
WHO REALLY DIED ON THE CITY OF RICHMOND & WHAT HAPPENED TO JACOB SUTTER ?

The following problem came to the fore during a study of the original manifest of the steamship City of Richmond which docked at the Port of New York on July 27th, 1874. This was the second such voyage which carried Swiss Volhynian families to America during the great Mennonite immigration from Russia. This particular voyage was predominantly composed of members of the Zahoriz congregation from the circle Dubno of Volhynia. The majority of these folks settled in the Dakota Territory.

Of special interest is the Jacob and Katharina (Albrecht) Sutter family. It so happens that the ship's manifest indicates that the wife, Katharina, died while crossing the Atlantic Ocean. However her death presents a genealogical problem which James W. Krehbiel (1995) defined as follows:

"According to the ship list of the SS City of Richmond (SlZz #20) Katharina died on the voyage to America, where it is recorded, "Catherine Sutter, [age] 28, F[emale] Wife (Died of collapse)". According to WaJo p 37, Katharina married Jac Schmidt after J. Sutter died. No dates are given. If she died on the voyage to America where she and Jacob Sutter are listed as passengers (see SlZz #19-21), she could not have married Jac Schmidt" [KrSR-193].

The following transcription from the manifest of the City of Richmond profiles the traveling party of the Sutter family and confirms Krehbiel's findings [9]:

Name	Age	Sex	Occupation	Origin	Destination
566 Jacob Sutter	32	M	Farmer	Russia	United States
567 Cath "	28	F	Wife	died of collapse	19th July 1874
568 Jacob "	1	M	Child	Russia	"
569 Cath "	26	F	Spinster	"	"
570 Susan Sutter	18	F	"	"	"
571 Anna "	16	F	Spinster	"	"

Passengers #566-568 are (Su3.236) Jacob Sutter (1848-?), his wife (Ac4.2326) Katharina Albrecht (1844-?) and their only surviving child at the time of immigration, (Su4.2363) Johann Sutter (1873-1964). (Johann is named Jacob on the manifest. He had an older deceased brother named Jacob and this may be the name that appeared on the family passport?)

Passengers #570-571 are Jacob Sutter's younger orphan sisters, (Su3.238) Susanna Sutter (1852-1940) and (Su3.239) Anna Sutter (1855-1889).

The identity of "Cath", passenger #569, has been for some time a mystery.

For now, let us focus on Johann Sutter, the son of Jacob and Katharina. He is known to have been a part of the early settlement at Pretty Prairie, Kansas and was a life-long member of the First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie. He is listed in the church history as becoming an unmarried member of the church sometime between 1885 and 1887 [FMPP-15]. The conspicuous thing is that he would have only been 11-14 years old at that time and he was the only Sutter known in the early history of the Pretty Prairie settlement [5].

Knowing that my aunt, Viola (Krehbiel) Graber, wife of my uncle, Walter J.J. "Matzie" Graber, is one of the few people remaining who knew of Johann Sutter I asked for her recollections:

She remembered that John Sutter operated a threshing machine, doing custom work in the Pretty Prairie area. She told me that when John Sutter moved the thresher into the farmyard he would sound the train-like horn to let the family know it was time to thresh wheat and that this was very exciting time for her when she was a young child.

My Aunt went on to tell me that my uncle, Walter, when he was young, worked for

John Sutter (they called Mr. Sutter, "Sutta"). She went on to say that from time to time some individuals would try to start a fight with John Sutter and in that event he would grab a pitch fork, at the tip of the handle, between only his thumb and forefinger, and hold it straight out at arm's length in the horizontal, saying to them, "Wenn Sie können tun und lassen, was ich dann tun werde ich sie." ("If you can do what I can do, then I will fight you.")

It appears that after this show of strength that there were few if any takers for any actual fighting. So it would seem that John Sutter must have been a very strong man of considerable stature and one who knew how to handle trouble makers!

Aunt Vi also recollected that John Sutter's father (Jacob) was lost. "They couldn't find him on the boat," were her words. She said that some even thought that he may have run off with another woman? But actually no one knew what really happened to him.

