

Our Raser Family



Our Raser Family

Descendants of Johannes Röser of Schwarzenau, Germany,
who settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania, 1726/7

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Preface

This book is truly the work of a lifetime. I first became interested in family history in mid-1945 at the age of 20. At the time I was a patient in the US Naval Hospital at Sampson, New York, having been recently washed out of the Navy V-12 engineering officer training program at Cornell University because of a blood pressure problem. I had discovered that another patient in my ward was avidly working on his family genealogy, and I was intrigued at what he had been able to discover. Knowing from family tradition that there was a Raser sea captain and Revolutionary War soldiers in our background—and having quite a bit of spare time on my hands—I decided to follow his suggestion and seek information from relatives. I obtained my mother's Christmas card address list, and sent request letters to all of our relatives who I thought might be of help. Service personnel during the war had free mailing privileges; all one had to do was write "Free" in lieu of a stamp, and your name, rank, and navy post office address in the upper left corner of the envelope. Upon receiving these requests from a hospitalized sailor, my relatives apparently all saw it to be their patriotic duty to reply, for in no time I learned that Bernard Raser was our sea captain, and Philip Heyl (from Philadelphia) and Augustus Stoughton (from Connecticut) were our Revolutionary War ancestors.

This wealth of information—some of it contradictory—immediately struck a responsive note, and in order to elaborate on the facts I quickly engaged in correspondence with the family members who were most interested in family history. After the war I expanded my efforts to interviewing relatives and conducting library research. This soon led to research in historical society collections and courthouse records, and eventually to state and national archives. By 1950 I had expanded my pursuits to my grandmother's colonial New Jersey ancestors, and had evolved into surname genealogy research in an attempt to identify enough candidates to solve the ancestral roadblocks that had long stymied earlier researchers. Since my memory never was the best, I kept good notes and developed a filing and index system that enabled me to readily access my records. Unfortunately, the broadening of my pursuits had the negative effect of slowing down overall progress on particular lines—such as the Rasers. However, as I tended to mine-in-depth the more promising leads of the moment, I was able to uncover and save information from sources that later would be nearly impossible to duplicate. But my major regret has been that it has taken so long to make this information available to family members—all too many of whom have passed on in the meantime.

The passage of time has been obvious as I finalized this book. My early notes and correspondence, often written in the liquid ink of fountain pens, soon were augmented with ones written with ball point pens. Early copies of published articles and documents were obtained as photostats or blueprints. When personal copying machines first came into use, the peculiar heat- or photo-sensitive papers then being used often tended to deteriorate over time. Early genealogical publications often were produced on mimeograph machines, or as in the case of *Raser and Allied Families*—the 1960s edition of my Raser genealogy—on hectograph machines using jelled-ink printing plates! With the perfection of xerography, the eventual widespread availability of xerographic copiers greatly simplified the copying of records and publication of research findings. Research facilities also saw big changes. I did my earliest census research using the original volumes in the main reading room of the National Archives in Washington. The introduction of microfilm reading facilities in Branch Archives made it possible in subsequent years to research the newer census releases closer to home. With the availability of computers, the Internet and web sites, we can now do much research from our desk at home.

In February 1985 I bought my first personal computer (a dual-floppy-disk PC with 256K memory, an 11-inch monochrome CRT display, and a dot-matrix-printer), which made it wonderfully easy to update and print biographical accounts as new facts were discovered. The rapid advances in computers and software eventually

created new problems, such as when I had to convert my large library of 5.25 inch Easywriter data files to 3.5 inch WordPerfect files. But advances in printers introduced features such as changeable fonts and proportional spacing, enabling anyone to produce professional-looking camera-ready copy for book publishing. Using these newer facilities, I was able to produce three hardcover genealogical finding aids—but all at the expense of delaying my Raser publication plans. For this book I was pressed to the current technological extreme, which required the electronic handling of all my words and pictures.

Many people assisted me over the decades in collecting the voluminous material in this family history. I have tried to give credit to these contributors, as well as to early authors and record keepers, by the inclusion of extensive endnotes. Some people I feel require explicit mention. In the earliest days, John Heyl Raser Arms made available to me material that had been collected earlier by his mother, Celeste (Raser) Arms. These records were particularly valuable, for they included detailed family tree structures for what was then known of the early generations, as well as for the William and Thomas Raser branches of the family. John allowed me to copy significant portions of this material—some of which later disappeared. In 2005, his daughter-in-law, Elizabeth (Widger) Arms, gave me what remained of this collection, including the old photographs which provided many of the portrait images included in the William Raser branch chapter.

