

VALENTIN OBERDORFF (1735-1800)
AGNES ELIZABETH (1738 - AFT 1774)
[128, 129]

Died in his 103rd
year.

Valentin Oberdorff was born in Kembach, Germany in October 1735. Although generations of Oberdorffs have lived in Kembach and worshipped there, it is apparent that Valentin's parents were, on 17 April 1734, living in Dietenhan.¹ The census of that day lists 282 persons living in Kembach and 160 in Dietenhan.²

Kembach is near Wertheim, a town in southwestern Germany, in the state of Baden-Württemberg. It is the most northerly town in that state. It is situated on the delta of the river Tauber flowing into the river Main. It borders on the Oden-Wald and Spessart to the north across the river Main.



Under the guidance of Kembach's pastor, Christoph Ludwig Neubich, a chapel was built in Dietenhan in 1735 and on 29 October 1735, Valentin was the first child baptized in this new chapel³ (see photograph). After more than 200 years, the chapel was torn down in September 1937 and a new chapel put into service on 29 May 1939, still containing as the only keepsakes from the former chapel the Baptismal Font and the smallest of the present-day church bells.

At the age of 18 (with his 19th birthday just a month away), Valentin emigrated to the United States with his mother and father and at least two siblings.⁴ The family arrived at the Port of Philadelphia on September 24, 1754 on the ship *Neptune* which was captained by John Mason. Valentin signed the Oath of Allegiance with his mark.

It is not known what Valentin was doing between 1754 and 1760. He may have worked as an indentured servant to pay for the cost of his crossing before he settled down — this was common among immigrants of the time. By 1760, however, he seems to have settled in York County, Pennsylvania, located in the

¹ See also Johann's parents, Balthazar Oberdorf II and Magdalena [256,257].

² This information comes from Dorothy Cunningham after researching the German ancestry of the Overturf family in the State of Baden Württemberg's Archives in Wertheim on the Main and in the church records of Kembach and Dietenhan. It would appear that all Overturf descendants came from one of four villages — Kembach, Dietenhan, Dertingen, and Lindelbach — and emigrated to America between 1752 and 1773.

³ A copy of the Dietenhan church book of baptisms, in German, is included here. A translation appears at the bottom.

⁴ For a copy of the ship's manifest, see Johann's parents, Balthazar Oberdorf II and Magdalena.

Susquehanna Valley, a large fertile agricultural region in south-central Pennsylvania. It perhaps reminded him of his home in Germany. York County was created on 19 August 1762, and named either for the Duke of York, an early patron of the Penn family, or for the city and shire of York in England. Its county seat, also named York, is apparently where Valentin settled.



In 1760, Valentin married Agnes Elizabeth (or Elizabeth) in York County, Pennsylvania. Valentin is found on the tax list in Newberry Township, York County, Pennsylvania, in 1762 – nine years after coming to America. He is found on the tax list for Manchester Township, York County, Pennsylvania, in 1780.

Valentin and Agnes Elizabeth had seven children:

- John b. 28 Jul 1760 in York County, Pennsylvania
- Martin b. 18 Oct 1762 in York County, Pennsylvania
- Catherine b. 1766 in York County, Pennsylvania
- Anna Marie b. 1768 in York County, Pennsylvania
- Simon b. 2 Jan 1771 in York County, Pennsylvania [64]
- Samuel b. 2 Jan 1771 in York County, Pennsylvania (Died at birth)
- Conrad b. 16 May 1774 in York County, Pennsylvania

Valentin would have been about 41 years old when the Revolutionary War began, but some of his children would have been quite young, his oldest 16. No records have yet been found to indicate that he took up arms for American Independence, though there were men from York County very involved in the War.⁵

⁵ As early as July 4, 1774, York Countians selected a committee to protest against British taxation and other oppressive measures. When Boston was blockaded as a result of its famous tea party, York County provided financial help and military support. A local company of militia riflemen were among the first from west of the Hudson River to march to Massachusetts. In 1775 there were 3,349 "associaters" or volunteer militiamen within the County, and by 1778, a total of 4,621 York Countians answered the call to arms. By contrast the total population at the time was just shy of 25,000. In 1779 Colonel Thomas Hartley observed that, "the York districts has armed first in Pennsylvania and has furnished more men for the war and lost a greater number of men in it than any other district on the continent of the same number individuals." Innumerable organized protests against parliamentary restrictions and sporadic fighting throughout the colonies swelled into organized revolution. In July, 1776, the Declaration of Independence was read to cheering Yorkers who gathered before the two-story red brick courthouse on Centre Square. Fourteen months later the Continental Congress assembled in the same courthouse in order to administer a nation not quite fully born. The presence of the Congress in York, from September 30, 1777 to June 27, 1778, brought the first printing press to the County. Undoubtedly the most important business conducted here was the drafting of the Articles of Confederation, establishing the "United States of America".

Valentin moved his family to Fayette County, Pennsylvania, prior to 1785, for in that year he was on the tax list of that county and he was enumerated in that county in the 1790 Federal census.

How and why Valentin went to Kentucky, where he died in 1800, is unknown. It is presumed that Agnes Elizabeth preceded him in death, but after 1774 when she gave birth to her youngest child, Conrad.

WILLIAM
OVERTURE
DIED
MAY 18 1860
AGE 60