

## The Lowe Family Journey

By SINDI LOWE-JEFFERS

In 1708, winter was descending on the area known as the Palatinate, or Pfalz, in Germany. Situated along the Rhine River, the Palatinate was already struggling to overcome the 30 years war and had been at the mercy of France's Louis XIV for some time. Homes were burned by the invading French, and many people who rebuilt soon found their homes burned again. Now, the vineyards and crops that had not been destroyed by war were frozen. The fruit crop that brought livelihood to so many was gone. Families were unable to protect themselves from the many impending threats and were forced into a downward spiral. Disgusted by the destruction of their way of life, the Palatines were determined to find a way out.

In boats of every type imaginable, the first wave of Palatines set sail on the Rhine River in April 1709. The sail down the Rhine meant enduring four to six weeks of extreme cold and hunger. For many, it was a small price to pay for a chance at a better life. Most of the refugees eventually reached Rotterdam in the Netherlands. By June 1709, people were flooding into Rotterdam at a rate of 1,000 per week. After arriving in Rotterdam, the Palatines were forced to live in refugee camps that would eventually become poverty stricken towns. For most, the future looked bleak.

The people of the Netherlands were sympathetic to the plight of the refugees and were willing to help. However, the massive need soon overwhelmed the small country. It was then that England stepped in to help, migrating the Palatines to England and Ireland. Even after 20 years of migration, most Palatines were still living in the camps.

Perhaps the older refugees could remember a visitor to the Palatinate named William Penn. In 1677, Penn had extended an invitation to join him in Pennsylvania. Tales of plentiful and cheap land and freedom from religious persecution were making their way through the camps. Penn's invitation, coupled with reports from former refugees who had managed to make it to Pennsylvania, made the Palatines begin to envision of land of opportunity across the sea.

Among those dreaming of a new life were Christian Lau and Balthasar Bortner. Christian and Balthasar shared a common dream of hope and prosperity for their families. Amazingly enough, those dreams would eventually lead all the way to Scott County, TN. Not many details are known about Christian and Balthasar's lives during this time. We do know, however, that they would eventually endure great hardship in their pursuit of freedom.

On October 9, 1732, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* featured an article by Benjamin Franklin. The article detailed the struggle of *John and William*, a ship that carried 220 Palatine immigrants to Pennsylvania. Seventeen weeks earlier, as Christian Lau, wife Anna and son, Conrad, boarded the *John and William* with dreams of freedom and happiness, he had no way of knowing what a grueling journey it would be. He was surely also unaware of the fact that his small family would be the beginning of many generations of Lowes in Scott County.

Most of the ships carrying Palatine immigrants were stocked with the cheapest supplies the ship's master could find. Often food and water ran out long before the journey was complete. Since the ships were overcrowded and unsanitary, sickness was rampant. By the time the *John and William* would reach Pennsylvania, 44 immigrants would be dead. Suffering from extreme hunger and exhaustion, the Palatines became fed up with the inhumane treatment they received at the hands of those transporting them. Countless robberies and worse crimes were committed aboard the ship. With the *John and William* three weeks from reaching Pennsylvania, the passengers had had enough. They mutinied and took control of the vessel. The long and arduous journey was completed on October 17, 1732, when the ship finally sailed up the Delaware River and arrived in Pennsylvania. The leaders of the mutiny were jailed upon arrival.

Soon after arrival, all the male Palatines over age 16 were required to take the following oath of allegiance:

“I do solemnly, sincerely and truly acknowledge, profess, testify and declare that King George the Second is the lawful and rightful King of the Realm of Great Britain and all others his Dominions and Countries. And do declare that I do believe the Person pretending to be Prince of Wales during the Life of late King James, hath not any right or title whatsoever to the Crown of the Realm of Great Britain. I will of my best endeavors and make known to King George the Second and his successors all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which I shall know to be made against him or any of the . . . And do make this Recognition, Acknowledgment, Renunciation and Promise heartily, willingly and true.”

Meanwhile, Balthasar Bortner and his family were facing similar conditions on *The Adventurer*. While the details of the journey of *The Adventurer* are mostly unknown, the conditions of most ships carrying Palatine immigrants were similar. A passenger aboard another ship reported extreme starvation and sickness. This passenger also stated that some parents were desperate enough to sell their children into slavery. Infants rarely survived the trip.

