

Differentiating Men of the Name Matthias Sommer in Philadelphia 1745-1800

by M. A. Schaefer, 28 Jan 2013

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As pertains to my family tree, there are two distinct Sommer lines which have a family member named Matthias. It seems likely there were other men named Matthias Sommer who also lived in early PHL. This discussion attempts to identify different persons named Matthias during this time period (1745-1800) who resided in the locale of Philadelphia.

HOCH-WEISEL LINE

This line¹ descends from Hermann Sommer and has the "famous" 5 sons who emigrated with their father: Philip, Henry, Martin, Peter, and Matthias (a 6th son John remained behind in Germany). In this line, Matthias was born 7 July 1745. Assuming he arrived with his father on the ship Edinburgh in 1754, he would have been 9 years old and too young to appear on the passenger list.

FREISTETT LINE

This line descends from Matthias Sommer and Anna Barbara Huebster. Their oldest child was Matthias, born in 1715. He married in 1736 to Maria Magdalena Sommer, (a cousin of some sort, exact relation unknown at this time), and they had two children before Maria died in 1741. This Matthias then remarried to Anna Barbara Gramp (sp?) in 1742 in Freistett, and this couple then had three more children (girls) from 1744-1746.

We don't know if this Matthias emigrated because it appears he did not arrive with his younger brothers in PHL in 1752. However, further research into the descendants of the younger Sommer brothers in PHL has indicated that there was probably another male Sommer in the immediate family group who also came to PHL. The only other male we

¹ Referred to as "HW" in the rest of this article. This line has been confused with the Freistett line in older Philadelphia county histories. See my article about mistaken [resources](#).

know about was the oldest brother, Mathias. So assuming that Mathias of Freistett did indeed emigrate to PHL, when did he arrive and what became of him?

Matthias References

This section outlines the various references I have found to any man named Mathias Sommer in early PHL (~1750-1800). I've tried to arrange them chronologically.

1. Matthias Sommer who married first Christina Null(in) in Philadelphia in 1749.

The HW Matthias was not old enough to marry in 1749. If this was the Freistett Matthias, it would mean that he arrived in PHL after 1746, when his last known daughter was born in Freistett, and before 1749, the time of this marriage. In addition, Christina Null would have been Freistett Matthias' 3rd wife – not impossible.

Supposedly, this Matthias Sommer and Christina had six children between 1750-1764, and then migrated to Nova Scotia (today, Moncton, New Brunswick) in 1766. Supposedly Matthias died in Canada before 1768, and almost all sources say he was 47 when he died, making his birth year around 1720 (Freistett Matthias was born in 1715). Christina remarried to Jacob Riker.

Reference:

Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1800), Lewes, DE, 2008, Vol 4 Marriages and Confirmations 1745-1800, p. 853

2. Matthias Sommer who arrived on the ship Anderson in 1751.

In reviewing the signature of this person on the passenger list,² I have some reservation if this person was even a Sommer, but let's say that he was. Where he came from and what happened to him next cannot be established with any certainty.

References:

A collection of upwards of thirty thousand names of German, Swiss, Dutch, French and other immigrants in Pennsylvania from 1727-1776 ... Chronologisch geordnete Sammlung von mehr als 30,000 Namen von Einwanderern in Pennsylvanien aus Deutschland, der Schweiz, Holland, Frankreich u. a. St. von 1727 bis 1776 ..., text in English and German, compiled by I. Daniel Rupp; Philadelphia 1927; p. 246-7. My note: this reference contains 53 fewer names than other published lists and does not include the name of Mathias Sommer arriving on the ship Anderson in 1751.

² Add reference here to other 'experts' who also say not a match.

