

## Chapter One

## OUR IMMIGRANT ANCESTOR

Christian Leimberger arrived at Savannah, Georgia on March 12, 1734 on board the ship, Purysburg, with the first transport of forty-one Protestants from the Archbishopric of Salzburg which was a part of the Holy Roman Empire (1). These Lutherans, who believed in an affirmation of faith and the exclusive mediatorship of Christ, had been expelled from their homeland by a 1731 emigration decree by the Catholic Archbishop of Salzburg, Leopold Anton, Baron of Firmian. Some thirty thousand Protestants were forced to flee their homeland under this decree.

This persecution of the Salzburger Protestants aroused the sympathy of a protestant group in England known as the Society for Propagation of Christian Knowledge. This group had learned of their plight through the correspondence of their secretary, Henry Newman, with the senior pastor, of the Lutheran Church in Augsburg, Reverend Samuel Urlsperger.

The Society proposed, through Reverend Urlsperger, to defray all of the expenses of transporting fifty displaced protestant families to the newly chartered Royal Colony of Georgia. It had made arrangements with the Trustees of the Georgia Colony that each head of a Salzburger family would receive a town lot, a garden lot and fifty acres of land to clear for agricultural purposes. The Society also supported the cost of providing a pastor to minister to their spiritual needs in the new colony which guaranteed each person the right to practice religious freedom.

Christian Leimberger, the immigrant ancestor of all the present day Limeberger-Lineberger family of Georgia, was born about 1710 in Leogang, which was and is now, a small village in the Saalach Valley, which is located in a mountainous region of the present land-state of Salzburg, Austria (2). At that time, Leogang was described as being in the County of Saalfelden in the Jurisdiction of Lichtenberg which was in the Catholic Archbishopric of Salzburg which was a part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Christian had a brother named Andreas who was five years older (3). At the age of 23, Christian was employed by a George Buecher, a farmer and a digger in the saltpeter mines which were in the area.

In the fall of 1733, Christian Leimberger was forced to leave the region of the Saalach Valley due to the unbridled persecution of the Archbishop, Leopold Anton. Christian traveled in the company of his employer Buecher with Buecher's wife, Ursula and six children, a miller named Martin Hertzog, a servant named Mattheus Mietersteiner and a maid-servant named Maria Reiter. This group of twelve Salzburgers traveled toward the Swabian town of Augsburg seeking religious freedom. They arrived at Augsburg on September 3, 1733. They were met by sympathetic Lutherans who lodged them, along with another group of about twenty-five

Salzburgers, in a home belonging to a rich gentleman named Schauer. It was located outside the city of Salzburg. The Roman Catholics in the city would not consent to lodging the group in a Protestant home within the city.

The displaced Salzburgers lived in Schauer's house and garden for nearly a month. Their number had increased to fifty-one by that time. In the early part of October, they were moved to Scheissgraben which was a shooting range for marksmen.

George Buecher, the rich peasant, and his family of eleven persons made known on October 15th that they had changed their minds about going to Georgia and that they were going to embrace the Catholic religion. Christian Leimberger, who had been in Buecher's employment and had traveled with the group, held firm in his resolve of emigrating to Georgia along with thirty-nine other Salzburgers.

After Buecher and his family had decided to stay, Reverend Urlsperger felt that it would be best to undertake the transport at the earliest possible date in order to maintain the number of the group.

George Phillip von Reck was chosen to lead the Salzburgers on their long trip to the colony of Georgia. Mr. van Reck arrived in Augsburg about the 29th of October, 1733 and was immediately carried to meet the Salzburger group. October 31, 1733 had been set as the day that the group would depart from Augsburg.

All of the worldly belongings that Christian Leimberger brought from Leogang was packed with baggage belonging to Stephan Riedelsperger, Johannes Mosshamer, Barbara Rohmoser and her children and was loaded with five other parcels of luggage aboard a wagon. The wagons were to carry the Salzburgers to a waiting ship at Marksteft on the Main River.

The morning of departure turned out to be a dreary one. The place called Scheissgraben was covered over with thick fog. In addition, rain was being driven by a stiff wind. Two members of the Catholic Magistracy stood by, counting heads, in order to insure that all the Salzburgers would depart in the wagons. Reverend Urlsperger gave a short sermon exhorting the group and the chaplain Schumaker, who was to travel with them, offered a short prayer. Urlsperger then distributed some money to the Salzburgers which had been given by the Protestants in the city of Augsburg.