It has been estimated that by 1750, Pennsylvania had welcomed between 70,000 and 80,000 German immigrants, among them, the Lau and Bortner families. Both the Lowes and the Bortners are listed as being among the original settlers of Tulpehocken Township in Pennsylvania. Christian and Anna's family was branching out. Some researchers believe that the Laus had a son named Michael after arriving in Pennsylvania. Others believe that Michael was their grandson. The Bortner family was also growing, with the addition of a daughter, Elisabetha “Betsy.” We do know for sure that Michael and Betsy would eventually marry, and Michael would come to be known to many Scott Countians as “Grand Mikey, father of all Lowes.”

As the first generation of Palatine immigrants were living out their dreams of freedom in Pennsylvania, their children were growing up to have dreams of their own. With the flood of immigrants to Pennsylvania, land was becoming scarce. The English victories in the French and Indian War meant broad, new horizons were now in reach. People began to explore the newly

opened territories to the west and south. Michael and Betsy were among them.

By 1765, a new wave of immigrants were moving down what would become known as “The Great Wagon Road.” The road was originally known as “The Great Warrior’s Path” and was used by Native Americans for raids on other tribes. This road would eventually lead tens of thousands of settlers to new homes. The road, really a series of rough trails, stretched through valleys from Pennsylvania to Virginia and split into a “Y.” One road would have led settlers to the west. The other headed south into Georgia. The governors of the states down south were

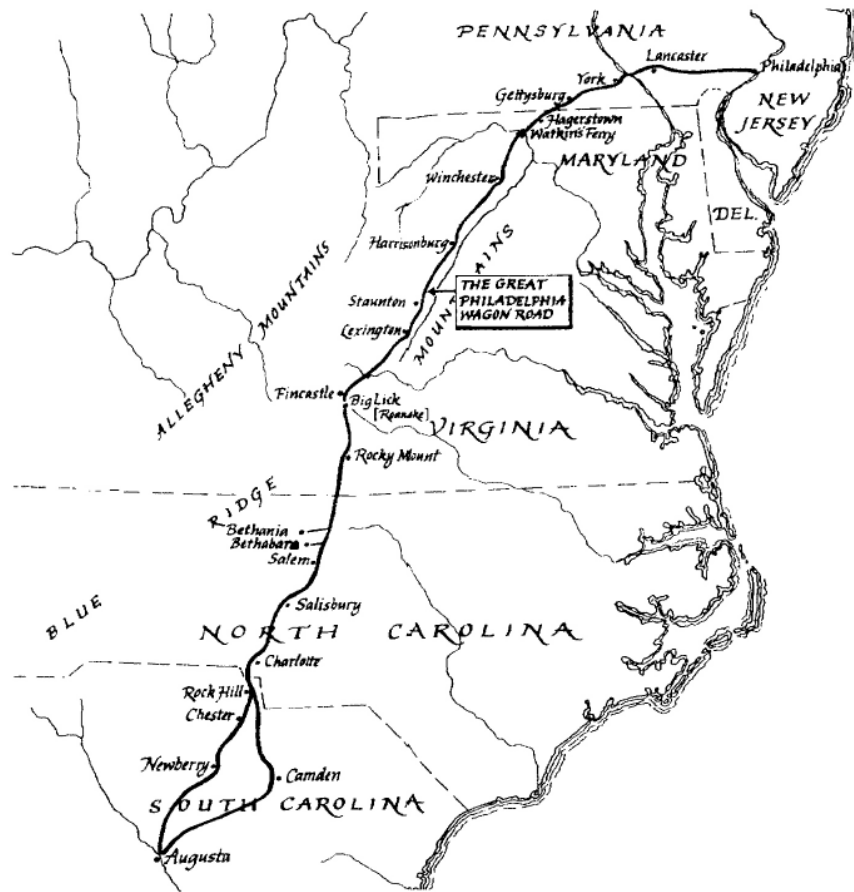


Figure 1 Map of The Great Wagon Trail

more than happy to offer the settlers land at extremely low prices and on easy terms, since they were hoping to create a buffer of settlers against any future incidents with the Native Americans.

The journey down the wagon road was not an easy one. Most settlers began the journey on foot, leading pack animals carrying supplies. Those traveling by wagon would have considered 10 miles a good day’s journey. The journey was slowed by taking oxen; however, oxen were strong and able to keep the pace long after horses had quit. Slow progress was the least of the settlers’ worries. There was also the ever present fear of a Native American attack, so getting a good night’s sleep was unlikely. Perhaps Grand Mikey and Betsy traveled at least part of the journey to Tennessee on this wagon road.

