

**A HISTORY OR
GENEALOGICAL RECORD OF
THE MESSLER (METSELAER)
FAMILY. [1903]**

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REMSSEN VARICK MESSLER

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THIS WORK IS DEDICATED WITH DEEP AFFECTION TO THE
MEMORY OF
THOMAS DOREMUS MESSLER
AND TO THE MEMORY OF
REVEREND DOCTOR ABRAHAM MESSLER

PREFACE

The character and scope of this work are what its title imports, namely, a genealogical record of a family, extending in nine generations from the original emigrant-ancestor from Holland to America, and embracing a period to the present time of at least two hundred and sixty years. It cannot, of course, be viewed in any sense as a literary product, inasmuch as it deals with the bare chronology of human lives. It thus partakes of the nature of a reference manual. In this aspect the work is an historical recital of the four unsolved mysteries of human existence—birth, which marks life's commencement of a sentient being; marriage, an institution under which occur other births of a succeeding generation; the limited continuity of life; and lastly, death, the termination of life on earth.

As far as I have been able to discover from various sources of evidence, the commencement of this work by my grandfather, the late Rev. Dr. Abraham Messler of Somerville, New Jersey, may be assigned to the middle of the last century.

During the remainder of his life, a term of thirty years, Dr. Messler gradually collected together in the form of notes much of the matter relating to the earlier generations, and which constitutes the basis upon which the later fabric has been built. The material, doubtless, was gathered from many sources—some of it through hearsay and tradition from a grandfather, who in turn may have had it transmitted to him by an earlier ancestor; some from historical research in local publications; some from church registers, which, in the denomination of the Reformed Dutch churches in America, are unusually full and complete; some from correspondence; and some from personal recollections. All this early material which Dr. Messler had garnered in various fields, bearing on the genealogy, passed, at his death in 1882, to his son and my father, the late Thomas D. Messler. Mr. Messler, however, owing to the demands upon his time in an official capacity, found no opportunity to engage his attention on the genealogy until the year 1889, when a release from some of his official railway duties gave him more leisure. From this time forward, it seems, the work was considerably extended. Many links were found and traced by sending circular letters to persons bearing the family name, who in return would fill in accompanying blank forms with the requisite information. The facts thus elicited would open up new chan-

nels of inquiry, and, following these, further facts would be developed. Thus the process was continued until the work was well advanced.

On the death of my father in 1893, all the materials which had been collected by him and by his father before him passed into my possession. What had been commenced I then resolved to finish as far as possible, within known limitations. And so it is that during the interval of ten years which has now elapsed, I have been enabled, through many long periods of interruption and through many difficulties and misgivings as well, to still further elaborate and amplify the work down to and including the present, or ninth generation.

In reviewing and systematically arranging the materials then already at hand I early foresaw that, as some of the links in the second and third generations and many of those in the later generations were irretrievably lost, ultimately a point would be reached where further inquiries would be useless in the endeavor to ascertain missing names.

As each generation succeeded a preceding one, so the ramifications and number of names increased in the generations while advancing towards the present age. Migrations of children as they reached maturity to widely scattered parts of the country from their native localities, which became pronounced with the advent of railway intercommunication, and more and more so as the railway systems developed; a loss of knowledge of facts concerning births, marriages, and deaths; the whereabouts of near or distantly related kinsmen unknown at the source of inquiry; and many other circumstances will sufficiently account for the impossibility of now supplying the missing links in the genealogical chain. The vicissitudes and changes, which are the common heritage of life, bring with them births and deaths constantly occurring; and so it is that no genealogy can ever be said to be complete at any given moment. I have considered, therefore, that, under all the present conditions, the time has come to close the record and put it into the permanent form of a printed volume.

This is now done, not in the spirit of family glorification, but to preserve in a compact and unified form facts, gleaned during more than half a century, which would otherwise become wholly lost in the passage of time.

The work is, of course, in no sense a contribution to literature, neither is it curious or diverting; but it is simply a compilation of brief facts touching the births, marriages, and deaths of human lives in successive generations.

These facts in a few instances have been elaborated into biographical monographs where the requisite knowledge has permitted it. The work is not brought out for publication, but is intended for private distribution only among those persons who bear the Messler name, or among those who are affiliated with it by ties of kinship. To this limited class it is hoped that it may not prove uninteresting.

