

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF OUR ANCESTORS ...

FROM WÜRTTEMBERG, GERMANY, TO WURTEMBURG, NEW YORK

Johannes George Rymph (? – 1791) & Mary Barbara Reichenecker (? – ?)

— *Bradley Rymph*

VISITS TO HYDE PARK, NEW YORK:

September 1, 1995 (with José Baquiran)

July 8, 1999 (with José Baquiran, Albert and
Edna Mae Rymph)

May 24, 2014

September 17, 2017 (with José Baquiran)

September 9, 2019 (with José Baquiran)

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Uncertainty has surrounded historical knowledge of the origins of **Johannes George Rymph** and **Mary Barbara Reichenecker**, progenitors of the Rymph family name in America. In his 1973 genealogy, *Come In and Sit a Spell!*, my grandfather, Levi Budd Rymph, recalled being brought up as a child to believe that the Rymphs were of Dutch origin. The region in which they settled, New York's Hudson Valley, was largely settled by Dutch immigrants. Moreover, in the opening decades of the 20th century, when my grandfather was a boy, families were proud to be of Dutch descent, but less public about acknowledging German ancestry.

However, in his research later in his adult life, my grandfather became convinced that the original Rymphs did, in fact, come from Germany. One published history he studied, *The Commemorative Biographical Record of Dutchess and Putnam Counties*, noted that "George Rymph, originally spelled Rim, arrived in America a few years prior to 1769, coming to this country from Wittenburg, Germany, with the Cookinghams (Kuckenheims), who settled at Wurtemberg, near Rhinebeck."*

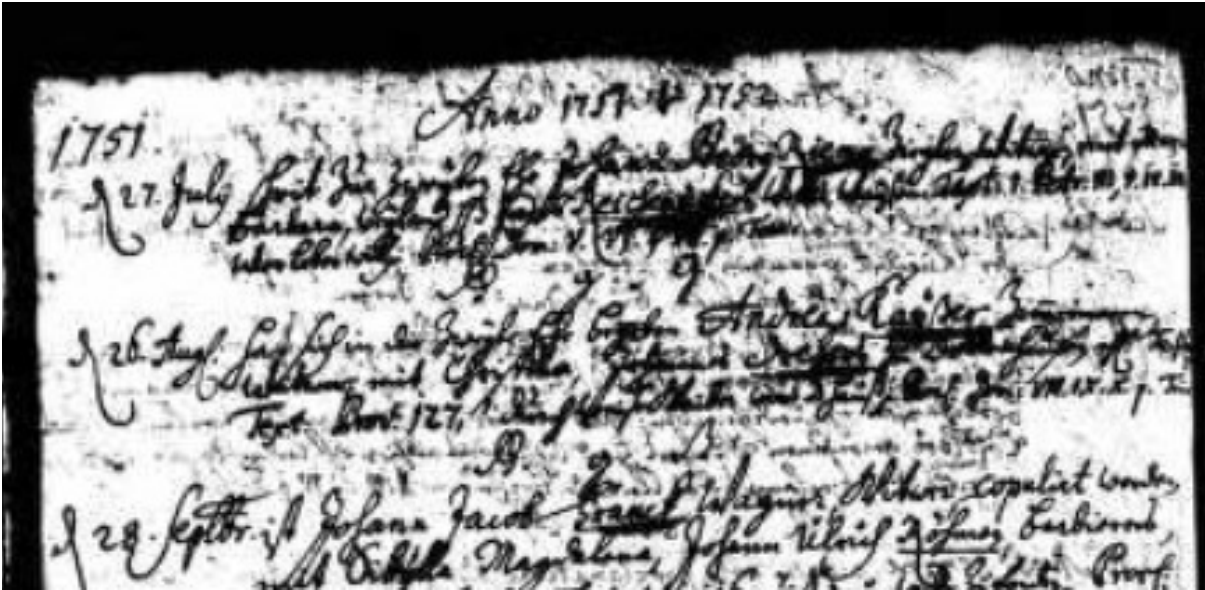
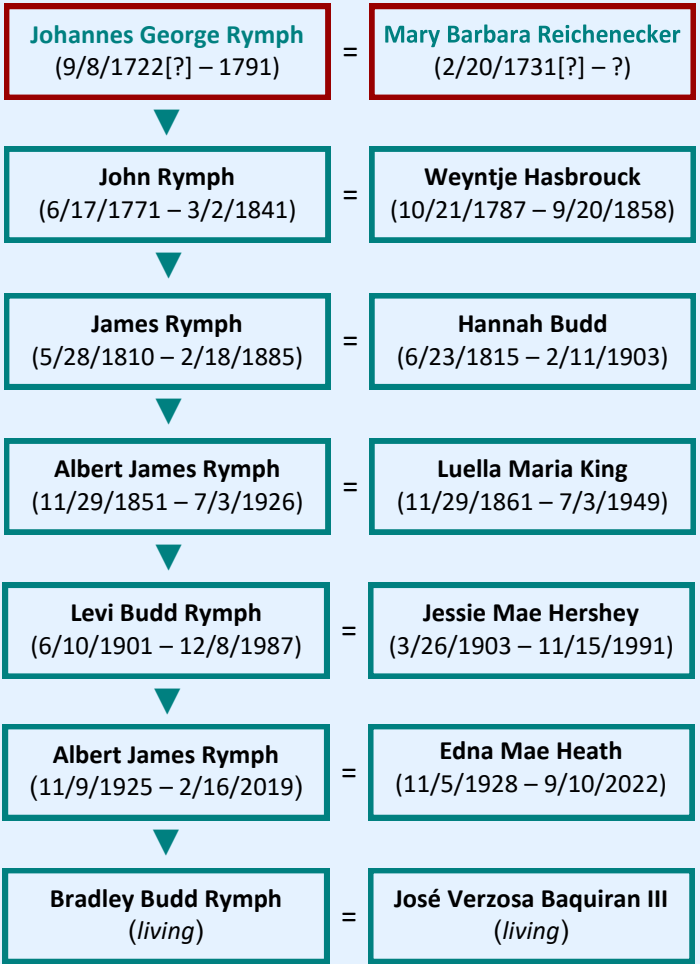
* This volume makes this statement in the entry for George W. Rymph, great-grandson of Johannes George and Mary Barbara (Reichenecker) Rymph and grandson of John and Weyntje (Hasbrouck)