Tennessee officially became a state in 1796. Much of the land that now makes up the state of Tennessee was part of North Carolina. Michael was awarded land on Smokey Creek by a North Carolina land grant and he and Betsy settled down in their new home. This land grant was awarded prior to 1796 but was later honored by Tennessee. The new state of Tennessee’s borders stretched all the way to the Mississippi River. However, much of the state was still considered

Indian Territory. Districts were surveyed into six mile grids and then divided into lots and obtained by settlers through land grants.

Grand Mikey and Betsy may have been the first white settlers in Smokey, but they were not the first people to arrive. According to local legend, a Cherokee man and his wife were living there before Grand Mikey arrived. The Native American had apparently relocated after being banished from his tribe in North Carolina. Grand Mikey was accused of paying too much attention to the Cherokee woman. Her husband resolved to put an end to the problem.

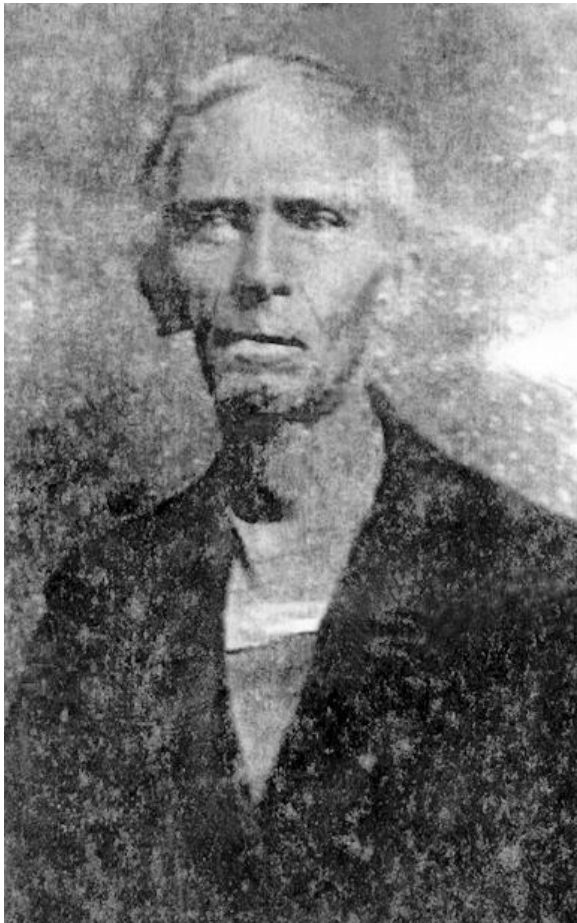


Figure 2 Michael Low III, born September 15, 1835, died June 18, 1907, was the son of Michael Lowe Jr. His mother's name is unknown.

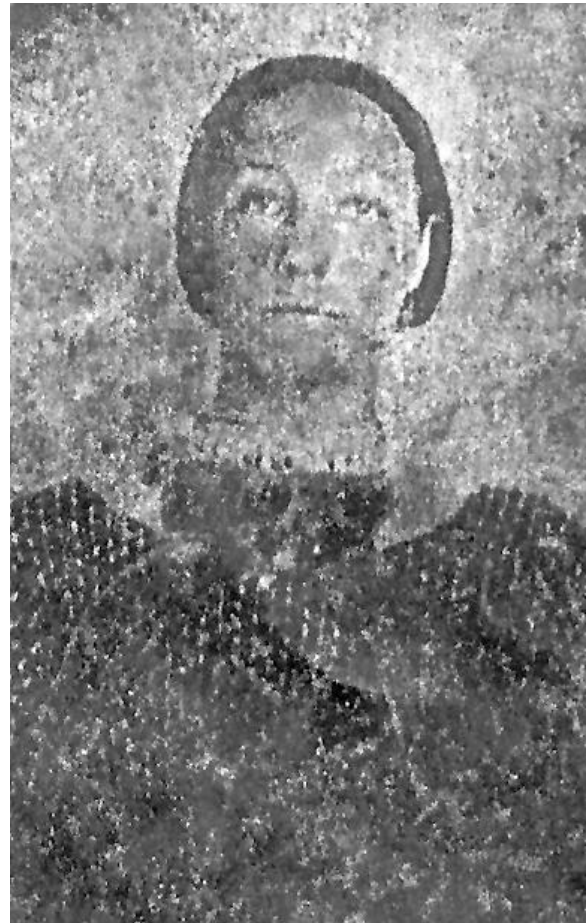


Figure 3 Frances Emiline Dyer, wife of Michael Low IV, born Mar 3, 1838, died June 7, 1901.

