

**THE BOWSER  
FAMILY HISTORY.  
[CHICAGO]**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649085620

The Bowser Family History. [Chicago] by Addison Bartholomew Bowser

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BOWSER FAMILY  
HISTORY

BY

ADDISON BARTHOLOMEW BOWSER, A. M.

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AUTHORIZED AND PUBLISHED BY THE EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE OF THE BOWSER REUNION WHICH  
MEETS ANNUALLY AT KITTANNING, ARM-  
STRONG COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ON  
THE LAST TUESDAY OF AUGUST



EXCELSIOR PRINTING COMPANY  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
MCMXXII

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## PREFACE 1217090

The following pages present what we believe to be the first attempt to write a history of the "Bausser," now, Bowser family. When our ancestors came to this country they spelled their name "Bausser," and "Bousser." In many instances there was but one "s" used. The change from the former spelling to "Bowser" was gradual and, we believe, now complete. The last on our record to use "Bouser" was Adam Bouser in his will recorded in Armstrong County, Pa.

The reader will get clearly in his mind that we are of Teutonic blood. The chief source of our German ancestry was in the Alemanni tribe occupying upper Switzerland and adjacent provinces. The French still speak of the German as *Alémagne*. This territory was subsequently called the "Palatine." An overflow reached the Rhine and was called the "Lower Palatine." From this land then, came the scores of "Pennsylvania Dutch," to the virgin forests of Pennsylvania. Among them was Matthias Bausser, Sr., who landed at Philadelphia, September 28, 1733. He and his family made the long voyage from Rotterdam, Holland, on the brigantine "Richard and Elizabeth." The same year Daniel Bousser and two brothers came via Baltimore, Md. The story of the settlement of this small family, chiefly in Pennsylvania, and their development down to the present, the reader will find in the following pages. We wish to express our grateful acknowledgment of the aid given us in finding the descendants of Daniel Bousser, by Jacob C. Bowser, of Erie, Pa., the Kittanning Daily Leader-Times for use of several cuts. Also the invaluable help rendered by Chas. A. Bowser, of California, who is himself preparing a genealogy and history of the Bowser people. Also to the Executive Committee for their sympathetic interest and manifold kindnesses during the protracted years this history has been in process of preparation, and also for the promptness with which they provided for its publication when it was ready.

Sincerely your cousin,

Ford City Pa.  
May 1, 1922

A. B. BOWSER.





## CHAPTER I

### THE HOMELAND

History has its sources, like the ancient Nile, hidden in the mysterious and impenetrable reaches of the unexplored and unknown. The painter trails his art backward to the crude sketches left on the rocks by the aborigines. Back of that the unknown. The writer of human history begins at the boundary of Mythology. On this side we have tangibilities, features, forms, facts though scanty, countries, names and periods of time.

In preparing a family history such as is undertaken in this work, the writer's first task is to know from what race his forebears sprang. What native land reared them? What valleys grew golden with their annual harvests? What cities educated their children? What rivers bore upon their bosom their rugged crafts of commerce? What sort of government ruled them? What ideals inspired them with heroic manhood, and lastly, what religious impulses moulded their characters and awakened the innate love of justice and liberty and hatred toward despotism whether of government or religion? We have a deeper regard for Christian denominations, when we are acquainted with the tyranny and persecution against which they revolted. In peaceful America where all creeds and names alike are under the same kindly protection of the state we would little suspect how dearly the pioneers of these Christian bodies paid for the right to breathe and think and worship God according to their consciences. And there is a soul stirring history back of these European emigrations to the new world. We think with pride of our heroic ancestors who braved the perils of the sea, and the uncertainties of a life in a wilderness, in a strange land, rather than submit to oppression. We regret that space will not permit us to yield to the inclination to marshal a greater array of the terrific iniquities our brave people suffered across the seas.

