

## HANS SCHNEPP and the MAUSER-GÖTZ FAMILY

Little was known until now about the early life of Hans Schnepf, founder of the large Schnepf family of Alsace and his two wives, Apollonia Mauser and Maria Helffer, all from the village of Plobsheim, located near the larger community of Illkirch-Graffenstaden, about twelve miles southeast of the city of Strasbourg. The church registers of Plobsheim date from 1588 and while there are several significant gaps in the record it is possible to glean enough information from records of Plobsheim and neighboring parishes to reconstruct an outline of Hans and Apollonia's family and document their connections and associations with people in the Plobsheim, Entzheim and Illkirch-Graffenstaden area.

The marriage record of Hans and Apollonia at Plobsheim, states that:

On the 23<sup>d</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Sundays Post Trinity, 1629, Hans Schnepf, shepherd in Haegen, son of laborer and citizen, Hans Schnepf, here (*ie.* Plobsheim), and Apollonia Mauser, single daughter of deceased Georg Mauser, laborer and citizen here, also the step-child of Christmann Götz, the shepherd here, pronounced their banns and on Monday November 16<sup>th</sup> were joined in marriage. (Plobsheim Protestant Register 1588-1714, p. 415)

Nothing more has been found regarding Hans's father, Hans Schnepf, but it is believed that he is Johannes (Hans) Schnepff, born at nearby Illkirch in February 1582 to Wolff Schnepff and his wife, Elsbeth Veltin, who married there in 1579. Elsbeth died soon after the birth of Johannes. Wolff married Barbara Mersch of Illkirch in 1583 and was living at Illkirch as late as 1593, but there is a gap in the records from 1594 to 1620. Wolff Schnepff was deceased by 1625, when his daughter Anna, "daughter of deceased Wolff Schnepff, iron dealer," married Adolf Ernst, 24 October 1625 at Illkirch. There were several connections between Anna Schnepff and the family of Hans Schnepf, which point to a family relationship.

The Mauser family of Plobsheim appears to have been established there well before 1588, the date existing church records begin. Apollonia's father, Georg Mauser, was born before that date and so his parents cannot be identified but a Jacob Maurer and wife, Agnes, had a son, Johannes, born in 1589 and a daughter, Maria, born in 1592. They likely had several children born before 1588 and Georg could have been one of them. A Michael Mauser, son of deceased Michael Mauser of Wibolsheim (a small hamlet in the Plobsheim parish), married Sibilla Schmidt at Plobsheim in January 1589 and had at least five children born by 1606. He was no doubt a relative of Jacob and Georg Mauser but specific connections have not been found.

Georg Mauser first appears in the records of Plobsheim when he sponsored the baptism of a child of Melchior Shaffer at Plobsheim 4th March 1603. Unfortunately the Plobsheim parish records contain no marriages from 1592 to 1622 and so there is no marriage record at Plobsheim for Georg Mauser, but he was clearly married by 1605-1606 the time frame in which his daughter Apollonia was born but there is also no record of her birth and baptism. Not only are marriage records missing, but from 1592 until 1622 the pastor, perhaps in an effort to save ink, recorded only the name of the father in baptismal records and identified the sponsors only by name. From 1607 onward Georg is mentioned as sponsor for a number of children in the parish and in March 1610, he had a daughter, Christina, baptized and another daughter, Maria, in July

1614. (Plobsheim Protestant Register 1588-1714, p. 58/31 and p. 24/39.) Georg also had a son, Christmann Mauser who is listed as a tailor at Plobsheim when he married in 1645. (Plobsheim Protestant Register, 1588-1714, p. 425) Christmann moved to Illkirch, where he died 28 May 1700. His name was usually spelled Müsser at Illkirch but his death record states that his parents were: “*Georg Müser burger und Schiffmann von Plobsheim und Apollonia Wolff, sein ehel. hausfrau.*” His age was given as 83 years and a few months. (Illkirch-Graffenstaden Protestant Register, S[burials], 1685-1715, p. 124). This clearly establishes the fact that Georg Mauser was a boat builder at Plobsheim, his wife was Apollonia Wolff and that for an unknown reason the births and baptisms for at least two of their children are not recorded in the church records of Plobsheim.