Names of Foreigners Who Took the Oath of Allegiance to the Province and State of Pennsylvania, 1727-1775; by Wm. Henry Egle; Harrisburg, PA, 1892; originally published as Pennsylvania Archives, Vol. XVIII, Second Series, Harrisburg, 1890, Reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Co, 1967, 1976, 1994; p. 328

Pennsylvania German Pioneers: A Publication of the Original Lists of Arrivals in the Port of Philadelphia from 1727 to 1808, Vol. I by Ralph B. Strassburger, edited by Wm. J. Hinke; originally published Norristown, PA, 1934 by Pennsylvania German Society; reprinted by Genealogical Publishing Co, 1966, 1975, 1980, 1992; pgs 450-452

3. Matthias Sommer who sponsored child of Hans Georg and Anna Barbara Sommer in 1753.

Here is record of a baptism at the StM&Z church:

Margeretha, of Hans George Sommer and Anna Barbara, b. 6 Aug 1753, bapt. 7 Oct 1753. Sponsors: Matthias Sommer, Margareta Haas(in), and Christina Sommer (in).

Reference:

Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1769), Lewes, DE, 2008, Vol 1 Baptisms 1745-1800, p. 39

Notes:

- Hans George and Anna Barbara were my Freistett ancestors. They arrived on the ship Brothers in 1752, and we know from later records that they indeed had daughter named Margaret. We also know from the Freistett church records that George had an older brother named Matthias.
- The inclusion of the Haas name is interesting because that is the surname of George's step-father who possibly also arrived on the same ship in 1752.
- Until this record, Christina is not a name we have seen in either the Freistett or HW Sommer family. It's hard to tell if she was married at the time of this baptism, although there are several other church records during subsequent years of a Matthias Sommer and his wife Christina.

This is the one record that most leads me to believe that George's older brother Matthias did, indeed, also come to America. The date of 1753, precedes the arrival of the HW Sommer clan, and I have found that it seems to have been common for siblings to

sponsor the birth of each others' children. And who was Christina if not the woman who married Matthias Sommer in 1749?

4. Matthias Sommer, widower, who married Magdalena Aldmann, both of Frankfürth on 15 Aug 1758.

I'm not sure if this character belongs to either the HW or Freistett lines. First of all, the church record says they were both widowed when they married. It also says they were both of Frankfürth, which I mistakenly thought at first that was the Philadelphia borough called Frankford. But the accent used in the writing really does, I think, indicate the city in Germany, Frankfurt. The HW area is just north of Frankfurt, but Matthias, son of Hermann, would have been only 13 years old in 1758, so this record could not apply to him.

Reference:

Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1708-1985, ancestry.com; original data: Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Collections of the Genealogical Society of PA, PHL 1896, Vol XVI, p.399.

5. Mathias Sommer, husband of Anna Maria, had a daughter, Elisabetha, b 3 Feb 1759, bap 5 Aug 1759 a daughter at St. Michael's in Germantown. The only sponsors to this baptism were the parents. This record appears at St. Michael's of Germantown (as does previous record, marriage to Aldmann). It doesn't appear that the couples in these two Germantown records are the same people.

Reference:

Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Church and Town Records, 1708-1985, ancestry.com; original data: Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Collections of the Genealogical Society of PA, PHL 1896, Vol XVI, p.21

6. Matthias born in Koehl, Breisgua, Germany. There are varying references on the internet to this Matthias, some mixing with the previous Matthias who supposedly died in Canada.

- Name: Matthias SOMERS
- Given Name: Matthias
- Surname: SOMERS
- Sex: M
- Birth: 25 Jun 1728 in Koehl, Breisgua, Germany
- Death: 13 Jun 1761 in St Michaelis Zi, , Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Note:

Ancestral File Number: 5375-V8
[allen01.FTW]
From Ancestral File (TM), data as of 5 JAN 1998.

I believe the reference to Breisgua is a typo meant to refer to the place Breisgau, which is the area that includes the Rhine and the Black Forest. The town in Breisgau that approximates the spelling of "Koehl" is Kehl, which is only 10 miles from Freistett, and directly across the river from Strasbourg. Nothing about the dates listed here can be verified (by me). It would be interesting to know what the origin of this information was.

