dr. Henry Propst, a veterinarian, b abt 1745, married Elisabeth Beaver Klein, and settled in Rowan County, North Carolina. "They came to NC from Penn about 1755. First settled in what is now Cabarrus County on Elks Creek, which is now Mount Pleasant. Elizabeth Klein's father was Sebastian Klein and he had a brother Matthias. Henry and Elizabeth settled on land on Clark's Creek, which is near the present town of Newton, N. C. which was Lincoln County, now Catawba and at one time was part of Burke county." His house remains today.

"I own the land and original house that Dr. Henry Propst bought when he moved his family from Germany to Pennsylvania and then to Rowan County in 1791. The house has been added onto through the years by his descendants but is still an old farm house with some original rooms from the log cabin. I didn't know the history of the land/house until two years ago when I re-read family history passed to me by Mary Propst twenty years ago. The next week after reading and studying I met a man who lives near the house who began to tell me the history of the land I owned...strange isn't it? One of those weird tales...I had the history for twenty years, bought the land/house as an investment only to find out after taking possession that a Propst had lived there as I found old Bibles and school books with the names in it. One of his descendants was the school teacher in that area for years and years. Then, I meet a neighbor that tells me "the rest of the story". I intend to get the

house in a more stable and restored condition. It hasn't been taken care of and now that I am alone it will take me some time to do what needs to be done. I am sure that some day you would be interested in seeing it. It is a blessing...two hundred years and we are still there!"

There is a question of Henry's parentage. It is very tempting to believe that he was a son of Johann Michael Propst, 1712, the immigrant, since the time and place of his birth coincides with Johann Michael's family in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. However, the specific date of Henry's birth conflicts with the specific date of one of Johann Michael's children, so either one or both of the birth dates are in error, or Henry wasn't Johann Michael's son. The latter is assumed. He may have been born in 1740, in Schwaigern, Wuerttemberg, Germany.

The Cline/Klein family, into which many Propsts had married, holds annual reunions in North Carolina (in 2000, in Newton, NC).

Lewis Frederick Propst

Another Propst family headed by Lewis Frederick Propst, b 1745 (perhaps related to Dr. Henry Propst, DVM), who married Sophia Aschenbrenner, settled in Lincoln County, North Carolina. Like Dr. Henry, his parentage is unknown, but neither of them is obviously related to Johann Michael Propst (1712). He owned land in the 1760s and 1770s in Tryon Co and Lincoln Co. He may have been the Frederick Propst who immigrated to America with his family on the snow (ship) "Squirrel" in 1761 with a bunch of other Propsts and Propsts.

Dr. Heinrich Propst, MD(?)

In addition, there were some descendants of Johann Michael Propst, the immigrant, who settled in North Carolina. Dr. Heinrich Propst, MD (not Dr. Henry Propst, DVM), born abt 1750-1755, married Catherine Abendschon in Anson County, and lived later in Cabarrus County. His early life has been somewhat of a mystery, according to a Cabarrus County history. Was he a native of Bad Gandershiem, Germany, or of Pennsylvania, or of Lincoln County, NC? Other records show him as a son of Johann Michael Propst, Jr.; however, the most credible records do not show him there. Walter Eye, in his pedigree register of the Propst family, does not show him anywhere!

GENDEX states that he was born in 1740, in Schwaigern, Wuerttemberg, Germany, but that may have been the other Dr. Henry Propst, DVM.

At the height of the smallpox epidemic in Cabarrus County, NC, in the mid-1780s, one Heinrich Propst, physician, is recorded as having treated patients, per Rouse's Cabarrus County history. He practiced medicine in the German community between Coldwater and Buffalo Creeks, but was he really a physician?. A history of Mecklenberg County, NC, reflects this:

"Epidemic of smallpox in 1780 brought by British and American armies. Catherine Blackwelder, of Cabarrus, acted as a nurse and no doubt saved many lives by her care and self-sacrifice. Some of those who were the recipients of her attentions paid her, but the money was almost worthless continental currency all the time, so that she never received any adequate compensation for her heroic efforts to save the lives of her friends and neighbors. Henry Propst, of Cabarrus, in 1780, rendered an account against one of neighbors for 'four fisicks and rideing.' He was not a physician, but no doubt had some knowledge of medicine."

Was he a doctor to the Hessian soldiers who took leave of the British troops at Camden, SC, and settled in Cabarrus County? He was fluent in German, and a successful physician or pseudo-physician. Since he was actively practicing medicine in 1780, he must have been at least 25 years old at that time, so was born sometime before about 1755.

In the spring of 1808, Dr. Propst was called to the home of a sick friend. The patient was given medical assistance, and then Dr. Propst began the long trip back home by horseback. Not too far from his home, a violent electrical and rain storm forced the rider under the branches of a giant oak tree. A bolt of lightning struck the tree and instantly killed him.

THE ILLINOIS PROPSTS

Johan Nicholas Propst was born May 1767 in Prussia, Germany. He came to America at age 16, arriving in Philadelphia from Rotterdam on the ship "Dorothea" on October 14, 1787. He settled initially in Greenbrier, Virginia. Sometime before 1800, he married Maria Magdalena (family name unknown). They moved to Menard County, Illinois, in 1829. Magdalena died Jul 14 1836 in Sweetwater, Menard Co; Nicholas died there Feb 19 1849.

Doug Hammerling, a descendant, relates an interesting story about their son Anthony. He was born Sep 22 1810, in Greenbrier, VA. He married Lucinda Powell in 1836 in Sugar Grove, Illinois. On March 28, 1852 they left with five children and his nephew Franklin Propst and Anthony Campbell for Oregon with 2 wagons, nine yoke of oxen, a light wagon and 13 head of cattle. Lucinda died with five others on the old Oregon

Trail, in Butler Creek in the Blue Mountains of Umatilla Co, Oregon, on Aug 19,1952. Anthony died shortly after the crossing the Cascade Mountains and was buried at Foster Oregon. Their children found homes with their Powell uncles in Oregon. There is a marker on the Oregon Trail , placed there on Nov. 3 1990, by the California-Oregon Trails Association, at the Butler Creek Crossing of the Trail. Lucinda was buried at Butler Creek Crossing with the other five who died there. Their remains were removed in 1990, and Lucinda's remains (with the remains of her newly-born twin babies who died with her) were reburied in Echo Cemetery, Echo, Oregon.

Original Posting: http://campd.tripod.com/propsts_in_america.htm

Also see the following:

<https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/propst/202/>

<https://www.ancestry.com/boards/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=38&p=surnames.brobst>

<http://homepages.rootsweb.com/~brobst/> or <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~brobst/>