“Jörg” Mauser sponsored baptisms for children of Christmann Cron over a period of ten years, the last time in May 1618. The last record of Georg Mauser at Plobsheim is later that year when he sponsored two more children in October 1618. (Plobsheim Protestant Register, 1588-1714, p. 47) One was a child of Jacob Fischer, who had sponsored Mauser’s daughter, Christina, in 1610 and the other one was a child of Michael Walter, who had sponsored Mauser’s daughter, Maria, in 1614. Without a marriage record and no mother listed in the baptism of his daughters and no woman named as “wife of Georg Mauser” among baptismal sponsors the questions are: Was Apollonia Wolff the mother of Georg Mauser’s daughter, Apollonia or was she a second marriage for Georg and step-mother of Apollonia?

The name “Apollonia Mauser” first appears in the Plobsheim records when she sponsored the baptism of a child of Jörg Hocht in August, 1607. In 1610 “Jörg” Mauser sponsored a child of Jacob Fischer along with Wendling Götz and in 1614 Jacob Fischer’s daughter, Catherina, was sponsored by Apollonia Mauser (p. 40). There are no other adult Mauser women named in the church records during this time period who could be a first wife of Georg Mauser. It can be concluded that Georg and Apollonia married about 1605, perhaps in her home parish and that she was his only wife and they were parents of four known children. Did she marry Christmann Götz and have more children? When and where did she die?

The answers to those questions require research into the life of Christmann Götz, listed as step-father of young Apollonia in her marriage record. Several members of the Götz family appear in the earliest records of Plobsheim. Wendling Götz, “son of Adam Götz, deceased, from Ichenheim” [across the Rhine River from Plobsheim] married Anna Schochen at Plobsheim, 20 January 1589. Nicolaus [Claus] Götz also had several children baptized at Plobsheim between 1607 and 1620, but there is no reference to Christmann Götz, until he had a daughter, Anna, baptized at Plobsheim, 3 April 1621, with Baltazar Klipfel and Julianna Heller as sponsors. Was his wife, Apollonia, the widow of Georg Mauser of Plobsheim?

Georg Mauser died in late 1618 or 1619 and Apollonia married Christmann Götz in 1620, a year in which there are no marriage records for Plobsheim. Christmann Götz had a daughter, Anna, baptized in April 1621, and sponsored by Balthasar Klipfel. The mother is not identified but it is almost certainly Apollonia. By 1622 a new record keeper began providing more details in the records and in September 1622, Apollonia “*Christmann Götzen frau,*” sponsored a child of Christmann Cron and in October 1623 Christmann Götz and wife, Apollonia had a son, Andreas, baptized. His sponsors were: Christmann Cron, Andreas Melchart,

shepherd from Graffenstaden and Anna, wife of Hans Wandereiss (p. 56). These people had associations with Georg Mauser and continued to show up in conjunction with the Götz family.

Christmann Gotz was a shepherd-herdsman at Plobsheim, who had obviously been married prior to his marriage to Apollonia, because other records show at least two sons, Christmann and Hans, born before 1620. He and Apollonia remained at Plobsheim the remainder of their lives and had three more children in addition to Anna and Andreas. Marcus was born in April, 1625, Magdalena in April, 1627 and Catherina in the summer of 1629. Baptismal sponsors for these children included Melchior Klipfel and his wife, Magdalena; Klipfel's son, Balthasar and Balthasar's wife Catherina; Andreas Melchart [Melchior] of Graffenstaden and Hans Wandereiss and his wife, Anna of Plobsheim. Christmann Götz also appears at Illkirch-Graffenstaden as a sponsor for a child of Andreas Melchart, Palm Sunday, 1623 and at some point he may have also served as a shepherd at Illkirch or Graffenstaden. His son, Hans, died at Illkirch in 1642, and was identified as the son of "Christmann Götz, the deceased shepherd here." Christmann and Apollonia's son, Andreas, died at Illkirch the following year, and is identified as "The shepherd apprentice, age 17, son of Christmann Götz, deceased shepherd here and Plobsheim and his wife Apollonia Mauserin." (From Illkirch-Graffenstaden Protestant Register, 1620-1661, p. 262).