Other speculations can be found. In one account, it is suggested that Jacob Sutter abandoned his family, remaining in Europe. It goes on to say that Jacob later sent a letter to Katharina asking if he could rejoin her in America and that she rejected him. Since he is registered aboard ship and for other reasons, it is difficult to believe that story. [4] There is no evidence from the manifest of the City of Richmond that would indicate that Jacob Sutter left the ship before embarkation from Liverpool for Queenstown and New York. Although marine intelligence is lacking for this particular voyage a study of other similar voyages indicates that the City of Richmond was likely docked at Liverpool for only a few hours [8].

Regardless, if the father was absent and the mother perished aboard ship then their child, Johann Sutter, would have become an orphan at the age of one year. When I asked who raised him my aunt's response was "a Gus Schmidt family", this recollection seeming somewhat uncertain for her.

The trail then went cold but a later correspondence with Betty (Graber) Hartzler, compiler of the Swiss-Volhynian database, revealed that there was some evidence that Katharina Albrecht had a child August Smith (1881-1964). Now if Katharina died aboard ship in 1874 then she could not have married Jac. Schmidt (Schmitt) as Krehbiel points out, and she could not have had a child August Smith (Schmitt). This finding promoted a search using variations of the name Schmidt [7] which led to the discovery of the obituary of a Katharina (Albrecht) Schmitt.

The elegant translation from the German which follows was provided by Professor Mary Ann (Graber) Gaeddert, Georgetown University (retired) [1]:

Schmitt. (sic Schmidt) - Katharina Schmitt, nee Albrecht, was born in Edwartow, Russia, on March 17, 1844. On March 21, 1865, she was baptized by Jakob Stucki and joined the congregation. In 1896 (sic 1869) she married Jakob Zutter (sic Sutter), and this marriage lasted four years. In 1874 she came to America with other members. She moved at first to McPherson County, Kansas. She married again, this time to

Jacob Schmidt, and this marriage lasted twenty years, until she lost her husband to death. In 1903 she moved to Pretty Prairie, Kansas and joined that church, where she remained a member until December 30, 1917, when her days were over and she was able to go home to her Lord, at the age of 73 years, 9 months and 12 days. She left behind two sons, a daughter-in-law, seven grandchildren, one sister and many relatives, to grieve her death. The funeral took place in the church at Pretty Prairie, Kansas, on New Year's Day, with many attendees, at which occasion brothers Ed. Schmitt (sic Schmidt), a student of Bethel College, Jos. Kaufman of Kingman, Kansas and Rev. J. J. Flickner from this congregation offered words of consolation. [CBB1]

The obituary documents that Katharina Albrecht did in fact marry Jacob Schmitt as indicated by Waltner [WaJo-37] and that she passed away in late 1917 and not in 1874 aboard the Steamship City of Richmond. This clearly proves that the

indication of death assigned to her in the ship's manifest is in error. At the same time it allows us to believe that Johann Sutter was raised by his own mother and justifies Aunt Vi's recollection of a Gus (August) Schmitt who would have been Johann Sutter's younger half-brother.

But some questions still remain: If Katharina Albrecht did not die on the City of Richmond then who did? What happened to the missing father, Jacob Sutter and who is passenger #569, the spinster, "Cath".

At first glance it seems presumable that it may have been the unidentified "Cath." who actually died aboard the City of Richmond? After all the first names are the same and it would be a reasonable error to assign the death remark to the wrong Katharina. So let us now take a look at that possibility:

One may suspect that since the unknown woman, "Cath" #569, is registered on the manifest in succession with the orphan sisters, Susanna and Anna (#570-571), that she could be their older sister, Katharina Sutter (1844-1920), but this will not calculate as that woman was married at the time of immigration and can be found with her husband and young children, also aboard the City of Richmond 07/27/1874, passengers #589-593. At the same time there is no evidence that Katharina Sutter (1844-1920) is mis-assigned genealogically and so she can not be correlated with passenger #569.

We can learn from a careful look at the ship's manifest that the immediate family of (Sw3.3133) Katharina Schwartz (1850-1918), a Sutter relative, is also registered aboard the City of Richmond 07/27/1874 (passengers #616-637). But at the same time we find that this girl is not registered with her family. Katharina Schwartz was an unmarried adult of about 24 years of age who is known to have immigrated and it would be highly irregular for a young unmarried woman to have immigrated totally apart from her own family or to have remained in Russia virtually alone. Thus it is here considered quite probable that passenger #569 is Katharina Schwartz. This being the case she could not have died aboard ship in 1874 as her death is well documented in 1918 [KrPD-15].