In my own ongoing research to confirm the Rymphs German roots, I have come to believe that actually came from not Wittenburg but instead Würtemberg, Germany. Other genealogical sources claim that immigrant Daniel Cookingham settled in Dutchess County, New York, from the town of Durlach in what is now the German state of Baden-Württemberg, rather than Wittenberg. In addition, in researching German church records that are increasingly becoming available online, I have found no references to any name similar to Rim or Rymph or to Reichenecker in historic records of Wittenberg. In contrast, many families with the name of

Rymph. However, in a separate entry for Edward L. Rymph, youngest son of John and Weyntje, this volume notes, James [apparently in reference to Johannes George] Rymph, grandfather of our subject, was *born in Holland* [italics added], came to America when a young man and settled on a farm in Hyde Park, where he built his own house in the wilderness, married, and reared a family of several children.”

HOW WE'RE RELATED

Johannes George Rymph and Mary Barbara Reichenecker were my great-great-great-great-grandparents through my father, Albert James Rymph.



Likely marriage record of immigrant ancestors, Johannes George Rymph and Mary Barbara Reichenecker, July 27, 1751, in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.

Map of Hyde Park, New York, Patent, with plots of Johannes George Rymph and Mary Barbara (Reichenecker) Rymph in burgundy oval

Reichenäcker were in the Württemberg region in the 17th through 19th centuries. Moreover, the Württemberg-region church records for the 1700s show multiple birth, baptismal, marriage, and death entries for people with the surnames of Ramph, Rempf, Remph, Rempp, Riemp, and Rump. Among these are two records that appear likely to be for Johannes Georg and Mary Barbara Rymph and their eldest son George. One is a marriage record for a Johann Georg Riemp and Maria Barbara Reichenäcker on July 27, 1751, at the Evangelische Kirche Weil im Schönbuch in Breitenstein, Baden-Württemberg, Germany. The second is a birth record for a Johann Georg Riemp, born December 12, 1752, in Weil Im Schönbuch, Böblingen, Baden-Württemberg, son of Johann Georg Rump and Maria Barbara Reichenäcker, born August 9, 1722, and February 20, 1731, respectively, in Weil Im Schönbuch.