Christmann and Apollonia were clearly well respected citizens of their community and hardly a year went by between 1620 and 1635 that they did not sponsor several children each year. Apollonia Götz died at Plobsheim 12 January 1640, age 66 and Christmann died a week later, age 70. They lived out their married life together during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), which by 1635 brought terrible misfortune to Alsace when the French entered the war. Their armies ravaged the villages of central Alsace as they marched into central Europe to fight the Austrians and their allies, bringing in their wake, famine and disease. Most of the villages of northern Alsace were totally abandoned by 1636. It appears that the only members of the family to survive these terrible years and have children were Apollonia's son Christmann and her daughter, Apollonia, both by Georg Mauser, and even then Apollonia did not outlive her mother or stepfather for long.

The earliest record of young Apollonia Mauser is dated 2 November 1626, when she sponsored baptism for a child of Baltasar Klipfel and Catherina, at Plobsheim (p. 118/59). She was identified as "daughter of deceased Georg Mauser of Plobsheim." Apollonia again sponsored a child of the Klipfels in January 1628, but was called "daughter of Christmann Götz, shepherd in Plobsheim" at that time. She went to nearby Graffenstaden in January 1629 to sponsor a child of Andreas Melchart [Melchior] and was specifically called "Apollonia, daughter of deceased Georg Mauser of Plobsheim (Illkirch-Graffenstaden Protestant Register, 1620-1661, p. 101).

Young Hans Schnepf was working as a shepherd at Haegen, a hamlet in the parish of Maurermunster (now Marmoutier) a few miles west of Plobsheim in 1629 but came back to Plobsheim, where his father lived, to marry Apollonia Mauser, 16 November 1629. It is not known where Hans Schnepf grew up, but it was probably in the Illkirch, Graffenstaden, Plobsheim area and he probably knew Apollonia for some time.

They soon settled at Entzheim, several miles north of Plobsheim, where he worked as a shepherd and had a daughter, Maria, baptized there, 6 February 1631. Long-time associates of the Mauser-Götz family, Balthasar Klipfel, the brickmaker, along with Hans and Anna Wandereiss from Plobsheim as well as Andreas and Magdalena Melchior from Graffenstaden, traveled to Entzheim to act as sponsors for the first child of Hans and Apollonia. (Entzheim Protestant Register 1594-1666, p. 55). In the spring of 1632 Hans Schnepf, “shepherd at Entzheim” sponsored a son of Hans Wandereiss at Plobsheim. The next child born to Hans and Apollonia was a son, Johannes (formal name for Hans), born in January 1633 and baptized at Plobsheim on January 24th. However, Hans, was described as the *Schafer* (shepherd) at Entzheim. The child’s sponsors were Balthasar Klipfel and Hans Wandereiss.

Many families from Alsatian villages near the city of Strasbourg fled their homes as the French armies came through in 1635 and took refuge in Strasbourg. Hans and Apollonia Schnepf were among them and while there a second son, Georg, was born and baptized at St. Nicolas Church, 28 June 1635. The baptismal sponsors were the same old friends from Plobsheim who had sponsored their other children: Balthasar Klüpfel [Klipfel] and Hans Wandereiss. (St. Nicolas Protestant Register Strasbourg, 1623-1639, p. 117, item #60) By 1638 the war was still raging but the situation in the countryside had improved and villagers began to return. Hans and Apollonia did not go back to Entzheim but to Plobsheim, where he was the village *Hirt* (herdsman). in time for daughter Christina to be born there, but they took her into Illkirch to be baptized, 16 December, 1638. The pastor at Illkirch spelled Hans’s name *Schnepff*. The war had taken its toll and the only long-time associate among the sponsors was Anna, wife of Hans Wandereiss. (Illkirch-Graffenstaden Protestant Register 1620-1661, p. 142.) They were still at Plobsheim when Apollonia died and was buried there, 12 September 1640. Her age was given as 34 years. (Plobsheim Protestant Register 1588-1714, p. 308, p. 327 online)

