

Early Ketner History
“When the way gets tough, the tough gets going!”

THE BEGINNING: PALATINE GERMANY

The 30 years war (1618-1648) in Germany was a grueling series of bloody conflicts between the Lutherans and the Roman Catholics. Mercenary soldiers roamed the countryside, robbing, cruelly violating and murdering most of the peasants who had survived the *Catholic troops* and the *Swedes*. (**The people of the Rhine lost three fourths of their population during this war and its destructive aftermath.**) Three years after the war officially ended, **Michael Kittner** (Ketner) was born.

The Ketner families and their Lutheran neighbors endured *starvation, Bubonic plague, scurvy, dysentery and torture*. Catholic armies plundered the priceless treasures of the Lutheran libraries and churches.

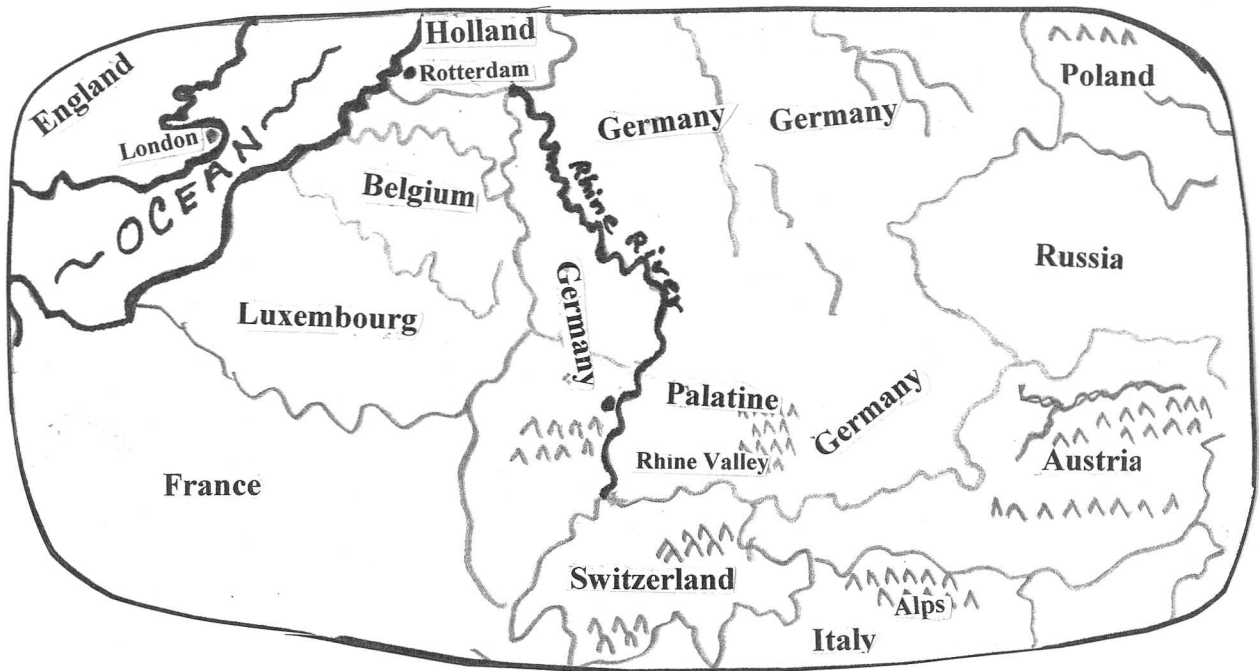
In 1674, as this *nightmare* continued, French King Louis XIV *ravaged and burned* huge areas along the Rhine to protect his French borders. This prevented the **Ketners** and other Palatine farmers from cultivating most of their fields for 3 years. During this on-going disaster, **Michael** married **Susanne** in 1681.

Johannes Kettner was born to **Michael** and **Susanne Kettner** in 1683. Twenty eight years later (1711), **Johannes** (1683-1746) married **Veronica Burkhart**. They had two daughters and three sons. (According to one of these daughters, *Esther Kettner*, her father, **Johannes Kettner**, was a ‘*Dragoner in the Sachsen Gothieschen Dragoner Regiments*’. (**Dragones were mounted soldiers who fired short muskets.**)

In addition to the horrors of war, Germany experienced a *bitterly cold winter* (1688-1689). With the *burning cities and castles in ruin*, the French invaded smaller towns and villages. As their homes *burned*, **Michael Kettner** and his family fled their home in the snow. For these proud and determined Ketners, the *overwhelming grief* of leaving their beloved homeland was replaced by **survival and protecting** their families. (*According to history documents, 50,000 Germans left the Palatine area to come to America in the early 1700’s.*)