In mid-1963 Catherine Cook (Mrs. G. Roger) Harvey of Falls Church, Va., allowed me to copy or abstract old documents from her extensive Abert family research, as well as to copy Blasius Daniel Mackinet's account of the early Colladay family. She later disclosed to me—on a promise that I would long hold off on revealing the record source—that her sister had for some time been researching Customs House records in the National Archives. In the process of searching for records of James Abert, Capt. Bernard Raser's apprentice, she had come upon many records of Capt. Raser, and had hopes of publishing (apparently never to be realized) a comprehensive finding aid to the Customs House records. I subsequently gained access to the underground stacks in the Archives and found the many records which enabled me to provide most of the facts relating to Capt. Bernard Raser's fascinating maritime career.

However, most of the biographical information provided herein for the Early Generations and William Raser branch came from my personal research, most notably of original deed, probate and vital records in the Philadelphia County courthouse and City Archives, census and military records in the National Archives, old newspaper collections, and from correspondence and interviews with family members which I undertook to generate biographical accounts for *Raser and Allied Families* and this successor publication.

For the Thomas Raser branch, I early learned of its structure from the genealogical work of Mattie (Raser) Hitchcock and Henry T. ("Harry") Raser, which I initially found in Celeste Arms' collections. This enabled me to locate and interview Harry Raser of Ashtabula, Ohio, and other Thomas-branch descendants living in the Erie County, Pa., area when I resided there during 1947–49. For a decade beginning in 1962, I corresponded with Harry's son, George B. Raser III; he provided helpful guidance and at times gave me copies (and sometimes originals) from the extensive family correspondence collections that had come into his hands. In 1994, after son Thomas McKim Raser of Ashtabula acquired much of his father's correspondence collection, I visited Tom for two days to study this material. He generously allowed me to copy significant documents, and subsequently at my request wrote biographical accounts of his Raser relatives. I am also indebted to him for most of the pictorial material appearing in the Thomas Raser branch chapter.

My first insight into the Matthias Raser branch structure came in early 1948 from correspondence with Mary Rose Raser of Germantown, Pa. I subsequently had informative interviews with Thomas Jefferson Raser, Sr. in the summer of 1949, and with Mary Rose in August 1951. In an October 1976 interview, Thomas Jefferson Raser, Jr., and his wife were able to expand on earlier inputs and bring me up to date on newer members of the family. In February 1987, not long after I returned to New Jersey, I was invited to the 50th wedding anniversary party of Lincoln Allison Raser, at which gathering I met many Philadelphia-area Rasers.

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This renewed my interest in the Matthias Raser branch of the family, and over the next decade I made a thorough search of city directory and census records, and conducted a detailed study of records in Philadelphia-area libraries and nearby municipal archives. In more recent times I found that Robert Lynn Raser and Gary Paul Raser had family photograph collections from which I was able to obtain images for use in the Matthias Raser branch chapter.

In early 1992 I was surprised to learn that Joan (Rezer) Brown and a cousin, Mrs. Kramer Graham, had been collaborating on a Rezer genealogy for years, claiming descent from the son of John Reser and Hannah Armitage. Although they agreed that the connection was not proven, I found their research to be extensive and thorough, and agreed to incorporate the Rezer line in my Philadelphia-area research. Based on our subsequent mutual findings, Joan was able to expand the list of Rezer descendants. Although a Reser connection still remains unproven, I decided the possibility to be sufficiently great to warrant inclusion of the John Reser/Rezer branch in this book. I am also indebted to Joan (now Mrs. Ronald Derry) for reading the final draft of my book and suggesting desirable changes and corrections, and to Mrs. Graham for the bulk of the photographs appearing in the John Rezer branch chapter.

During 2005–7 I corresponded with many current-generation descendants seeking detailed “Biographical Highlights” information so that I could bring the genealogical records up to date. In later discussions about the potential this information provided for identity theft, I reluctantly decided to forgo publication of this more than two years worth of work. While I realized this would disappoint many family members, I was left to hope that readers would be sufficiently satisfied with the great amount of Raser family history being brought to light in this book. I thank everyone who contributed to this effort; their inputs have been saved for a future day.

I also wish to thank Donald J. Martin, Jr., for his aid over the decades in discovering and elaborating on the German origins of the family, and James M. Duffin for his many contributions of information on the Germantown and Milestown activities of the early Raser generations.

And lastly, I wish to thank my son, Jonathan E. Raser, for his work in drafting the fine maps which appear in the Early Generations chapter, and Cori L. Quinlan, who showed her patience and competence in doing the involved digital processing work needed to make *Our Raser Family* such an impressive-looking book.

Monroe Township, N.J.
March 2011

Edward John Raser

Introduction and Overview

Our Raser name is an Anglicized Pennsylvania Dutch (German) surname. Our family is not the only one in America using this surname, but the spelling is relatively rare, as looking in telephone directories will soon reveal. However, if one does census research for this surname, using Internet search services such as Ancestry.com, a surprising number of Rasers will be found. A considerable number of them will be seen to be of 19th and 20th century immigrant origins from a variety of countries, including such places as Russia, Hungary and Italy. But other Rasers found in pre-1900 census records can be traced to Pennsylvania origins in the 1700s. Our family appears to be the first of these Pennsylvania Rasers, and no relationship has so far been found to any of the later arrivals. Like our family, all appear to have Anglicized their name after a generation or two in America.