As Grand Mikey was fishing one day, the Cherokee was lurking in the nearby bushes, waiting for the opportunity to shoot Grand Mikey with his bow and arrow. The Cherokee was unaware that he had already been spotted. Grand Mikey picked up his rifle and his enemy was fatally wounded. The water where he was fishing has been known as the Indian hole ever since. The legend states that the Cherokee woman stayed on at Smokey.

Grand Mikey soon became known for his hunting ability. On one hunting adventure, Grand Mikey supposedly crawled into a cave and, for one reason or another, began banging around

with a stick. He soon regretted this decision when an angry bear came out to greet him. Grand Mikey managed to back out of the cave, but not before the bear had given him quite a beating.

Another favorite tale is that of Grand Mikey's wife, Betsy, and the day she met with an angry bear. It seems that Betsy encountered the bear while going to get water. She ran away and the bear gave chase. As her wooden pail dropped to the ground, Betsy noticed that the bear stopped briefly to inspect it before continuing to follow her. Betsy then began flinging her clothes, one piece at a time, to the ground. This clever trick distracted the bear long enough for Betsy to reach the safety of the cabin.

Michael would eventually become the patriarch of an enormous family. His descendants in Scott

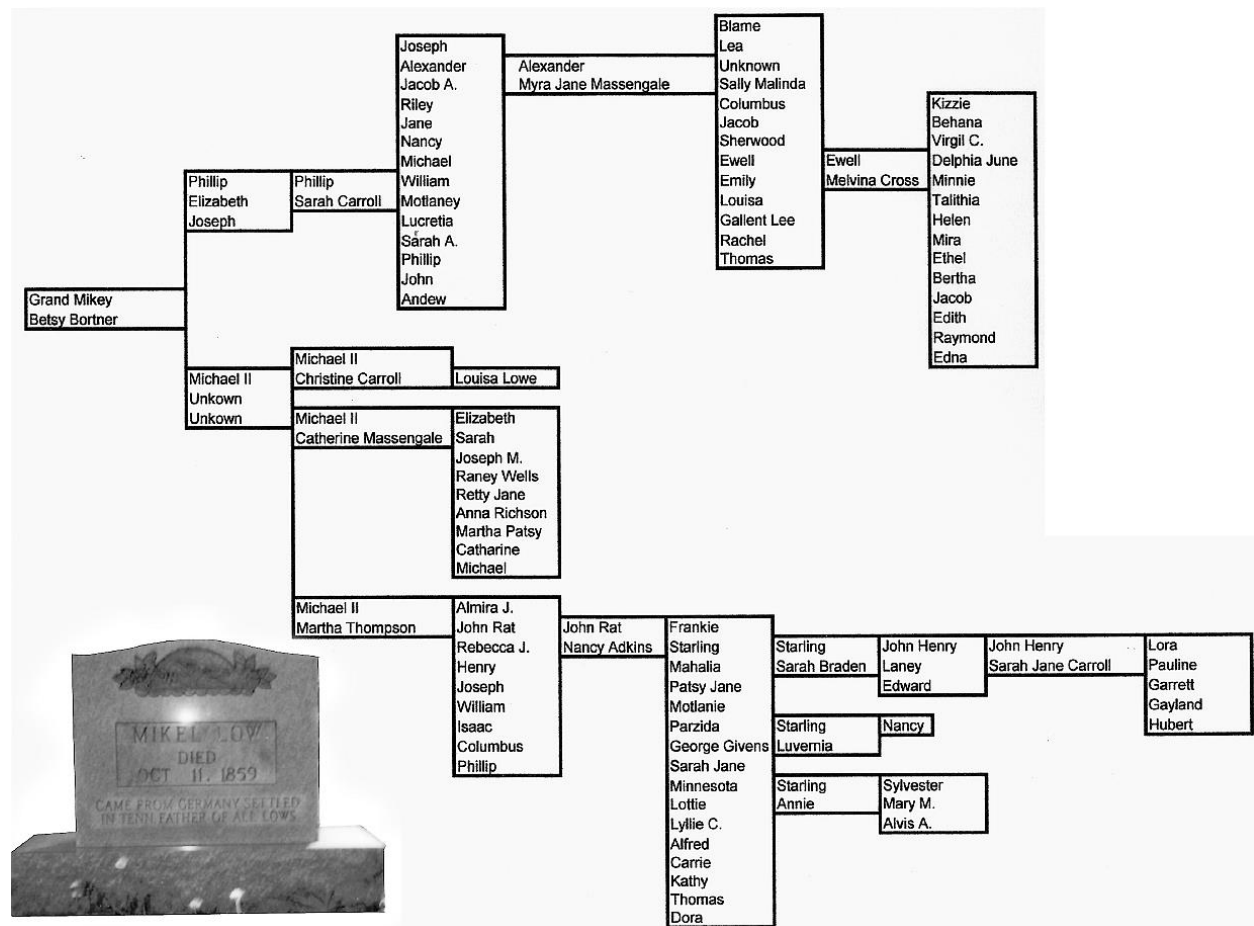


Figure 4 This chart indicates several of the earliest descendants of Grand Mikey and Betsy Bortner Lowe and was prepared by Sindi Lowe-Jeffers who would gladly furnish further information to those wishing to trace their ancestry. You can contact her at lions@multipro.com.

County would remember their German roots for generations to come by pronouncing their last name "Lowe" to rhyme with the original German version, "Lau." Michael would also become the subject of local folklore that has been passed down for hundreds of years.

The Lowe family has traveled a long way. From abject poverty in the Palatinate to refugee camps in the Netherlands; from the grueling 17-week sail on a crowded, unsanitary ship to Pennsylvania; and finally the long trek down The Great Wagon Trail to a lasting home in Scott