When the writer began the task of collecting data for this history there was no one of our people so far as he could discover who knew from what land the Bowsers emigrated. There was a tradition that we came from Germany; others said from Holland, yet others, from France. Following the clue of the first we were happy to discover the truth. It seemed most reasonable to begin with the language. A people's language would, it would seem obvious, be a direct index to their nationality. If, for example, an emigrant came to America speaking the Welsh language we would rightly conclude he came from Wales. That our people were not Hollanders was evident because they did not speak Dutch. They were not French for the same reason; and if from Germany, certainly not from the North German states. The people of Europe,

though dwelling in comparatively small areas, have distinctive languages. And their languages have been fixed in literature, books of history, science, poetry, and especially in the Bible. Our Bowser forefathers therefore left a homeland in which the same language was spoken which they spoke in this country, which, as all know, has been called "Pennsylvania Dutch." The term "Pennsylvania Dutch" is a misnomer. There is no such a language. It has been supposed by many as we ourselves once thought, that "Pennsylvania Dutch" was a corrupted German, the result of natural variations due to ignorance and long separation from its pure springs. We now know it is not a corrupted tongue but native to a part of Switzerland and the Rheinisch Palatinate, a principality in the Southern part of Germany. From the Palatinate, then, came the "Pennsylvania Dutch." Let us henceforth give them their right name "Palatine German."

"We speak of the German language or 'Deutsche Sprache' as embracing, generally, the different languages spoken in all their stages from the earliest history to the present, the languages spoken by the related Teutonic tribes, as the Austrians, Swiss, Alsatians, Bavarians and the like. What Dr. J. A. H. Murray has pointed out about the origin of the principal English dialects may equally well be true of these Germanic idioms. Having no specimens of the languages of the Germans for nearly three centuries after their final settlement, we cannot tell to what extent they originally agreed with or differed from each other, although there must have been some dialectal differences to begin with, which were afterwards increased and multiplied. But, however scanty our means of illustrating the earliest history of these idioms may be, there is no doubt that they were not all related to each other in the same degree. Three main groups are easily distinguishable.

"(1) The Frisian and Saxon, whose nearest relation is English.

"(2) Frankish, Hessian and Thuringian, and

"(3) Alemanni and Bavarian.

"The Frisian is generally regarded as a separate language." (Britannica.) These represent the Low, Middle and High German.

"The Alemanni is divided into the three main groups, Swabian, Alsatian and Swiss, while Bavaria is constituted by several dialects spoken in Bavaria and Austria. The members of the third group, Upper German, combined with the midland dialects, Hessian and Thuringian, and part of the Frankish dialects, are sources of the High German. The greatest difference prevails between the first (1) group and the third (3). The southern Frankish dialects are very closely akin to the adjacent Upper German idioms. Where German words are incorporated many have changes as the German Schlaf becomes Schlof; fragen, froge, waagen, woge." (Britannica.) The influence of Luther upon the German language

has been tremendous, as his writings, especially his translation of the Bible, were accepted as the best pattern of High German and imitated. Switzerland and Lower German clung for a long time to their native dialects, but the different German states were gradually brought nearer to a common language.

The Palatinate was inhabited by descendants of the group of German tribes called the Rheinfranken with an admixture of the Alemanni, the latter of whom had occupied the land until 496 A. D., when Chlodwig, King of the Franks, defeated them in a battle fought somewhere on the Upper Rhine. Wurtemberg and Switzerland were practically pure Alemanni while the Palatinate is Frankish with a strong infusion of Alemanni blood in certain parts. Hence it follows that "Pennsylvania Dutch," is a dialect—an admixture of Frankish and Alemanni. There are subdivisions in these dialects, the Swabian of Wurtemberg being different from Switzerland, and the mixed speech of the Palatine different from both. The "Pennsylvania Dutch" then has as a basis certain characteristics derived from all of these dialects, modified and harmonized. In brief, the language of our forefathers was a mixture of the original Alemanni, French and German words. The Palatinate, Frankish, Wurtemberg and Switzerland Alemanni—from these stems grew the people who later came to Pennsylvania speaking the Palatine German." (Swiss and German Settlements in Pennsylvania.)