The origin of our family has been traced to the village of Schwarzenau, on the Eder River, in an area of Germany about 70 miles due east of Koin (Cologne). Johannes Röser (A-1) first appears there in 1713, and his son Bernhard (A-2) soon after. While our small family spelled the name Röser, a much larger family in the village of Beddelhausen, two miles southeast and downstream from Schwarzenau, spelled the name Rösser. The earlier origin of all of these families is difficult to trace, since the Röser (and Rösser) name, meaning swamp dweller (at least by one source), is relatively common in many parts of Germany, which in ancient times “was, as Tacitus reported, a land of vast swamps” (1). The root *mar*, meaning “swamp,” was applied to Marburg—a university town 20 miles southeast of Schwarzenau—where the author was surprised to see a Röser statue when driving through that place in 1972. The Rösser family of Beddelhausen is known to have resided in that village since the early 1600s (see Appendix X-18), but genealogist Jochen Karl Mehltau, an expert researcher in the records of this region, could find no signs of kinship or even social connection with our Schwarzenau Röser family.

Herr Mehltau did find that a Johann Michael Röser appeared in Schwarzenau about four years after our family had left for America. He was born about 1700, probably in Canton Bern, Switzerland, the son of a Johannes Röser who died in Canton Bern. Johann Michael was a tenant at Schwarzenau during 1730–45 and had seven children born there. However, in 1730 he had married at Arfeld, two miles west and upstream from Schwarzenau, and all seven of these children were baptized in the Arfeld church. He subsequently had five more children born at Elsoff, two miles due east of Schwarzenau, in which village church the last four of these children were baptized. Baltus Röser (A-3), our ancestor, had been baptized in that same Elsoff Evangelical-Reformed church in 1720. But the church records at both places show no association of Johann Michael’s family with persons of any family surnames associated with ours. (2)

In the early 1700s the county of Sayn-Wittgenstein, in which Schwarzenau was located, had a ruler who was highly sympathetic to religious refugees, and many persecuted people settled there. The German Baptist Brethren Church (whose members were also known as Taufers, Tunkers and Dunkers) was founded in Schwarzenau in 1708. That congregation flourished, but in 1720 it relocated to West Friesland, and in 1729 it bodily emigrated to Pennsylvania (3). Knowing that many religious refugees, who earlier had fled to Switzerland, had later returned to Germany, I examined *Swiss Surnames Prior to 1862, 2nd Edition* (4). I found that the only likely heimatort (a Swiss surname’s “home community”) for Röser was the town of Frutigen. Unfortunately, a Google search for “Kirchgemeinde Frutigen” revealed that “The 27 church books of [Frutigen, 1552–1876, were among the few] not yet deposited in Staatsarchiv Bern.” As a result, it would be necessary to hire a person to undertake a local search in the Frutigen books for a possible earlier origin of our Schwarzenau family. Since I discovered this fact late in the preparation on this book, I decided to forgo pursuing this potential lead.

Our Raser Family

In 1720 a new Count of Sayn-Wittgenstein proved to be less tolerant of refugees, and with the simultaneous onset of deteriorating economic conditions, many families from this area began to emigrate to Pennsylvania and other American colonies. In 1726 our Bernhard Röser, baker of Schwarzenau, with his father Johannes, wife, and at least two children, accompanied other emigrating Wittgenstein families and eventually arrived in Philadelphia late in the year. Many who went to Pennsylvania during these years stayed briefly in Germantown or passed through that place on their way to settle in what are now Montgomery, Bucks, Chester, Lancaster and Berks counties. Quite a few, like the Röser, Sauer, Mackinet and Richstein/Ristine families, permanently settled in Germantown.

In late January 1727 Bernhard Reser, "baker of Germantown" (A-2), purchased a tract of almost 30 acres located in the southeasterly corner of Germantown, with an adjoining largely-wooded 48 acres extending easterly into (the then) adjacent Bristol Township. In July 1727 he added a final 14 acres on the northwest side of his initial purchase. Here he added bakery facilities to the large stone house (no longer extant) on the corner of Germantown Avenue and present-day Wister Street, and resumed the trade of baking. Subsequently, in a number of transactions between 1736 and 1747, he assembled a tract of 227 acres on the east side of Old York Road in the Milestown section of north Philadelphia, two miles north-northeast of his Germantown home site. In all of these transactions his name was spelled Reser. In 1745 he moved to a stone house in the center of his Milestown estate—portions of this house still remain within an enlarged and remodeled house at 1035 Chelton Avenue. In late 1746 he sold much of his Germantown property to John Wister, and spent his remaining days in Milestown, where he died in 1761. Much of the northeasterly portion of Bernard Reser's original Germantown tract remains today as Wister Woods Park, while Wister Street forms the northwestern boundary of our ancestral tract.