County, TN, our ancestors persevered. They were willing to face hunger, sickness, and the elements as they chased their dreams of freedom and prosperity. Their stubbornness and determination made this place what it is today. We all owe them a word of thanks.

This is the passenger list for the ship that carried the Lau family to America:

### **The John & William**

17 OCT 1732 John & William

List of foreigners imported in the ship Pink, John and William, of Sunderland, Constable Tymperon, Master, from Rotterdam. Qualified Oct. 17, 1732.

(The original list is herewith given)

Albrecht, Antonia	Keyl, Hans Jacob
Albrecht, Gerich	Kooyer, Jacob
Apfel, Pieter	Kooyer, Nicholas
Britbill, Benedick	Lorrence, Morriw
Britbill, Hans	<b>LOW, CHRISTIAN</b>
Britbill, Hans Pieter	<b>LOW, CONRAD</b>
Britbill, Jacob	Martin, Hans Jerich
Cooler, Fridrich	Matts, Stephven
Derst, Paul	Melchionar, Ludwick
Deynen, Johannes	Melchionar, Philip
Doopel, Hans Woolf	Menser, Mathiaws
Dubo, Abraham	Meyer, Philip Melchior
Dubo, Philip	Miller, Michael
Emich, Hans	Moll, Bartel
Gek, Hendrick	Nagel, Johannes
Gerloch, Balsar	Parishon, Nicholus
Gets, Conrad	Proops, Michael
Glais, Hans Philip	Proops Philip Jacob
Harbyn, Pieter	Reynhart, Philip
Hendrick, Jacob	Roebach, Hans Jerick
Houbly, Joseph	Rosler, Laurence
Huffer, Gedon	Rubichon, Mathias
Hufman, Johan Michael	Sheare, Jacob
Hugel, Ludwick	Shedeicher, Helflick
Hunsam, Johannes	Shook, Johannes
Huvigh, Pieter	Smidt, Pieter
Kelyfer, Laurence	Smit, Johan Michael
Keyl, Hans	Spreaker, Hans Jerick

Stis, Jerig Adam  
Stropfield, Johan Martin  
Trookmiller, Bastian  
Vansettel, Johan Jerich  
Vielard, Casperrias  
Vigilie, Johannes  
Vintenhelver, Johan  
Vosselman, Hans Earhart  
Vybert, Jerich  
Weyber, Jacob  
Weymer, Bernard  
Wilt, Adam  
Wisel, Fridrich  
Wysel, Michael  
Yegen, Johannes  
***Women & Children***  
Albrecht, Barbara  
Albrecht, Hans  
Albrecht, Peter  
Apel, Apalonia  
Bever, Christina  
Bever, Dorothy  
Bever, Jacob  
Britbill, Anna  
Britbill, Maria  
De Meyeren, Charl.  
Dubo, Anna  
Emich, Dorothy  
Emich, Jacob  
Emich, Johannes  
Emich, Nicholus  
Gerloch, Maria  
Getson, Maria  
Glassen, Maria  
Harbyn, Margaret  
Haufman, Eva  
Haufman, Maria  
Helferen, Christophel  
Helferen, Maria  
Husslich, Bernard

