

INTRODUCTION

This family history is dedicated to my grandfather's oldest brother Norman C. Kerstetter (1890-1981) of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a gregarious and inquisitive man who began exploring his past many years ago when interest in genealogy was far from common.

It draws together information from a host of sources, but it certainly isn't the last word on the early generations of Kerstetters. The footnotes for each chapter and the chapter on "elusive" Kerstetters suggest some starting points for continuing research.

This is the fifth edition of a text that dates back originally to 1984. It includes a substantial amount of new material using Internet search techniques. Genealogical materials on-line are growing rapidly, but they are still limited by very imprecise search engines and reports from individual contributors that are clearly incorrect.

When I began my work in genealogy in 1980, my initial plan was to trace my own branch of the family back to the time the Kerstetters arrived in North America. It soon became evident that this would be impossible unless I could sort out the many family members with the same first names. Martin and Leonhardt were special favorites in the 1700s and early 1800s. I quickly changed my focus to the early history of the entire family.

Throughout my research, I've tried to stay close to primary sources of information and to avoid interpretations which aren't supported by fairly convincing evidence. I've also tried to indicate in the text and footnotes where reasonable doubts or differences of opinion exist.

German spellings of first names are used in the early portion of the text but eventually give way to English spellings. That's due to the way records were transcribed and also reflects the family's increasing use of English as the years went by.

From the time I started this project, I've had help from people too numerous to thank individually. Some of them work for state or county governments, some are volunteers with historical societies, museums, churches or patriotic organizations, and some are amateur or professional genealogists. Their expertise, their enthusiasm and their willingness to share what they know are much appreciated.

Among the many people who contributed to this family history over the years were my brother Dr. Philip P. Kerstetter of Mount Olive, North Carolina, and Elbert and Dorothy Kerstetter of Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Phil joined me for my early library work and numbing hours in front of microfilm readers at the National Archives. Elbert, one of the sons of Norman C. Kerstetter, accompanied me on my early field visits in central Pennsylvania.

Other contributors to previous versions of this work included Carol A. Fisher of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Carleton L. Weidemeyer of Clearwater, Florida; Carolyn Taby Larkins of Jersey City, New Jersey; Charles Levengood of Canton, Ohio; Ruth Wood of Buckeye, Arizona; Charlotte Walter of Sunbury, Pennsylvania; Anna K. Gilfert of Beaver Springs,

Pennsylvania; Ruth Galon of Seipstown, Pennsylvania; Joan L. Gray of Amboy, Indiana, and Carol Happel Grennan of Green Lake, Wisconsin; and Dan Kerstetter of State College, Pennsylvania.

Initial work on the family history began long before personal computers and Internet services were commonplace, and I relied heavily on help from a distance. Eva Sparrowgrove of the McKinley Museum of History, Science and Industry in Canton, Ohio, assembled information about Kerstetter graves in Stark County and provided copies of published sketches of family members. The research of Dr. Gregory K. Castetter of Grove City, Ohio, and Dr. Thomas Ellis of Massillon, Ohio, added much life to Chapter IV. I got in touch with them with the help of local members of the Daughters of the American Revolution and Alice McLinden of North Canton, Ohio.

Among the people who provided new material for later editions of this work were: Ruth Burkholder of Stouffville, Ontario; Joy Kersteter of Vancouver, Washington; Karen Lon of San Diego, California; John W. Petro of Kalamazoo, Michigan; Kathy Waddell; Jeff Wilson and Scott Southard of Indianapolis, Indiana; Patricia Hutcherson of Northglenn, Colorado; Diane Gilligan of Fremont, Nebraska; Jean K. Benfer of Shermans Dale, Pennsylvania; Pauline Beers of Sebastian, Florida; Rich Kerstetter of Easton, Pennsylvania; Skip Worrells of Redmond, Washington; George O. Kerstetter of Auburn, New York; Barbara A. Shipcott and William W. Wallace of La Verne, California; Beth Karstetter Coats of Glasford, Illinois; Mike Nichol of Grass Valley, California; and Barbara McDonald Facius of Flagley Beach, Florida.

I retained the original title for this family history, including the dates 1727 to 1850. However, I stretched the time frame for my research to include more information about the fourth and fifth generations of Kerstetters born in the New World. That had the effect of bringing the last generation mentioned in the text up to the late 19th or early 20th centuries, an era when sources of information were more readily available and much more easily followed by later family historians.

Hopefully, still more information will be found in years to come to shed further light on the family history and to fill the tantalizing gaps that remain. And hopefully, my research will encourage others to explore their roots and to preserve more of their heritage for future generations.

Steve Kerstetter
Vancouver, British Columbia
August 2010