Bernhard's older son, Baltes Reser (A-3), who was about six years old when he accompanied his parents to America, grew up in Germantown where he learned the trade of a tanner. In 1745 Baltes bought from his father the roughly seven acres of the original family tract that extended beyond the southwesterly side of Germantown Avenue, and on which he had been operating a tannery. Baltes soon became active in community affairs; in 1759 he was a co-founder of the Germantown Academy (originally called the Union School) and was its manager for several years. In 1743 he married Mary Luckens, whose grandfather in 1683 was one of the original settlers of Germantown. Their marriage certificate, and copies of it, long survived in the hands of Baltes's descendants, all of whom for some generations believed that they descended from an original Germantown settler. It was not until 1921 that a descendant, George Bernard Raser III (T-16), discovered that Baltes had married a Catharine Colladay a year after Mary's death in 1762, and that only descendants of Mary's son Matthias Raser (M-1) had this heritage. Baltes died in 1773, after which his widow Catharine moved to downtown Philadelphia and in 1775 commenced operating a tavern in a building owned by her stepfather. It may be of interest to know that Benjamin Franklin had resided in this building during 1748-50, and that Catharine Raser's occupation makes descendants of her sons William (W-1) and Thomas (T-1) eligible for membership in The Flagon and Trencher Society: Descendants of Colonial Tavern Keepers.

Matthias Raser (M-1), eldest son of Baltes, was born and raised in Germantown. In 1771 he married Abigail —, whose surname has eluded discovery. Following his father, he took up the trade of tanner, and for almost 25 years operated a tanyard in upper Germantown on the westerly side of Germantown Avenue, just below present-day Washington Lane. Like his father he was a supporter of education, contributed to the founding of the Concord School in upper Germantown and was a trustee of that school from 1788 through 1798. By 1799 Matthias was experiencing financial problems which forced him to sell his tanyard property. He moved his family to downtown Philadelphia, where he functioned as a flour dealer and feed store operator until his death about four years later. In the decades that followed, widow Abigail, accompanied by several of her children, made several moves about central Philadelphia, always operating their rented residences as boarding houses. She passed away in 1823 in the residence of her son Matthias (M-7).

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Matthias Raser, Jr. (M-7), had established a printing business in Philadelphia by 1814—the first of a number of Rasers in the Matthias branch to be engaged in the printing trade. In 1817 he formed a printer/bookseller partnership with John C. Clark and over the next 15 years printed many titles. Unfortunately his career ended abruptly in 1832 when, while crowds were watching Matthias Baldwin's first commercial steam engine begin to pull cars on the Philadelphia to Germantown railway, his coat became entangled in the wheel of one of the cars and he was killed.

All of Matthias and Abigail Raser's male-line descendants of today descend from their son Thomas Mahorter (M-8), a teacher in downtown Philadelphia, and his son Thomas Matthias (M-12), a Philadelphia printer. Thomas Matthias is said to have married Eliza Agen, of undiscovered parentage, but recent research has raised the likelihood that she was descended from the Edgin family of colonial Delaware. Thomas and Eliza had a large family, but only their son Thomas Jefferson (M-16), who married Mary Rose Fullaway, is the ancestor of Matthias-branch Rasers of today. Some descendants still reside in the suburban Philadelphia area, while others have relocated to the west coast. It is to be noted that Thomas Jefferson, Sr. (so called) (M-23), who died in 1953, continued a two-century interest in education in this branch of the family when he served for 25 years as a member of the School Board of Whitmarsh Township, Montgomery County, Pa.

When Baltes Reser (A-3) died in 1773, the children of his first marriage were all adults or nearly so—they likely went to live with their eldest brother Matthias (M-1) in upper Germantown. Catherine, his widowed second wife, was left with four young children, of whom the oldest, Bernard (A-9), was only nine years old. With the help of her stepfather, Colladay family members and her own children, she was able to relocate to the waterfront area of downtown Philadelphia and conduct a successful inn and tavern operation there for twenty years. Apparently as a result of his exposure to seamen and shipping merchants, Bernard was prompted to go to sea. Nothing is known of his early maritime career, but by late 1789, when only 25 years old, he had risen to the rank of captain. Considerable information has been discovered of the ships he commanded, and the cargoes they carried as he sailed to the Caribbean, Europe and finally, on his fatal last voyage in 1804, to Batavia, Java—now known as Jakarta, Indonesia.

Captain Bernard Raser (A-9) was already absent from home for extended periods when he married Mary Heyl in 1790. For some years she raised her family in the house of her father, Philip Heyl, who conducted a bakery business not far from Catharine Raser's inn. By 1799 she was living in a house purchased by her husband, and remained there after his death until 1809, when illness forced her to return with her children to her father's house. She died the next year of "consumption of the lungs," leaving four young boys and a girl to be raised by her brother John Heyl and spinster sister Elizabeth in the Heyl's downtown Philadelphia house.