Reference:

FamilySearch, [Pedigree Resource Files](#).

7. Matthias Sommer, who was confirmed by the Rev. Henry Muhlenberg in April 1766, age 19. This event would make this Matthias born about 1747, which makes him a candidate for HW line. (HW Matthias was born 7 Jul 1745.)

Reference:

citation forthcoming

8. Matthias Sommers/Summers/Sumers who served as a private for PA during the Revolution. So far, I have not found any more detailed information about this person. The index where this name was found is for the years 1775-1783, so if I had to guess, potentially the younger Matthias in the HW line could have fought in the war. Supposedly all of Hermann's sons fought in the Revolution.

Reference:

John Blair Linn and William H. Egle, Eds, *Pennsylvania in the War of the Revolution : battalions and line, 1775-1783*, Vol. I, Harrisburg, PA, 1880; Continental Line; First Pennsylvania; Matthias Summers, May 1, 1776, p. 334.

9. Matthias Sommer who appears as a sponsor with Margretha Manch, as seen in this Philadelphia church record:

Anna Margretha, of Peter Sommer and wife Maria Catharina, b. 8 Mar 1773, bapt. 12 Apr 1773. Sponsors: Matthias Sommer and wife Margretha Mänch (in) .

Reference:

Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1769), Lewes, DE, 2008, Vol 2 Baptisms 1770-1786, p. 332

This record has perplexed me for a long time. First, Peter Sommer of the HW Sommer line married the niece of Ernst Menge, who is in the direct line of my family tree, the niece's name being Catharina Menge (with many variations of the surname spelling). It's almost certain that the Margaretha who sponsored this baptism was Catharina's sister (she had a sister named Margaretha born in 1753), and one might then continue to infer that the male sponsor, Matthias, was Peter's brother. HOWEVER, I've been in search of this original record because I want to see for myself where it says "wife" pertaining to Margretha. Alas, I've so far not been able to locate the original record, but I did find another transcription, and that one did *not* use the word "wife" at all! I am suspecting that the Matthias and Margretha in this record were not married. More research required. For the sake of this article, however, it seems at least possible that Peter's brother Matthias was indeed alive and well in 1773, but for whatever reason Matthias was then *not* mentioned at the time of Peter's death in 1783.

10. Matthias Sommer who married wife, Rahel. This couple shows up in later Philadelphia church records as sponsors:

1775 sponsor of son Matthias of Philip & Salome Stocker? (question mark is part of transcription so it might be Sommer), pg 381

1781 sponsor of dau Rahel of Philip & Salome Meger, pg 464

Reference:

Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1769), Lewes, DE, 2008, Vol 1 Baptisms 1745-1800

Note: The girl name Rahel is pronounced as RahHHahL. Rahel is primarily used in the German language and its language of origin is Hebrew. Rahel is a German variation of the English, French, German, and Yiddish name Rachel.

If I had to guess, I would say this Matthias could have ties to the HW line, only because of the potential ties to Philip Sommer of that line. But it's curious I don't find any other records relating to this couple.

11. Matthias Sommer who married wife, Regina. This couple shows up in two different churches as sponsors:

Maria Regina, of Joh. Bach and wife Elisabet, b. 11 Nov 1778, bapt. 22 Nov 1778.
Sponsors: Math. Sommer and wife Maria Reg. [Hess & Wright, p. 419]

Maria Regina, daughter of Jacob Hargersheimer and Maria, b. June 12, 1780,
bapt. July 9, 1780. Spon: Matthias Sommer and Maria Regina. [Wright, p. 175]

Carl, of William Davis and wife Sara, b. 17 Mar 1793, bapt. 1 Jul 1793.
Sponsors: Matthias Sommer and wife Regine. [Hess & Wright, p. 669]

Reference:

Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1769), Lewes, DE, 2008

F. Edward Wright, *Early Church Records of the First Reformed Church of Philadelphia*, Westminster, MD, 1994, Vol. 1.

12. Matthias Sommer who died in 1794, at the age of 49 years, 6 months, which almost fits the HW Matthias but not exactly (off by 6 months). The rub here is that when Peter Summers of the HW clan wrote his will in 1783, it mentioned three other brothers, but not Matthias. If this Matthias belonged to the HW brothers, his brother Peter did not name Matthias in his will for some reason.