Husslich, Michael  
Husslich, Susan  
Hyvigh, Barbara  
Kooler, Dorothy  
Kooler, Elisabeth  
Kootson, Anna  
Kuyer, Barbara  
Kuyer, Johan David  
Kuyer, Maria Savin  
Lorrence, Barbara  
Lorrence, Jacob  
Lowan, Anna Fluf  
Lowan, Barbara  
Lowan, Christian  
Lowan, Margaret  
Lowan, Philip  
Margareta, Elisabetha  
Martin, Anna  
Martin, Michael  
Matts, Cathrina  
Melchionar, Anna Fugo  
Melchionar, Luodwick  
Melchionar, Maria K.  
Miller, Caspar  
Miller, Cathrina  
Miller, Cathrina  
Miller, Christophbena  
Miller, Hans  
Miller, Michael  
Moll, Kairina  
Nagelin, Maria  
Panchson, Andreas  
Panchson, Eve  
Panchson, Hendrich  
Panchson, Magdalena  
Panchson, Maria  
Proops, Cathrina  
Proops, Felder  
Proops, Michael  
Revenooch, Johan

Reyl, Cathrina  
Reyl, Maria  
Reyl, Michael  
Reylen, Eve  
Reylen, Jerick  
Reyn, Anna Hagel  
Rosar, Dorothy  
Rynhart, Sophia  
Shabel, Cathrena  
Shooken, Cathrina  
Shooken, Hans  
Shooken, Maria  
Shooken, Maria  
Shyndech, Marilas  
Smiden, Gertruy  
Smit, Maria  
Smith, Anna

Spis, Catharin  
Spis, Susanna  
Spreakering, Cathrina  
Trookmiller, Cathrina  
Vansettel, Cathrina  
Veymert, Barbara  
Veymert, Johannes  
Vielard, Magdalena  
Vorg, Jacob  
Vyberton, Maria  
Vyberton, Susan  
Wyberton, Anna  
Wysel, Ablonia  
Wysel, Barbara  
Wysel, Susanna  
Yege, Paliana

This is the passenger list for the ship that that transported the Bortner family.

### **The Adventure**

"At the Courthouse aforesaid, September 23, 1732. Fifty seven Palatines, who with their Families, making in all One Hundred & forty five Persons, were imported here in the Ship Adventure, Robert Curson, Master, from Rotterdam, but last from Cowes, as by Clearance thence." From the Minutes of the Provincial Council, printed in Colonial Records, Vol. III, p. 455. [List 23 B] Palatines imported in the Ship Adventure, Robert Curson, Master, from Rotterdam, but last from Cowes, p. clearance thence. Qualified September 23, 1732.

Ha[n]s Michal Miller  
Michael Brandt  
Michael Gross  
Johann Gorg Pauner  
Frederick (O) Tendelspech  
Hans Jerig (O) Able  
Hans Martin Ranger  
Hans Paulus Zantzinger  
David Holtzeder  
Johs. (x) Aarts  
Jorich Mosser  
Balthus Stuber

Andreas Kilian  
Hieronymus Glantz  
Andreas (O) Horne  
Mathias (X) Walder  
David Fischer  
Michel Moster  
Simon Meyer  
Lorenz Zwirner  
Jerg Unruh  
Conrath Long  
Michl. (M) Potts  
**BALSER BORTNER**



Hans Leond. (X) Nydy  
Johannes Heberling  
Johann Scholl  
Johs (X) Wingleplech  
Henrich Steger  
Madteis Riegel  
Henrich Lips  
Hans Jacob Kander  
Daniel Kolmer  
Mathias (X) Wagner  
Hans Ulerich Hui  
Bernhard (X) Shertle  
Michl (O) Koogh  
Simon (O) Gillinger  
Johannes (O) Becker  
Paul Le Cene  
Jean Le Cene

Andreas (O) Wise  
Jerg Rigel  
Fallendin Scheib  
Nickel Bogert  
Johannes Grawius  
Conrad Clewer  
Nicolas (X) Bortle  
David Moser  
Andreas (X) Schaup  
Leonart (O) Moster  
Paulus Mos[e]r  
Ha[n]s Jerig Lechner  
Hans Melcher Stecher  
Hanns Michael Haag  
Georg Michael Mack  
Hans Peter (O) Steyger  
Jerich Leohat Gam