Pairing these two records with the fact that my immigrant ancestors settled in a part of Dutchess County, New York, known as Wurtemberg makes me suspect that the Rymphs who lived in the 1800s and 1900s in Dutchess County confused Württemberg with



Wittenberg (famous as Martin Luther's home town) in orally passing down the family's immigration history.

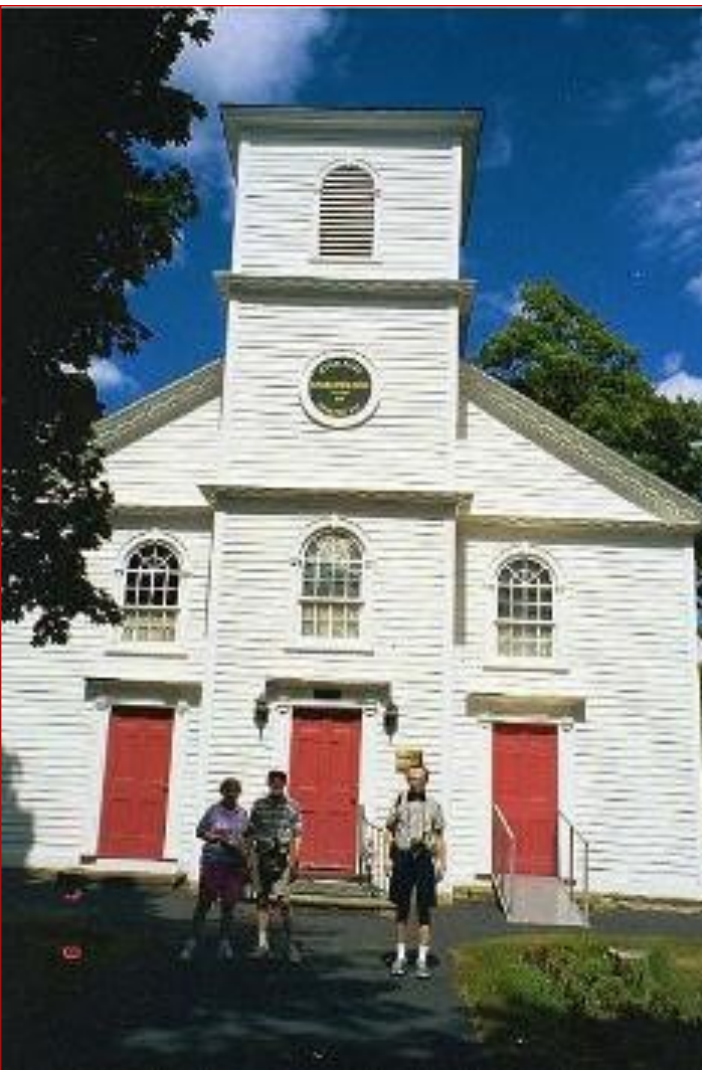
In the New York State Library in Albany and at the St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church of Wurtemberg, New York, my grandfather and grandmother found baptismal records for three children of a Hans Jerg Remp and his wife Barbara — Jacob, born November 13, 1760; Abraham, born March 30, 1767; and Maria Barbara, born April 30, 1769.

Several other children apparently were born before or after the dates included in the Wurtemberg Church birth



above: *St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Wurtemberg, where the Johannes George Rymph family apparently first worshipped after settling in Dutchess County and where several of the family's children were baptized.*

below: *Reformed Dutch Church of Hyde Park, where the Johannes George Rymph family apparently transferred their church membership at some point.*



records. George Rymph's will, probated in Dutchess County, New York, on July 2, 1791, listed as his children: George (likely the Johann Georg Riemp born in Weil Im Schönbuch in 1752), James, Rebecca, Elizabeth, Rachel, Mary, Luke, Abraham, John (my ancestor), and Peter. Two of the three child names listed on the baptismal records do not show up on the will. Perhaps, Jacob died before his father or went by another name later in life. Mary could have been the Maria Barbara of the baptismal records. In a 1909 history of Hyde Park (published as a chapter of *The History of Dutchess County, New York*), Amos T. Ashton wrote that George Rymph "died in 1791, leaving a wife and ten children."

Little else is known about Johannes George and Mary Barbara Rymph. Dutchess County Historical Records record the following: "T. George Rim (Rymph), a file maker, by deed dated November 10, 1768, lot #5 of the patent consisting of 215 acres."