Reference:

Robert L. Hess and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1769), Lewes, DE, 2008, Vol 5 Burials 1745-1800, p. 1327

Record Groups and Individuals

Of these 12 references to a Mathias Sommer, I think we can split them into two groups, those before 1767 and those after. I choose this year because there was a Mathias Sommer who is believed to have departed PHL for Nova Scotia in the spring of 1766, so that year can be used as a benchmark.

Group 1 - Before 1767: Records 1-7 above

In this group, I think we are looking at four individuals:

1. The Mathias Sommer who married Christina in 1749. This Mathias is presumed to be the one who migrated to NS because there is documentation in Canada of Christine Sommer shortly after the settlers arrived in Moncton in 1766.
 - Records: #1, #3, #6

2. The Mathias Sommer who married Aldmann in 1758. This Mathias might have been the one who arrived on the Anderson in 1751, but that is uncertain. This Mathias can be differentiated from the man who married Christina by virtue of Canadian documentation dated 1 Jul 1766.³
 - Records: #[2](#) and #[4](#)
3. The Mathias Sommer married to Anna Maria who baptized a daughter at St. Michael's in Germantown in 1759. This might also have been the person who arrived on the 1751 Anderson, but again, that is uncertain. Again, this Mathias can be differentiated from the man who married Christina by virtue of Canadian documentation dated 1 Jul 1766.⁴
 - Records: #[5](#)
4. Matthias Sommer who was confirmed by Muhlenberg in 1766. He was young, and thus likely belonged to the HW Sommer line.
 - Records: #[7](#)

The references shown in color are associated references, which is to say, I have applied some logic. So:

- Re record #3, Hans Georg and Anna Barbara Sommer were my 6th g-grandparents, and I have documented their origins in Freistett, where it was also documented that Georg had an older brother, Mathias. For this reason (a possible link between two brothers), I assign reference #3 to person #1.
- Re record #6, it seems almost certain that Bresgua is a typo for Breisgau, which refers to the Black Forest region which includes the Rhine River, exactly the area where Freistett is. And for this reason, I also assign reference #6 to person #1.

Group 2 – After 1767: Records 7-12 above

In this group, I'm guessing there are at least two individuals and possibly three, but one is a carry-over from the previous group (#4).

1. Mathias Sommer of the HW line – the one who was likely confirmed in 1766 (Group 1)
 - Records: #[7](#), #[8](#), #[12](#)
2. Mathias Sommer who married Regina
 - Records: #[9](#)

³ Les Bowser, *A Search for Heinrich Stief, A Genealogist of the Loose*, Halifax, NS, 2001; pp. 202-203; land grant records from Nova Scotia archives, discovered by Dr. Allen Robertson.

⁴ Ibid.

3. Mathias Sommer who married Rahel

- Records #10

It's my opinion that Mathias #1 in this group might have been the one to marry either Regina or Rahel, and so is likely the same person as #2 or #3.

Re record #12, I infer this death record could belong to Matthias HW based on his age at death, and what we know from German baptism records.

So how many total individuals named Mathias Sommer are we talking about here? Before 1766, we might deduce from the records that there were three individuals of adult age, and maybe four if you count the Mathias who was confirmed in 1766 at age 19..

1. Mathias who married Christina and went to Canada, with links to Freistett,
2. Mathias of HW (age 19 when confirmed in 1766),
3. Mathias who married Aldmann in 1758, and
4. Mathias married to Anna Maria who baptized a daughter in 1759.