Men whose wives died and left them with children to raise married again very quickly. Hans Schnepf waited longer than many and found a new wife nine months after the death of Apollonia. He married Maria Helffer, “daughter of the late Hans Helffer, of Ohnheim,” 9 May 1641. Ohnheim is a small village in the parish of Plobsheim. No record of Maria’s birth or baptism can be found in the church records of Plobsheim nor is there any mention of Hans Helffer. A Georg Helffer and wife Margaretha appear as baptismal sponsors in 1589 and a Jacobea Helffer is listed in 1612 but no other Helffers appear in the records and Maria does not appear as a baptismal sponsor before her marriage. A Jacob Helffer “zu Ohnheim” was living at Illkirch in 1646 but it is simply not possible at this time to determine any further information regarding Maria’s family.

Hans and Maria remained at Plobsheim and had a son, Valentin, baptized 8 February 1642. The only sponsor from the earlier days was Anna, now the widow of Hans Wandereiss. (Plobsheim Protestant Register 1518-1714, p. 160/83). The next child born to them was Matthias, baptized at Entzheim, 18 February 1644. The record states that Hans was still the shepherd at Plobsheim but none of his sponsors had previously sponsored a child of Hans Schnepf. Many of the old ties to the Mauser-Götz family no longer figured in Schnepf’s new family.

By 1645 Hans and Maria had moved into Graffenstaden in the Illkirch parish where he became the community shepherd. Their daughter, Maria was baptized at Illkirch, 9 December 1645 and sponsored by Anna, wife of Hans Bischoff, the cow herder from Wibolsheim and Agnes, daughter of Andreas Melchior, also a shepherd at Graffenstaden, who had himself sponsored some of the children of Hans and Apollonia. (Illkirch-Graffenstaden Protestant Register 1620-1661, p. 179) Hans and Maria had another son, Martin, baptized at Illkirch, 2 November 1647 and again, Agnes, daughter of Andreas Melchior acted as a sponsor (p. 189). Hans and Maria remained at Graffenstaden for the next decade, but sometime after 1656, when his son, Hans “der Jung” married there, and before 1664, they moved further north and west to Ingolsheim where he continued to work as a shepherd. His daughter, Maria, married Hans Hammann at Ingolsheim in 1664, his son Valentin married there in 1665 and Hans was still called the “shepherd here” when his son, Matthias, married at Ingolsheim in May 1670. (Ingolsheim Protestant Register 1650-1736, p. 83). Hans would have been close to age 65 by then and no doubt died within a few years but no death date has been found. The same is true of his second wife, Maria, whose life still remains shrouded in greater mystery than that of his first wife, Apollonia.

### **Children of Apollonia Wolff Mauser Götz**

1. APOLLONIA MAUSER, born 1606, died 11 Sept. 1640, m. Hans Schnepf.
2. CHRISTINA MAUSER, born 4 Mar. 1610.
3. MARIA MAUSER, born 24 July 1614.
4. CHRISTMANN MAUSER, born 1617, died 28 May 1700.
5. ANNA GÖTZ, born 3 April 1621.
6. ANDREAS GÖTZ, born Oct. 1623, died 10 July 1643.
7. MARCUS GÖTZ, born 10 April, 1625.
8. MAGDALENA GÖTZ, born 15 April 1627, died 22 July 1637.
9. CATHERINA GÖTZ, born August, 1629.