According to tradition, in 1818 Catharine two older sons, William (W-1) and Thomas (T-1), traveled by horseback to Alabama to take advantage of business opportunities in the newly booming South. Soon joined by their two younger brothers, they set up a merchant shipping and consignment sales business in Alabama's Tombigbee River valley, with William in Mobile, Thomas in Demopolis, and John Bernard (A-11) in Columbus, Mississippi. George (A-12), the youngest brother, appears to have traveled about the region, overseeing the movement of their goods and serving as supercargo aboard sailing ships traveling between Mobile and Philadelphia.

While the Raser enterprise was successful, and the men became prominent in their rapidly growing towns, the work was exceedingly demanding and the climate unhealthy. George, unmarried, died in St. Stephens, Ala., in 1825 while on his way to Philadelphia. John Bernard died in 1826 while on the road to Tuscaloosa, Ala., to visit his sister Mary (Raser) Vincent (A-13), who also had moved to Alabama and was then ill with typhoid fever—cause of his death: "too free use of cold spring water on a hot day." His young widow suffered a nervous breakdown from his loss and never recovered.

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William Raser (W-1) married Amanda Susan Pfister in Demopolis in 1821. She had been born in Nassau, in the Bahamas, where her parents had settled for a time after being driven out of San Domingo (modern Haiti) by the black uprisings there. She was frequently sick and died in 1828 "after a long and painful illness." William was forced to send son John Heyl (W-2) to Philadelphia to be raised by his namesake uncle. His two-year old daughter, Ann Eliza (W-3), was sent to Tuscaloosa to be raised by the Vincents. William struggled to maintain the family business but died, probably of tuberculosis, in Mobile in 1833.

John Heyl Raser (W-2) was educated in the north and became a successful druggist and artist. He married Cylinda Stoughton, of colonial New England heritage, and raised a family of ten children. Four of their boys (William Heyl, John Bernard, Amand Pfister, and George Prentice) graduated from the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Science and became engaged as pharmacists and/or drug manufacturers and salesmen. Son Oliver Burbank (W-6), who was more interested in machinery, headed west. After joining the Army, serving in the mop-up phase of the Bannock Indian War, and surviving the San Francisco earthquake, he settled in Portland, Ore., where he continued his machinist career. John Heyl Raser's many descendants are today scattered around the United States.

Mary (Raser) Vincent (A-13), youngest child of Capt. Bernard Raser, was raised by the Heyl family in Philadelphia. While on a visit to her brother Thomas in Demopolis, Ala., in 1821 she met and married John Himrod Vincent. John Vincent was from Milton, Pa., and had been induced by his brother-in-law, Major John B. Hogan—who was stationed in Mobile—to try his luck in business in the South. By 1821 John Vincent had relocated to Tuscaloosa, Ala., and was passing through Demopolis on business when he met Mary Raser. The Vincents resided in Tuscaloosa until 1837, when they decided to return to the Milton area, taking with them their two sons (four earlier children had died in infancy) and Ann Eliza Raser, their adopted daughter. John Heyl Vincent, their son, grew up to become a bishop in the Methodist Church and, with Lewis Miller, was the co-founder of the popular Chautauqua Movement of that day.

Thomas Raser (T-1) was the only brother to survive the family's Alabama ventures. In 1840, many years after the loss of his wife, he decided to join the Vincents in the Milton, Pa., area. The next year he married Elizabeth Knight Brown; she was 22 and he 48, but tradition says they were well matched and happily raised a sizeable family. About 1855 Thomas removed to Waterford, Pa., where he soon died of pneumonia; a decade later his widow settled in Erie, Pa. Their children subsequently settled in Ohio and more western states. Of them, "Mattie" (Raser) Hitchcock (T-2) was a collector of family papers and relics; George Bernard (T-4) was an affluent businessman of Ashtabula, Ohio, and Henry Alfred (T-7) was among the unsuccessful participants in the Klondike Gold Rush. Henry Thomas (T-10), son of George Bernard, became seriously interested in Raser family history, and was largely responsible for assembling many of the family records referenced in this genealogy. The only Thomas-branch Rasers of today descend from his son George Bernard Raser III (T-16).

Bernhard Reser (A-2), our immigrant ancestor, had a younger son, John Reser (J-1), who was probably the first of his children born after the family had settled in Germantown. In 1757 John married Hannah, daughter of Benjamin Armitage who owned much of the land on the west side of Old York Road, opposite Bernhard Reser's Milestown tract. In 1765 John became a tavern keeper, in a stone house on a lot he bought from his father on the southeast corner of Old York Road and Oak Lane Avenue. By 1770 he had relocated to downtown Philadelphia, where over the years he operated several taverns. He was a member of the Philadelphia City Militia during much of the Revolutionary War. Over time his name appeared in records as Reser, Rasor and Razor, but he clearly signed his name Raser in his will and codicil of 1793.

