

Palatine Immigrants to Schaghticoke: Andreas Weatherwax

The first immigrants to Schaghticoke in recorded history were the Native American refugees of King Philip's War, who were settled near the "Council Tree" in 1676. They were followed by the intrepid Dutch farmers who took up the first leases from the city of Albany and settled next to the Schaghticoques. The next group of immigrants were Palatines, from what is now Germany, who arrived around the time of the Revolutionary War and settled in what is now the Melrose section of town.

By the early 1700's, the common people of Germany had suffered through many years of war. Their homes and lands had been devastated and many innocent civilians had been killed during military campaigns by the Swedish, French, and Spanish during the preceding century. The British government mounted a publicity campaign, seeking hard-working settlers for its colonies in the New World. A book, called "The Golden Book," circulated around rural Germany. It extolled the virtues of the New World, painting it as a new Eden. The new governor of New York, Governor Hunter, was interested in forming colonies of workers to produce "naval stores," hemp, tar, and pitch.

In December 1709, hundreds of Palatine families left their homes in response, travelling first to Rotterdam, then London. Finally in April of 1710, eleven ships set sail for New York. After so much time on ship, there were many deaths due to disease, and once the immigrants arrived, they were quarantined on Governor's Island in New York, where even more died. That winter Governor Hunter settled some of the survivors on 6000 acres of land purchased by his Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Robert Livingston, on the east side of the Hudson River, near current Kingston. Conditions were terrible, and the land not suited to producing naval stores. After years of upset and wrangling, the Palatines were released from their indentured servitude. Many moved on to other places in New York and other colonies.

Johan Henrich Wiederwachs (Weatherwax), his wife, and six children were one of the Palatine families. By the time they arrived in "East Camp," near Kingston, only Johan Henrich and his two oldest children, Johan Andreas, born circa 1701 in Hoog-Duytsland, Germany, and Catherina, born circa 1704, were alive. Johan remarried immediately. He and his son Johan Andreas became naturalized citizens in 1715. He moved to Dutchess County about 1720, and died soon after.

In the next column, I will tell the story of that surviving son Johan and his life in Schaghticoke, and give the bibliography of my research.

Palatine Immigrants to Schaghticoke: Andreas Weatherwax, part two

In an earlier column, I gave the background of the Palatine immigration to the New World. Due to my error, the first column on another important Schaghticoke man, Peter Yates, appeared last week. The Palatines were indentured servants, who were brought here to produce naval stores for the colony of New York just after 1700. Finally released from that commitment, they moved on to several colonies, including the Rhinebeck area of New York. Johan Friedrich Weatherwax, his wife, and his two children who survived the voyage from Europe were among the Rhinebeck settlers. His son Johan, born about 1701 in Germany, is the hero of this story as far as Schaghticoke is concerned.

Johan Andreas, known as Andreas, married a fellow immigrant, Barbara Lesser, in 1724 in Kingston. He and his wife had eight children. After her death in 1739, Andreas married again. He and his second wife, Johanna Edeli, lived on in the Rhinebeck area until about 1767, and had ten children. At that point, Andreas and at least some of his family moved to Schaghticoke. To me this seems quite a step for a 65-year old man, although almost all of his children were old enough either to have farms of their own or to help their parents with their own farm. From the information I have, it seems that Andreas' sons Johan, Bastian, Andries (Andrew), Alexander, David, Petrus (Peter), Jacob, and Martinus (Martin), with their wives, all moved with their father.

We know from early maps that Andreas bought property on what is now Calhoun Drive. He and other Palatine immigrants purchased land outside the Albany Corporation Lands. That land had been kept within the original Dutch families, or other settlers from Albany for the most part. And it was still only rented, not owned. Other early families in town with German surnames were the Bonesteels, Overockers, Stovers, Grawbergers, Wetsels, and Lohnes. Schaghticoke records at the time of the Revolution include Michael and Wendell Overocker, and Peter and Johannes Weatherwax (Waderwaaxt), both sons of Andreas. Alexander, David, Martin, and Peter Weatherwax were all on the list of soldiers in the 14th Albany County Militia.

Andreas and his wife attended the Schaghticoke Dutch Reformed Church until the new Lutheran Church started around 1777. By that time enough Palatines had arrived in the area of Schaghticoke and Brunswick to warrant their own, Lutheran, church. Besides the difference in the religious practices of the two churches, the Palatines would certainly have been more comfortable in a church where services were conducted in German rather than Dutch.

Andreas died in 1784. In his will, he stated he was a farmer in "Tamhanick", which was apparently applied more broadly than now. Andreas' will lists his own farm of 235 acres, and bequests of farms of 231 acres to son Hannes, 280 acres to son David, 269 acres to son Peter, 220 acres to son Jacob, and 104 acres to daughters Barbara and Elisabeth. I don't know if Elisabeth and her husband lived in the area or not. These farms were all in the Calhoun Drive area and to the east, in what is now Pittstown. Another plot of 800 acres "adjoining Rensselaerswyck on the Hoosick Road" was to be sold to pay off the remaining debt on the other farms. The 1790 census for Schaghticoke includes Andrew and John Weatherwax, living next to each other, and brother Martin near by. Brother Peter and his family lived near a long list of Overockers. The 1790 Pittstown census includes the others: Barbara, who lived with just one other female, and David and his family, next door to each other, with Alexander and his family, who owned one slave, near by.

The life of Andreas Weatherwax is an early illustration of the fulfillment of the promise of the new land, America. He arrived in the colony of New York as one of the few survivors of a horrific Atlantic crossing and a hard landing in the new world. Released from indentured servitude, he became a farmer in Dutchess County. A widower with a large family, he remarried, doubled the size of his family and moved with many of them to the frontier in his old age. He seized the opportunity to buy hundreds of acres of land. Surviving the tumult of the American Revolution, he left that land to his many surviving children, who continued on in their new community. Andreas had come a long way from his impoverished beginnings in Germany.

Bibliography:

Genealogical file on the Weatherwax Family, including a transcription of Andreas Weatherwax's will
Cemetery and church records
1790 census
[NY in the Revolution as Colony and State](#)