Sometime in the late spring of 1773, the Ketners set sail from the Palatine for Holland. The *dangerous 4 to 6 weeks* journey down the Rhine River to Rotterdam, Holland was *horrendous*. (*Much of this time was spent in complying with the rules of the many German harbors along the Rhine River Valley and obtaining permits to navigate past their areas.*)

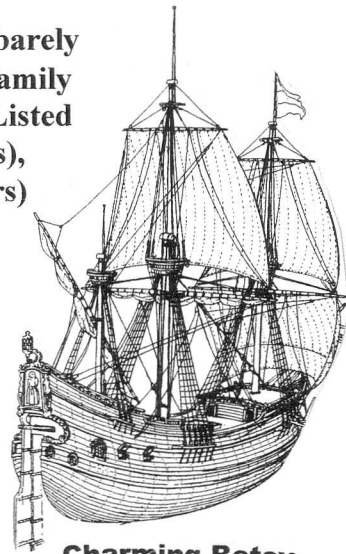
Map showing the journey of the Ketners from the Palatine area of Germany to Holland.



In Rotterdam Holland, **2 more weeks** was *wasted* clearing customs, booking passage and waiting for favorable trade winds to make the trip to America. (It had been **2 months** since Johann and his family left their beloved Rhine Valley home.) As Johann and his family waited on their ship “**Charming Betsy**”, they could not have imagined that the most *difficult* part of their journey was ahead of them!!

The **Charming Betsy** was 140 feet long by 34 feet wide, barely large enough for the crowded passengers. Johann Katner and his family huddled with other immigrants and boarded their crowded ship. Listed on the ship’s log were **Johan Katner** (50 years), **Veronica** (41 years), George Michael (19 years), Maria (14 years), John Henry (10 years) and Henry Adam (8 years).

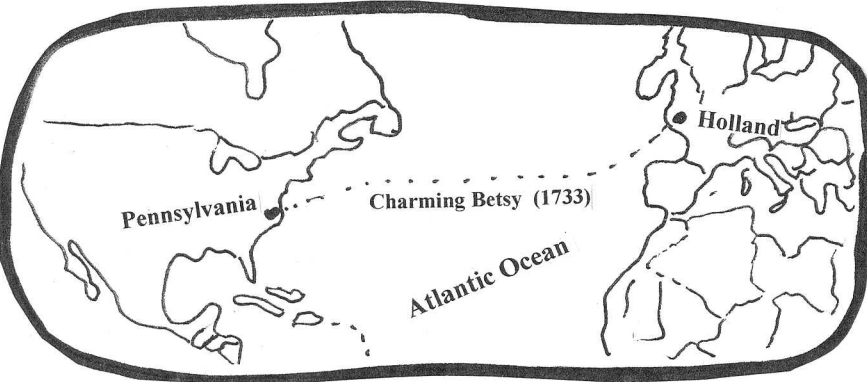
The Dutch ships were used to carry cargo. With the huge numbers of immigrants desperate to leave Germany, the ship owners *converted* musty, dark and dismal cargo space into cramped passengers’ quarters. The Ketners, like the other nervous, desperate immigrant families, had to use cots and hammocks squeezed into spaces too small to allow them only limited movement during the long and *treacherous* trip.



Charming Betsy

Aboard these converted cargo ships, it was either *stifling hot* or **penetratingly cold**. The trip by ship across the Atlantic usually lasted **5 to 6 weeks**. The Ketner, traveling in late summer, most likely encountered hurricanes. The *rough seas* and *huge waves* created *havoc* for these land-loving farmers.

The Ketners and other passengers were required to provide their own food. The two months in Holland almost *depleted* their food supplies. The drinking water aboard the ship was foul and basically unfit to drink. During hurricanes and violent storms, the ship *tossed* the passengers around the ship, creating *misery*. **EVERYONE** was *deathly* ill from sea sickness!



Only the **healthiest** managed to **survive**. Children and the elderly were the first to die when *dysentery, typhoid, scurvy* or *small pox* weakened them. Many died and were buried at sea. *(The overwhelming grief of leaving your loved ones buried at sea was horrible.)*

(It is a miracle that all the Ketners aboard the ship arriving in Pennsylvania survived, especially the Ketner children).