Rymph bought his land from John Bard, a New York City physician who had been one of the original founders of Hyde Park after he bought 3,600 acres of generally undeveloped land along the Hudson River in 1763. Financial difficulties a few years later caused Dr. Bard to sell some of his property, including the acreage on the north side

of Bard's holdings, which Rymph bought. (Several years after Dr. Bard's death, subsequent owners of the remaining Bard estate sold it to Frederick Vanderbilt, who built the mansion that currently stands on the property and is now preserved and operated by the National Park Services as the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site.)

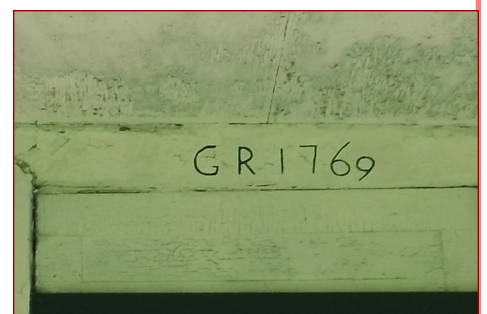
A year later, Rymph built a stone house on this property on the west side of the Post Road. The house remained in the Rymph family until 1915. In his history published in 1909, Ashton wrote, "The Rymph family have been landowners in this section [presumably referring to the original patent territory for Hyde Park] for a longer period than any other except [one family]."

As of the summers of 1995 and 1999 (and, later, in 2014, 2017, and 2019), the house still stood, when I was able

to view its exterior. Used previously as part of a Catholic Dominican camp, it stood abandoned and in disrepair when I visited it.

The house has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since August 19, 1993. Hyde Park town historian Carney Rhinevault was quoted in the June 27, 2010, *Poughkeepsie (NY) Journal* as stating that it is the second-oldest house in Hyde Park. The article explained that the house is special not because of any special architecture but because it "exemplifies ... the way ordinary settlers who were the first Europeans in these parts would make homes using mostly native materials; in this case, stone." The article goes on to state:

The date of 1769 is displayed over the door of the Rymph House, but the building does not look its age,



Johannes George Rymph House as it appeared in May 2014, with the initial "G.R." and year 1769, displayed above the house's front door.

and the fieldstone is seen only in the basement and in peekholes where damage has provided a glimpse.

The Rymphs had added onto the building and then, in the mid-19th century, transformed it into a popular style of the Victorian era owed largely to tastemakers of the day, Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing, an American Gothic marked by some rounded windows and a peaked central gable over the front door.

It is this period that most of the material in the house and its general appearance currently reflect, said Rob Sweeney, who is an officer of the Society of the Preservation of Hudson Valley Vernacular Architecture.

The exterior has a stucco and clapboard exterior. The interior has a wide variety of remodeling and not a

lot of detail left to speak of the periods that the Rymphs would know.

“It has about 75 percent of the material there to restore it back to the 19th century,” Sweeney said. “if you were to go back to the 18th century, you’d be relying on a lot of conjecture.”

In the early 20th century, another remodeling was done in a Colonial Revival style that further mixed up and muddled the home’s appearance.

“It needs a well-informed individual to go in and study the house and see what the house wants,” Sweeney said, “rather than go in and impose your own will on the house.”

In December 2007, a nonprofit preservationist organization, Scenic Hudson Land Trust, bought the lands of the abandoned church camp, including

Kirchhoek (German Church Cemetery), at Wey's Crossing, north of Rhinebeck — the site where the first church building in Dutchess County was erected in 1716. According to Rymph family tradition, it is also the likely burial cemetery of Johannes George Rymph and Mary Barbara



the ancestral Rymph house, as part of its campaign to preserve scenic lands along the Hudson River. The article in the June 27, 2010, *Poughkeepsie Journal*, was prompted by Scenic Hudson's announcement that it had put the old Rymph house up for sale or lease, with a covenant and conservation easement requiring that any purchaser "restore and rehabilitate the property to a suitable state."

The house was apparently sold to an investor who planned to convert the property into "The Rymph Arts Center for Culture and Sustainability" (TRACCS). Architectural plans are posted online, with the proposed center dated "2010–present." Another online page notes that TRACCS was incorporated as a "domestic not-for-profit corporation" in New York on April 16, 2012. However, as of a September 8, 2019, visit to Hyde Park, the house showed no sign of renovation or any other work around it since visits in 1995, 1999, 2014, or 2017.

TO LEARN MORE

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