Of these four individuals, I have no inkling what became of #3 and #4 – perhaps like my ancestor, they simply moved to another state – we can't know for sure. However, by virtue of their wives' names, they can be differentiated from the individual who married Christina and was later recorded with a wife of the same name in Nova Scotia.

Possible Conclusions

If we add up the clues found for the Matthias #1 and Matthias #2 mentioned in the previous section, the story about HW Matthias (#2) could read like this:

This Matthias Sommer arrived in Philadelphia in 1754 with his father Hermann Sommer and brothers Philip, Henry, Martin, and Peter. He was 9 years old. When he was 19-20 years old, he was confirmed by the Rev. Henry Muhlenberg in 1766. Matthias probably sponsored the baptism of his brother's daughter in 1773. Matthias may have married Rahel and had children between 1775-1781, which are also years he might have served in the Revolution. He died in Philadelphia in 1794.

And the story for the Freistett Matthias (#1) might read:

Matthias Sommer, the oldest brother of this Freistett Sommer family, came to America before 1749, and he likely had children from previous marriages with him. He was in his mid-30s at the time of arrival. He married Christina in 1749 and later church records

show two daughters born to this couple. He sponsored the baptism of his brother George's daughter in 1753. This Matthias Sommer, along with Christine and their children departed for Nova Scotia in 1766.⁵

It's worth noting that we know this Matthias had several children in Freistett from 1737-1746, and those who survived, likely also came to PHL. One of those children, only son of Mathias, was named Martin. StM&Z church records show a Martin & Maria Sommer having several children from 1762-1772, the oldest of whom was named Matthias, and the youngest of whom was named Martin. This youngest, Martin, may have been Martin Summers of Oxford, PA (see the research article on my website for more details).

This article will be updated as more information comes to light.

5 It has been asserted that this Mathias Sommer was the trustee at St. Peter's Church in Barren Hill, but I have been uncertain how we know that. Now, I think we can make that association because of the appearance of the signature of Valentin Muller on the Articles of Agreement.

Appendix A

These are records from the St. Michael's and Zion Lutheran Church that pertain to a Matthias and/or a Christina Sommer.⁶ Note that slightly different translations have been made of these same records.⁷

1 Apr 1750, widower Jacob Schitt & Maria Cathrina Antonia Sendig. Witnesses: Mathias Sommer, Jacob Stös, Maria Magd. Schoch(in), and Christina Lomer(in).

Anna Christina, of Georg Horn and wife Maria, b. 16 Mar 1750, bapt. 15 Apr 1750. Sponsors: (first name not give) Sommer and Christina Sommer(in).

Anna Cathrina, of Mathias Sommer and wife Christina, b. 9 Oct 1750, bapt. 18 Nov 1750. Sponsors: Jacob (surname not given) (Luth.), and Barbara Rik(in) (single) (Ref.).

20 Nov 1752, Matthias Haase & Margaretha Jäckler(in). Witnesses: Jürg Stöss, Mathias Sommer, and Johannes Stöss.

Eva Magdalena, of Mathias Sommer and wife Christina, b. 6 Feb 1753, bapt. 11 Mar 1753. Sponsors: Hans Jurg Wilkin (Ref.) and Barbara Rek(in).

Margeretha, of Hans George Sommer and Anna Barbara, b. 6 Aug 1753, bapt. 7 Oct 1753. Sponsors: Matthias Sommer, Margareta Haas(in), and Christina Sommer(in).

6 Hess, Robert L. and F. Edward Wright, *18th Century Records of the German Lutheran Church of Philadelphia (St. Michaels and Zion)*, Volumes 1-5 (1745-1800), Lewes, DE, 2008.

7 Sachse, Julius Friedrich, "The Records of St. Michael's and Zion Lutheran Congregation of Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania German Church Records of Births, Baptisms, Marriages, Burials, Etc From the Pennsylvania German Society Proceedings and Addresses* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1983) Vol 1, 514.