Johan and other German immigrants had to *bribe every 'petty'* official from the Rhineland to Pennsylvania. **(It is documented that the *Ketner family* had valuable real estate and personal property in Germany. Most likely they turned these assets into cash for their long journey to freedom. However, this money was stretched to the limit as they tried to buy their way to freedom.)**

Once the ship **dropped anchor** in Philadelphia, the Ketners (and other passengers) had to wait *offshore* for a doctor to check for *contagious diseases* before being released to Philadelphia.

At long last, **Johannes Kettner** and his **family** arrived in America through the Philadelphia Port on October 11, 1733. **Johannes** and his oldest son **Georg Kettner** (1714-1769) was escorted by officials and took a **required oath of alliance** to the British King at the Pennsylvania Colony Courthouse the next day.

DIFFICULT LIFE IN PENNSYLVANIA

The **deep forest lands** 60 miles inland from Philadelphia was the land that William Penn had developed for immigrants. There were 100,000 German Immigrants in Pennsylvania and the Ketners discovered other German immigrants to help them search for land warrants, guides and supplies for their migration from

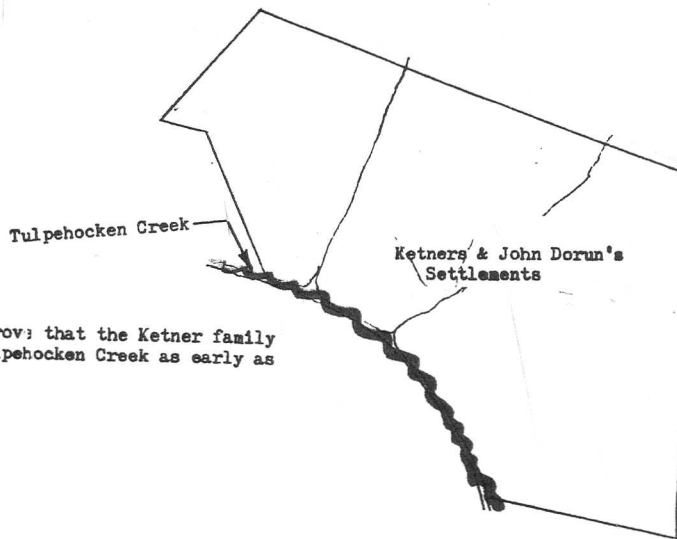
Philadelphia to Berks County, 60 miles away. These German Americans were **obstinate, strong, stubborn and courageous** as they confronted an English speaking land and English laws that were strange and difficult to understand. They persevered because of their commitment to survive in a new land of freedom.

In 1737, four long years since the Ketners had arrived in the Philadelphia, **John Ketner** obtained a land warrant for 293 acres of land on the Tulpehocken Creek in Berks County. (**John Ketner's** name is spelled *Kedner* on some documents.) **George Ketner** (19 years old) obtained a land warrant adjacent to his father's near North Kill Creek.

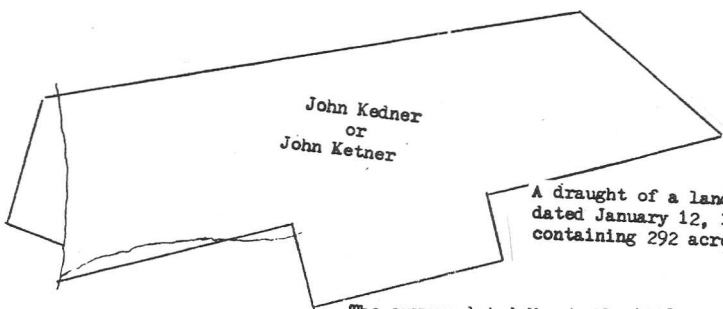
KETNER LAND TRACTS IN PENNSYLVANIA- EARLY 1700s:
(Information supplied by Roy Ketner):

A draught of a land tract surveyed to Albrecht Strowze (Strouze/Strauss) in pursuant of a warrant dated October 7, 1736 in Tulpehocken Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, containing 131½ acres.

A draught of a land tract surveyed to Martin Schell in pursuant of a warrant dated June 6, 1737 in Tulpehocken Township, Berks County, Pennsylvania, containing 137 acres. The survey of June 16, 1737 indicated that on the adjoining property (Albrecht Strowze) was situated the Ketners and John Dorun's settlements.



Note: This would tend to prove that the Ketner family was living on the Tulpehocken Creek as early as June 1737.