John Raser (J-1) had a son John born in 1758, who was baptized in 1772 at the age of 14. This son is believed to be the John Räser (J-2) who married Mary Levering in Germantown in 1780. No record has been

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found which positively identifies him as the son of John (J-1), but it seems sufficiently possible that I have included his descendants in this book as the John Reser/Rezer Branch. John and Mary had at least nine children, of whom four were boys who reached adulthood and had families. William (J-5), Aaron (J-6) and Peter (J-7) were all poor and moved about the Philadelphia, lower Montgomery and eastern Chester County areas seeking employment. Of these three, only William is known to have left a few recent-era male-line descendants, all bearing the Rezzter name. They descend from his son James (J-10), who moved to Ohio about 1850 and later settled in Illinois and Kansas. John's son Benjamin (J-8) was a wheelwright and sometime tavern operator, who early resided in Montgomery County but eventually settled in Philadelphia. His son Taylor Brant (J-15), a Union soldier and victim of the Civil War, left a son Taylor Brant II (J-21) from whom descend the few surviving Rezers of the John Reser/Rezer Branch.

In this overview I have named some of the earlier family members and outlined the general areas in which our Raser descendants eventually settled. In the five genealogical chapters which follow, more detailed accounts will be found for every male or female descendant, born a Raser, for whom I could find sufficient information to write a minimal biographical account. For the lesser-known persons, I have included within their parent's list of children, some factual information about them which may help their descendants discover their connection with our Raser family. The initial chapter covers our earliest ancestors, as well as their descendants from whom no present-day branch of Rasers evolved. The next two chapters, for descendants of brothers William (W-1) and Thomas Raser (T-1), cover the author's closest relatives, about whom most is known. The fourth chapter, for descendants of Matthias Raser (M-1), covers a branch whose members are now widely scattered. The last chapter provides information on the John Reser/Rezer Branch of unproven but possible connection, and from which some undiscovered male-line descendants may exist today.

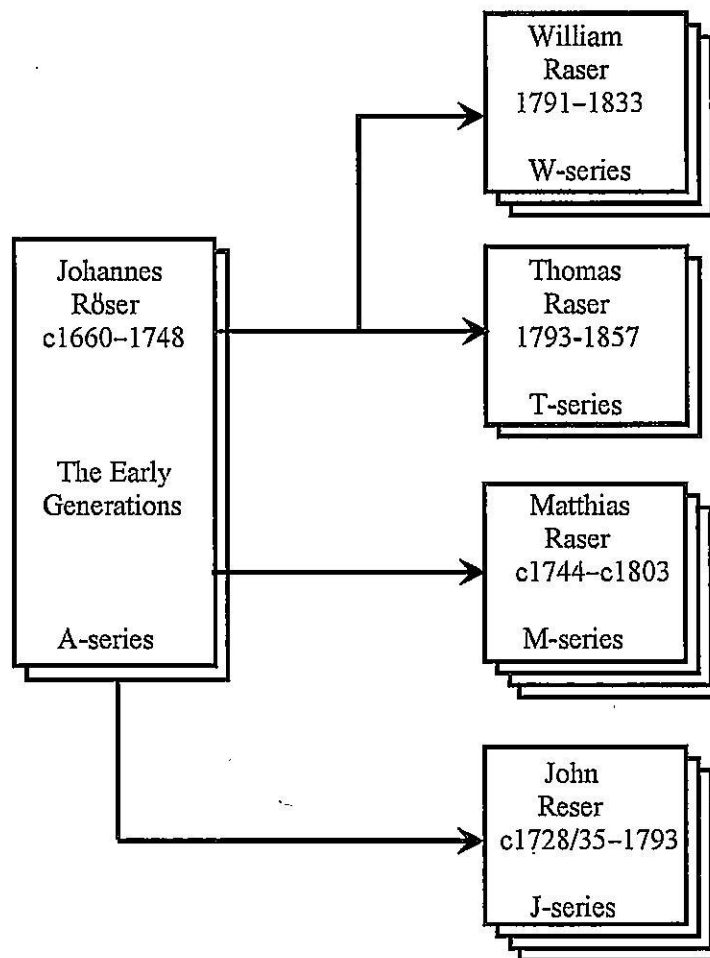
Readers of the following chapters should be aware that the spelling of the family surname, as it appears in the factual information then being presented, is *the way the name was spelled in the related source documents*, such as census and tax lists, and newspaper articles. As a result, the name may appear as Reser, Rasor and Razer in quick succession. These variations usually relate to how different scribes heard the name pronounced and thought it was spelled, and do not necessarily reflect how the owner might have spelled the name. These variations pose the problem in genealogical research, especially when people moved to other areas, of whether persons of seemingly different surnames might not actually be one and the same. Hopefully I have correctly resolved these uncertainties so that the reader of this work should be able to read accurate chronological accounts of the members of *our Raser family* as they moved about the country.