This leaves only one person in the Sutter party who can be matched to the manifest remark: "Died of Collapse, 19th July 1874" and that person is the missing Jacob Sutter (1848-?), the first husband of Katharina Albrecht and the father of Johann Sutter. This of course does not prove beyond all doubt that Jacob Sutter fell on the City of Richmond, but it does propose an explanation as to what might have happened to him.

Vi Graber's recollection: "They couldn't find him on the boat," returns to mind. Perhaps Jacob Sutter was not in the presence of his family when the medical accident which took his life occurred? He may have gone off somewhere for some reason and collapsed elsewhere on the ship? It may have taken ship's personnel some time to determine to which group he belonged and gain an identification? At the same time his family may have been searching for him also? Of course, all of that is speculation which will likely never be resolved.

As a further impression it would seem unlikely that Katharina Albrecht would have remarried unless she was certain of her first husband's fate and this discourages the notion that he was a missing person other than for a part of the eleven day period of the Atlantic crossing? [8]

It is also difficult to believe that Jacob Sutter would have abandoned his wife and infant child, not to mention his orphaned sisters and other family members, at such a difficult time?

In light of these findings the following genealogical summaries are hoped to be worthy of consideration:

Jacob Sutter: born: 13 Mar 1848, Russia; died: probably 19 Jul 1874, S.S. City

of Richmond; burial: at sea; survived by: wife & 1 son; preceded by: 2 sons; baptism: Sunday before Palm Sunday, 21 Mar 1865j, Kutusovka, Russia.; marriage: Sunday, 16 Nov 1869j, Katharina Albrecht (1844-1917), in Russia.

Katharina Albrecht: born: 17 Mar 1844, Eduardsdorf, Russia.; died: 30 Dec 1917, Pretty Prairie, KS, 73y-9m-12d; burial: probably First Menno. Ch. Cem., Pretty Prairie, KS; survived by: 2 sons, 1 sister; preceded by: 2 husbands, 2 sons; baptized: Palm Sunday, 5 Apr 1859, Eduardsdorf, Russia.; marriage1: Sunday, 16 Nov 1869j, Jacob Sutter (1848-1874) in Russia; marriage2: Sunday, 30 Oct 1881g, Jakob Schmidt (1820-1900), in McPherson Co., KS. Note: She was wrongly indicated to have died on-board the S.S. City of Richmond which docked in NY 07/27/1874.

FOOTNOTES:

[1]: Katharina's obituary in German, transcribed by James Lynch of Bethel College, Mennonite Library and Archives:

Schmitt. [*sic* Schmidt] - Katharina Schmitt [*sic* Schmidt], geb. Albrecht, wurde am 17. März 1844 in Edwartow, Rußland, geboren. Am 21. März 1865 wurde sie durch Aelt. Jakob Stucki getauft und in die Gemeinde aufgenommen. Im Jahre 1896 [*sic* 1869] trat sie mit Jakob Zutter [*sic* Sutter] in den Ehestand, in welchem sie etwa vier Jahre lebte. Im Jahre 1874 kam sie mit den übrigen Angehörigen herüber nach Amerika. Sie siedelten zunächst in McPherson Co., Kans., an. Sie trat dann zum zweiten Male mit Jakob Schmidt in den Ehestand, in welchem sie etwa zwanzig Jahre lebte, bis der Herr auch dieses eheliche Band durch den Tod des Gatten löste. Im Jahre 1903 siedelten sie über nach Pretty Prairie, Kansas, und schlossen sich dieser Gemeinde an, wo sie als Glied derselben blieb bis am 30. Dezember 1917 auch ihre Stunde schlug und sie gläubig im Herrn eingehen durfte, im Alter von 73 Jahren, 9 Monaten und 12 Tagen. Sie hinterläßt zwei Söhne, eine Schwiegertochter, sieben Enkel, eine Schwester und viele Verwandte, ihren Tod zu betrauern. Die Leichenfeier fand statt in der Kirche bei Pretty Prairie, Kans., am Neujahrstag, mit zahlreicher Beteiligung, bei welcher Gelegenheit die Brüder Ed. Schmitt [*sic* Schmidt], Student von Bethel College, Jos. Kaufman von Kingman, Kans., und Rev. J. J. Flickner von dieser Gemeinde Worte des Trostes redeten. Schmidt, Jakob (1820-1900) [CBB1].