A draught of a land tract surveyed to John Ketner (Kedner) by virtue of a warrant dated January 12, 1737 in Tulpehocken Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, containing 292 acres.

The survey dated March 27, 1738 indicated that the tract was located primarily east of a North Creek Drain (now known as Wolf Creek) with a small portion extending west of the drain.

Although the name was spelled John Kedner, on the draught, in the body of the document, the name was spelled as both John Ketner and John Kedner.

Evidently John Ketner never lived on the land. There has been speculation that John Ketner transferred title to Albrecht Strauss in exchange (at least in part) for use of other Strauss property located on the Tulpehocken Creek in the vicinity of Kricks (Sunday/Sontag) Mill.

Apparently the land grant was finalized and recorded July 13, 1761. In the document, John Ketner obtained title to the land and simultaneously transferred title to Albrecht Strause in the same document.

Life was difficult for the Ketner Family (and other immigrants) in Pennsylvania. This strange new land, with language barriers, created new challenges for them.

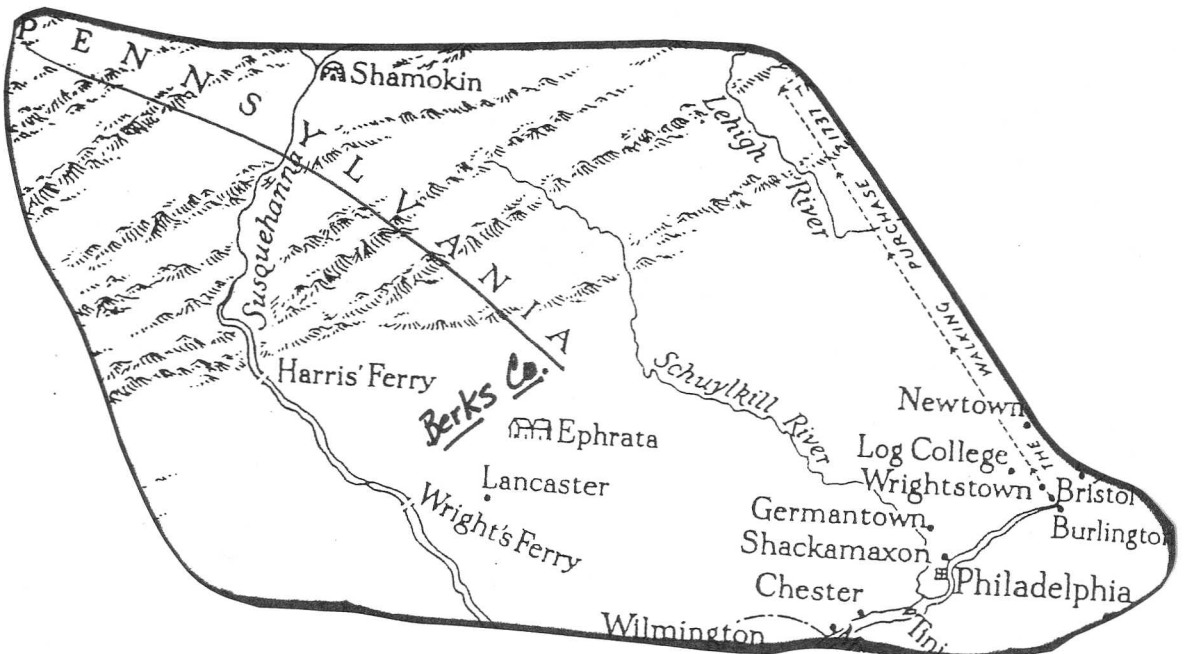
Benjamin Franklin *despised* the German Palatines, calling them Europe's 'riff-raff'. (Actually the *Ketner family* and many other German Immigrants were numbered among the Noble Families of Baden- The Princely House of Furstenberg.)

Franklin ordered a *head tax* for all German immigrants to discourage further immigration. (This was ironic given the fact that Franklin spent 11 years in England to obtain tax relief for the Pennsylvania Colony.) Some of 'head tax' money found its way into Franklin's pocket, making him a wealthy man. Franklin, who distinguished himself in the printing business, could not out-perform these immigrant master printers.

Fortunately, most of the American Colonists did not feel like Franklin (about the newcomers). In 1776, the Pennsylvania Colonists were given an opportunity to vote on the adoption of a language for the Pennsylvania area.. It must have 'galled' Franklin to discover that the choice of English only won by a single vote!

