

POTTERFIELD

What's in a Name?

– LARRY'S SHORT STORIES #172 –

There are many stories about how family names changed, a little or a lot, as immigrants came into this country from Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries; the Potterfield name is one of those stories.

My earliest-known ancestor was a fellow by the name of Johannes (1610-1674), born in Battenfeld, Germany (75 miles north of Frankfurt). One of his grandsons, also named Johannes, immigrated with his family to America shortly before we became "The United States of America". They were living in/near the Neckar River Valley at the time (near Heidelberg), and arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on August 28, 1750 – on a ship named Two Brothers. Johannes and his two adult sons (Johan Philipp - age 27 and Hans Adam – age 25) signed an oath of allegiance to the British; then the family traveled another 100 miles west to York County,

Pennsylvania - settled predominately by German immigrants.

Now the backstory on the original family name. My earliest known ancestor in Germany – Johannes, got his last name from the town in which he lived – Battenfeld. This was one of the ways surnames were established when they first came into use. Johannes from Battenfeld became Johannes Battenfeld, and his descendants carried the Battenfeld name forward.

About 1770 Johannes Battenfeld

(the immigrant to America) and his family left York County, PA and moved about 90 miles to the southwest, crossed the Potomac river and settled just east of Harpers Ferry – in Loudoun County, Virginia Territory. The town there now



Lionel Battenfeld is buried in Grass Valley, California. His roots also trace back to Hans Adam Battenfeld/Potterfield in Virginia. His great grandfather, George Michel Battenfeld was a son of Hans Adam and moved from Virginia to Ohio, retaining the name Battenfeld.

is Lovettsville, Virginia. One son, Philipp, stayed behind, in Pennsylvania. Moving into this new community, the spelling and pronunciation of the name Battenfeld morphed over several years into Potterfield – for those families that stayed in Virginia. However, some families that moved away carried the name Battenfeld with them. Also, Philipp Potterfield, who stayed in Pennsylvania, kept the Battenfeld name. One Battenfeld son, who moved to Pennsylvania, became Bottenfeld. Today there are still Battenfelds in Germany, and in America there are Battenfelds, Bottenfelds and Potterfields. So, that's what's in the Potterfield name.

"...stories about how family names changed."

Afterthoughts: There wasn't much consistency in the spelling of names in the early years of America. Johannes, Hans Adam and Philipp, arriving on the ship Two Brothers (1750), had their surnames spelled Battefelt, Bathenfeld and Battenfeld respectively on the ship's register. The surname Bottenfeld also originated from one of Hans Adams sons, when he moved to Pennsylvania. There may be others; we're all related!



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My Great grandfather, Henry Adam Potterfield, was born near Harpers Ferry, in Virginia Territory and was buried in Mt. Vernon Cemetery, Marion County, MO. He was the third generation to be born in America – a great, great grandson of Hans Adam Battenfeld/Potterfield.



This drawing shows the nearest village in Germany, from which the Battenfeld family immigrated in 1750 – Heidelberg; and the community in America – Harpers Ferry, where the name was changed to Potterfield.