Each of the five genealogical chapters is preceded by a multi-page family tree chart which pictorially shows the relationship of persons covered in the chapter. Individuals with detailed biographical accounts bear identifying ID-numbers (e.g., A-1, W-3, T-10) which will enable readers to quickly find their accounts in the chapter which follows. The sources of factual information being presented, and additional genealogical material not readily incorporated in their account, are indicated by note numbers (enclosed within parentheses) embedded in the text. A note number flagged with an asterisk, e.g. (7*), calls attention to the availability of particularly significant additional information. The related notes can be found in the Endnotes chapter at the back of the book. All genealogical chapters include pictorial sections. Credits and notes related to the pictorial items can be found in Appendix X-31, which provides details keyed to the P-#s placed below the items. Following the five genealogical chapters is an Appendices chapter (with 31 appendices) which includes copies and abstracts of many of the basic source documents that provided much of the vital records information presented in the book.

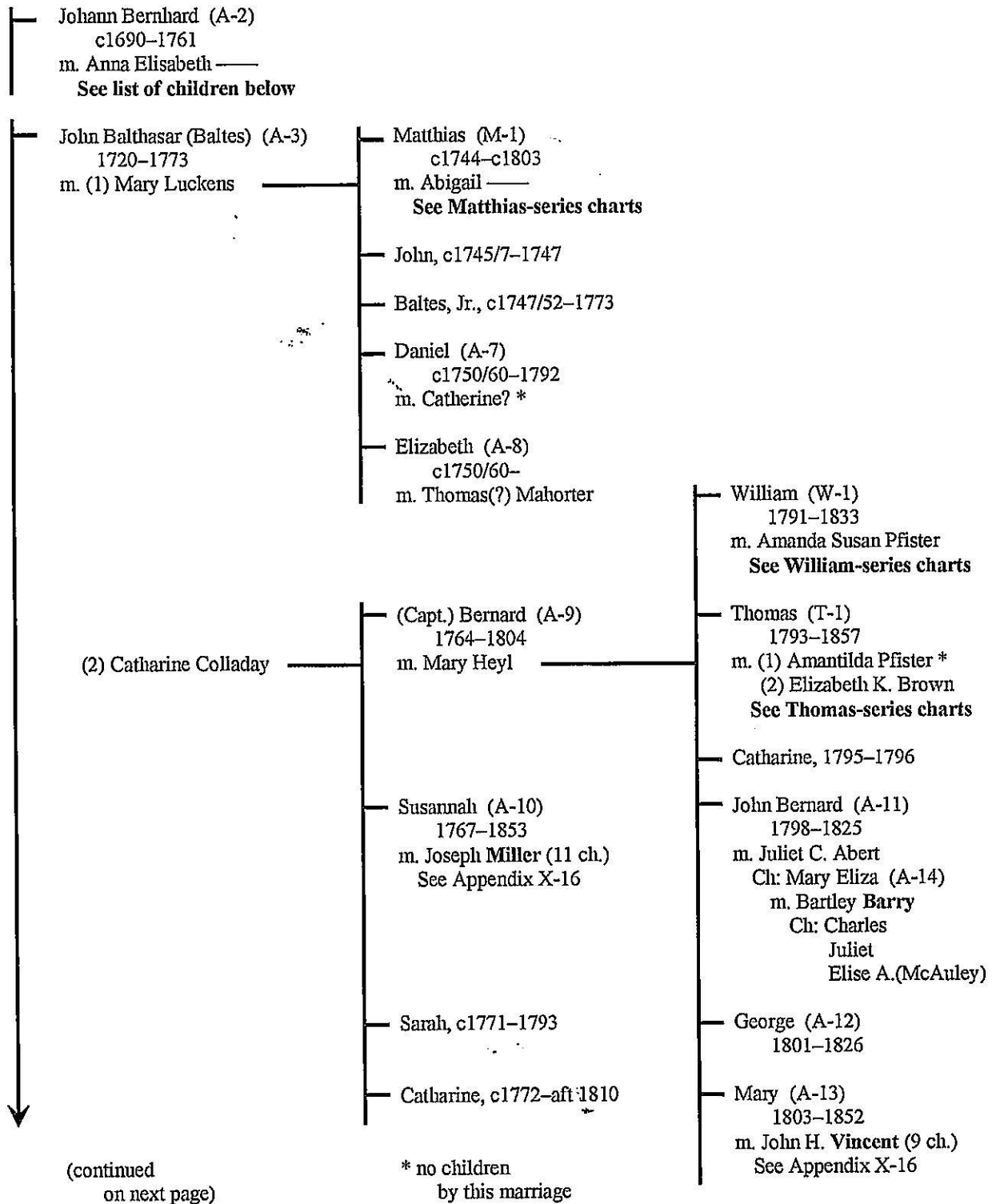
The Raser Family Tree Charts