By 11:00 in the morning, all the Salzburgers were loaded into two wagons. At this time, they departed from Augsburg and traveled through the town of Donauworth and arrived the next day in the Protestant town of Ebermorgen. On the same day, being November 1st, they arrived at Harburg. The next day, the group traveled through Dinkelsbuhl and arrived at Rothenburg on November 4th at 10:00 a.m., where they were provided with lodging. On November 6th, the group of Salzburgers arrived at Marksteft on the Main River, where they left the two wagons and boarded a waiting ship. After loading on the ship, the wind was not cooperative, so the group arrived in Wertheim one day later than was expected.

Leaving Wertheim, they traveled all night by ship and arrived at Frankfort on Friday, November 13th at 1:00 PM, and were carried into the city and were given a great welcome.

The Salzburgers spent two days in Frankfort, boarding the ship again on the evening of November 15th to continue their journey. This time, their destination was Rotterdam. On November 27th, the group arrived there. Here they were met by the two pastors who were to accompany them to the Georgia Colony and to minister to them.

The Reverends John Martin Boltzius and Israel Christian Gronau met their new congregation on Sunday, November 29, 1733 and celebrated the occasion by preaching three sermons to them during the day on board the ship.

On November 30th, the Salzburgers were quartered in Rotterdam in two homes. They stayed there until they were brought back aboard the ship on December 2nd; however, the ship did not sail from harbor until the evening of December 3rd. A pilot that had been brought aboard ran the ship aground on a sandbar on December 7th. There the ship stayed until after three days it moved after some of the load had been removed. The ship made very slow progress on the Maass River and finally reached the open sea on December 19th. After three days, the ship reached their next destination which was Dover, England. They had encountered very stormy weather while crossing the English Channel. In Dover, they were received with the best of accommodations and every effort was made to make them feel welcome.

On December 21st, 1733, Christian Leimberger swore allegiance to the English Crown and to its authority and to show obedience in his enjoyment of the rights and freedoms of the land (4).

While in Dover, the Salzburger Congregation celebrated Christmas and New Year's Day. It was a time for prayer, listening to exhortations from their pastors and having fellowship with their English hosts. On the 6th of January, preparations were begun in order to depart for the colony of Georgia. On the 8th, the Purysburg weighed anchor and left Dover. The ship cleared the English Channel on the 10th and headed into the open sea.

On March 6, 1734, the coast of Carolina was sighted and the ship dropped anchor outside Charleston harbor on the 7th. On the 9th, the ship left Charleston for their final destination, Savannah, in the Royal Colony of Georgia.

About 12:00 noon on March 12, 1734, the Purysburg dropped anchor in the Savannah River near the year-old settlement called Savannah. Later that day, Christian Leimberger went ashore to the town of Savannah along with his fellow exiled Salzburgers who had been forced to leave everything behind them except for bitter memories. Now a New Land lay before them. Only through hard work, suffering, and Christian perseverance would but a few of them live long enough to enjoy this newly gained freedom!

The Salzburgers remained in Savannah with the English until the Royal Governor of the Colony, General James Oglethorpe, selected a site for the Salzburger Congregation to settle. Finally, a

site was selected, about twenty miles up the Savannah River. Then some of the Salzburger men began to clear and construct an overland road in order to move all the group and their meager belongings to the site. The name selected for the new home of the Salzburgers was Ebenezer meaning "rock of help". The land was cleared and log homes were constructed. Farming was restricted, by necessity, at first to planting small gardens. After two years, about 200 people lived in the new town. The Salzburgers soon discovered that a poor choice had been made in the selection of the town site. The sandy, infertile soils in the area would not produce! Malarial mosquitoes were a constant source of sickness. After consultation with Gen. Oglethorpe, a new site was selected which was but a short distance from the Savannah River at a site called Red Bluff. New Ebenezer was surveyed off and covered an area of land which was a quarter of a mile square.

Christian Leimberger received a crown grant in 1734 for fifty acres of land, a garden plot and town lot 72 in New Ebenezer (5).

## References

- 1 G. F. Jones, ed. Henry Newman's Salzburger Letterbooks (Athens , Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1966)
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Georgia Archives, Index to Early Land Grants (Atlanta, Georgia).

## Suggested Reading

- P. A. Strobel, The Salzburgers and Their Descendants (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1953).
- C. Mauelshagen, Salzburg Lutheran Expulsion and Its Impact (New York: Vantage Press, 1962).
- G. F. Jones et al., Detailed Reports on the Salzburger Emigrants Who Settled in America, Vol. I-VII. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press).
- G. F. Jones, The Salzburger Saga - Religious Exiles and Other Germans Along the Savannah (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1984).
- K. Hvidt, Von Reck's Voyage (Savannah, Georgia: Beehive Press, 1980).

# Archbishopric of Salzburg