The mechanical arrangement of the genealogical record follows the usual custom of assigning in progressive order a number to each person's name which appears in the record.

REMSEN VARICK MESSLER.

PITTSBURG, March 8, 1903.

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FIRST GENERATION.

The name of MESSLER, or METSELAER, as it was originally written, was introduced into America by three emigrants from Holland. The name is still extant in that country, as the editor's grandfather, the late Rev. Dr. Abraham Messler of Somerville, New Jersey, discovered it in a Directory of Amsterdam, Holland, when he was in Europe in 1854. He afterwards saw the residence of the person bearing the name, which had at the door a sign with the following inscription, viz.:

"C. METSELAER,
"NOTARIS,
"On de Spiegel Straat, 163."

The name of Abraham Metselaer was also discovered in the same directory, but Dr. Messler does not say in what particular locality in Amsterdam he lived.*

When the editor was in Holland on a brief foreign tour in July, 1894, he saw in the little church at the village of Broek a number of slabs in the floor having on them the name of Metselaer, with dates of the 17th century and the 18th century as well. These simple stones marked the last resting-places of those who in life had been prosperous and respectable people of that village and its neighborhood.

In Brand's History of the Reformation in Holland, Volume 4, page 169, edition of 1722, London, there is a notice of one Peter Metselaer, living at Hazerwoude, near Leyden, Holland, having had an altercation with a person by the name of Walligh Martinsen, September 20, 1620. The name itself is of Holland origin and signifies a "Mason." Probably the persons who first assumed it were of that craft, or guild.

*The following names and addresses of persons bearing the name of "Metselaer" living in Amsterdam were found by Dr. Messler's son, the late Thomas D. Messler, when he visited Holland in 1891, viz.:

C. M. Metselaer, 7, Regulierdwarstraat.

J. H. C. Metselaer, 105, A, Oudenburgerstraat.

S. H. Metselaer, 15, Piperstraat.

A. J. Metselaer, 115, Gelderschekade.

C. Metselaer, 6, Wolfenstraat, en 122, Sarphatistraat, bight Alexanderplein.

"Tapyten, Meubelstoffen, Behangelpapier, Behangery."

C. A. Metselaer, 192, Kirkstraat.

It is not known, however, from what particular part of Holland the early emigrants came, nor the precise dates when they reached America. Their names were:

1. Teunis Thomasen Metselaer.
2. Teunis Teunisen Metselaer.
3. Jan Adamsen Metselaer.

1. TEUNIS THOMASEN METSELAER must have emigrated as early as 1640, if not before, for he had a daughter baptized in the Reformed Dutch Church in New Amsterdam (now New York) in November of that year, and it is fair to infer that she was born shortly before that date. He was appointed a Burgher of New Amsterdam in 1657. His wife's name was Belitje Jacobs, and they were doubtless married in Holland, as no record of their marriage exists in the annals of that church.

They lived in New Amsterdam for many years and she was a member of the Reformed Dutch Church in that city in 1649, under the auspices of which all their children were baptized.

They had five children, two of whom were sons, as will hereafter appear under the head of "Second Generation."

One of these sons left descendants; but, inasmuch as he, at the time of the baptism of his first child, assumed the surname of Quick, no descendants of his, of the name of Metselaer in the male line, are known.

The reason of this change of surname is not of record.

Possibly it may be explained by the fact that, in early Colonial days, surnames among our Dutch ancestors were little used. Children sometimes, as in this case, assumed a different name from that of the father, or they took the name of either of their parents, or they assumed the baptismal name of their father, with the syllable "sen" added thereto, in the case of a son, meaning the "son of," as, for instance, Teunis Metselaer having a son baptized Jan, the latter would be known as Jan Teunisen, that is, Jan, the son of Teunis. A daughter might be baptized Geertje and she would be known as Geertje Teunis-Metselaer, the surname of the father not being used in either case, or only in rare instances. Thus it is found a difficult, if not an impossible task, to trace the connection in every instance between parents, children and grandchildren.

Diligent search, even with the aid of the foregoing knowledge, has failed to disclose any descendants of the sons of Teunis Thomasen Metselaer bearing that surname, so that shortly after his death it may be assumed that the name of Metselaer became extinct, so far as he was concerned.