The descendants of Johannes Røser (A-1), in direct male lines, are shown pictorially in a set of family tree charts. The total tree has been divided into five parts, with the appropriate portions appearing in front of the Early Generations chapter and the four branch chapters which follow. As shown below, the branch chapters are sequenced in the book in the order of the author's greatest interest—but all branches were researched in depth—beginning with the William branch, followed by the branch of William's brother Thomas. The more remote Matthias branch was increasingly researched later, and the John branch only studied since 1992.

The total tree covers up to nine generations following Johannes, with the last generation consisting largely of persons born since World War II, and listed only by name. For all earlier generations, all persons born Raser (and many children of Raser daughters for at least one generation) are shown with their known birth-death range, names of spouse, and list of children in chronological order. Any person born Raser (or one of its variants), including females, for whom a minimal whole-life biographical account appears in the chapter which follows, bears an ID-number which serves as a pointer to their account.

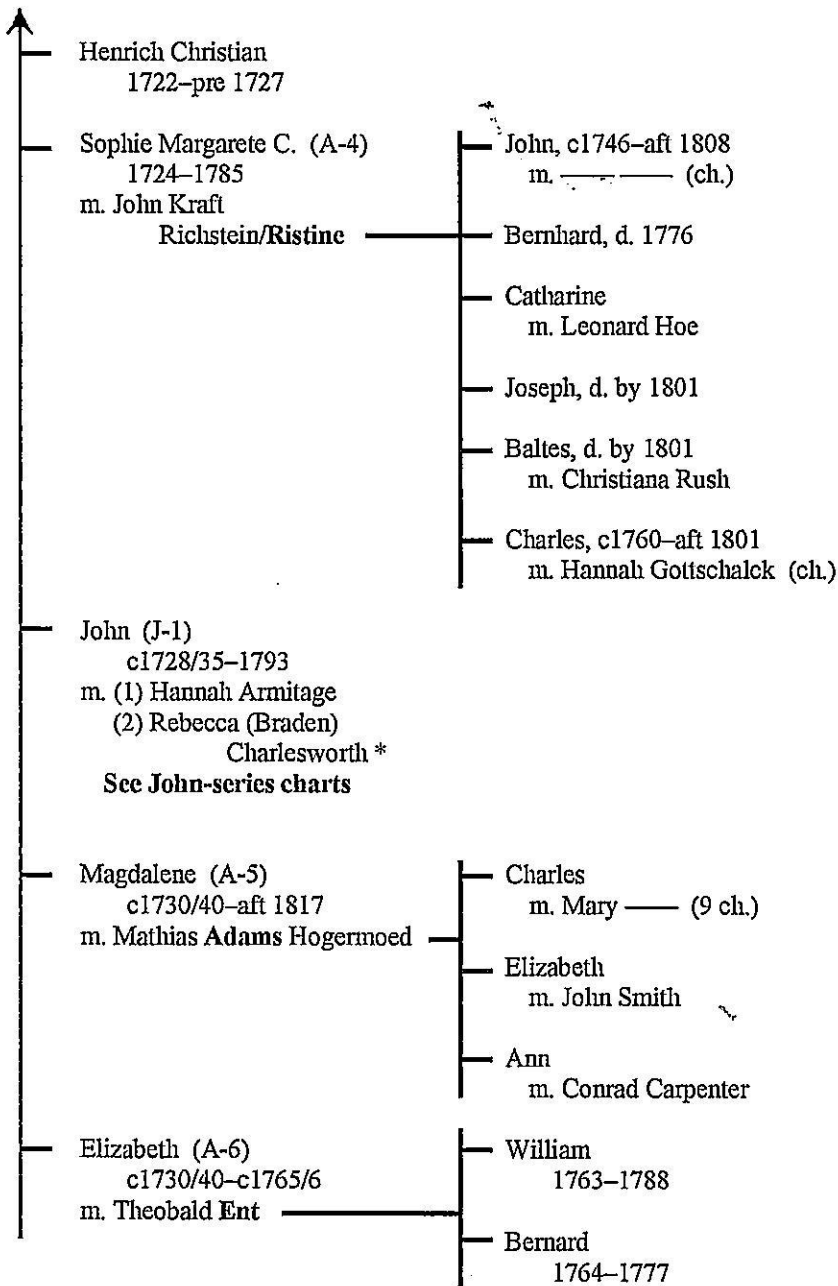


Descendants of Johannes RÜser (A-1)
c1660-1748



The Early Generations

Descendants of Johannes Ruser (A-1)
by son Johann Bernhard (A-2)
(continued)



* no children
by this marriage