(Theresa: "It is interesting to note that German Immigrants contributed many firsts in America: a school textbook, the first choir hymnal, the first paper and knitting mill, an oil well, the Christmas Card, and the Christmas tree.")

For 30 generations, the Johannes Ketner family had been master farmers, rotating and producing large crops. Coming to Pennsylvania, they brought that knowledge and skill!



In the late 1700's, the majority of Pennsylvania was covered in thick forest. Former Indians trails were the only roads and smaller wagons maneuvered over the narrow trails.

George Ketner I asked the German Immigrants who had come earlier about the hazards of the long trip ahead and the best place to purchase horses, wagons and provisions.

After purchasing supplies and a wagon, the Ketners braced themselves for hardship as they traveled (with other German Immigrants) in small wagon trains to **protect themselves** from Indians and wild animals.

Crossing large rivers and fords with their wagons, they bought cattle, pigs, chickens and goats from other homesteading pioneers, living along the way.

The Ketners crossed **South Mountain** to avoid **The Long Swamp**, covered with vines, *infested* with mosquitoes and "swamp fever". Finally they arrived at their "land warrant" and set up camp. (This camp was always near protected land and a spring in a low valley. They may have lived in their wagon as shelter during the first few months.)

The Ketners cleared their land of huge trees and rock boulders before they built a log cabin and a barn. (From immigrant letters and journals, a description of the primitive cabins emerge: "Wind whistled through the logs, rain leaked through the roof, and snow *blew* through the cracks around the doors and windows.")

George Michael Ketner I (1714-1769) married **Maria Friedrich (1719-1796)** at the little Tulpehocken Church in May of 1740.

(Legal records show that Ketner was spelled **Kettner** or **Kittner**. Maria was listed as **Mary Catherine Fredrick**.)

According to the 1743 records of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church in Stouchesburg, Pennsylvania, **John and George Ketner** became Charter Members. **George and Maria** had eight children, the youngest was **George Michael Ketner II** (1755-1824).

The Indians were *unsympathetic* to these immigrants and the *wild animals* were also a threat to the Ketners and as they cleared their land.

For the several years, *disaster* was part of the Ketner's life. In 1737, *Swarms of locust* ravaged the area and *severe earthquakes* were active. Two successive seasons of *poor crops* (1750-1752) were followed by *3 years of drought* (1752-1754). A *hailstorm* in 1763 dropped hailstones as large as turkey eggs, killing many small animals. During the hard winter of 1780, *20 inches of ice* formed on the ponds and the ears of the farm animals actually froze!

The continuing *weather hardships* and the high price of land created the decision to leave their new home in Pennsylvania for a new home. Searching for available lands in the Carolinas, **Johan** and **George Michael Kettner I** decided on *Piedmont Carolina* for their permanent new home. In the fall, after their crops were harvested, the Ketner families left Pennsylvania.

DANGEROUS JOURNEY TO THE CAROLINAS

Coming down the Shenandoah Valley Trail was *treacherous*. The Indian trails were narrow, rough and difficult to negotiate. The brisk winds of fall became the *bitterly severe winds* of winter that cut through their homemade clothing. Hauling their earthly goods and farm equipment in wagons, they drove their livestock in front of the wagons. They followed the Staunton River through the Blue Ridge Mountains, southward across the Dan River through North Wilksboro.

With *difficulty*, they crossed fords and ferried across the Yakin River. The heavily loaded wagons *sloshed* through rivers of mud and *axle deep* ruts. They *struggled* to negotiate the swollen creeks and streams. Not knowing the territory, the language or what lay ahead of them, these determined **Ketners** focused on hope, freedom and the promise of a new life.

The Ketner Family bought *large cheap tracts of land* from King George through the agents of Earl of Granville. As they arrived in Cabarrus County, the **cold winter weather** set in. **They were well supplied with food from their Pennsylvania farms to make the transition.** The weather in Rowan and Cabarrus Counties was *milder* than they had experienced in Pennsylvania, enabling them to build log houses and barns without the cold harsh snowstorms.

The **Ketners** had the reputation of being **industrious, hard working, economical and thrifty.** They loved their church and were, ***WITHOUT EXCEPTION***, Lutheran. Bringing their Bibles and Books of Worship with them, they made **faith and education top priorities.** (Shortly after building their houses and barns, they built a log church that also served as a schoolhouse.)

The Ketners settled near Buffalo Creek where the *fertile soil* and the 'flat bottom' land produced the best crops. The creeks furnished water for their livestock and family.