[2]: Katharina's obituary suggests that after immigration she settled initially in McPherson Co., KS but this must be called into question as there was no Swiss Volhynian settlement or even an intention to settle in McPherson Co. when she arrived in America 27 Jul 1874. There is considerable consensus that the Kansas settlement did not materialize until several weeks later when the Kutusovka congregation arrived in New York. At the same time no indication is found that the young widow, Katharina (Albrecht) Sutter and her infant son (Johann) proceeded from New York to Dakota Territory as did the majority of the others from her particular voyage. Her second marriage to Jacob Smith can be dated 30 Oct 1881 at McPherson Co. [McMR] and so she must have arrived in Kansas sometime prior. Jacob Smith's obituary states that he lived for a time in Iowa [CBB2] so there could possibly have been some connection there? Thus it is presumable that she remained in the east, as some did for a period of time, before moving to Kansas.

[3]: Katharina's obituary confirms that she was born at Eduardsdorf, Russia, 17 Mar 1844, and that she was baptized by minister Jacob Stucki. There is some confusion as to the date and place of baptism as the obituary quotes the Sunday before Palm Sunday, 21 Mar 1865 (Julian), presumably at Kutusovka, Russia, and Krehbiel (1995) reports Palm Sunday, 5 Apr 1859 (Julian), Eduardsdorf, Russia [KrSR-29]. The source of Krehbiel's information is unclear but could be the Eduardsdorf-Kutusovka Church Book [KrSR-193, EdKu-17]? Considering her age, the latter date of baptism is more consistent with custom and practice.

[4]: The account which suggested that there was a correspondence between Katharina Sutter and her first husband Jacob Sutter after immigration was found in an

Internet report "Descendants of Michael Albrecht". The author has since passed and an inquiry as to the source of the story yielded nothing. The account (item #73) states that "the ship left without him" which is contradictory to the evidence that he was registered aboard the City of Richmond. <http://familytreemaker.genealogy.com/users/a/l/b/Johny-A-Albrecht/index.html>

[5]: The history of the First Menno. Ch. of Pretty Prairie (1983) lists a Jac. Schmith and also a John Sutter (a minor) as having joined the church in 1885-1887 [FMPP]. Stucky (1954) lists a "Joab" Schmitt as moving from McPherson Co. to Pretty Prairie in 1884-1885 [StEH]. Since the name Schmitt and it's variants are relatively rare in Swiss Volhynian circles of that time, and no "Joab" Schmitt is known it is thought that these may refer to Katharina's second husband Jacob Schmitt.

[6]: The obituary of Katharina Albrecht's second husband also suggests that the family moved to the Springfield Church community at Eakly, OK, presumably from Pretty Prairie about 1899, one year before his death [CBB2]. This is confirmed by the records of the Springfield Church Book [KrcB-100]. Katharina's obituary seems to convey that she later returned to Pretty Prairie as a widow in 1903 and that she resided there until her passing [CBB1].

[7]: The names Schmidt, Schmitt, Schmith and Smith seem to be applied arbitrarily in the various literature but there are indications that 'Smith' is the preferred spelling of the descendants and possibly of Jacob Schmitt himself as 'Smith' is the spelling transcribed from the 1881 marriage license [McMR].

[8]: Although marine intelligence, which is often published in the New York Times of that period, was not found for this particular voyage, it is likely that the voyage across the Atlantic required 11 days. Thus it can be reckoned that the Swiss Volhynians boarded the City of Richmond on or about 16 Jul 1874 at Liverpool, England.

[9]: A segment of the original manifest [SM2] showing the registration of the Sutter family:

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[KrcB]: Krehbiel, James W., Swiss Russian Mennonite church books / transcribed and translated by James W. Krehbiel; Mennonite Library & Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, KS 66017-0531; MLA: 929.373 K872sw

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[SM2]: Manifest of the S.S. City of Richmond, NY 07/27/1874, Bethel College Mennonite Library & Archives, 300 East 27th Street, North Newton, KS 67118, Microforms Area, Record Group 36, Microfilm, 35 mm., Reel 392.

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