

Tracking Immigrant Name Changes

The Quest for the Origins of the Loyalist Leonard Slip and his wife Elizabeth Ryson of Hampstead, Queens County, New Brunswick

By Rick Crume, June 2004

Biographies of the Loyalist Leonard Slip disagree on his place of birth and his wife Elizabeth's last name. Was he born in Frankfurt-on-the-Cross, Germany, or in Amsterdam, the Netherlands? (And where is Frankfurt-on-the-Cross?) Also, was Elizabeth's maiden name Riemer or Ryson? Immigrants sometimes changed the spelling of their names and that can make it hard to trace their hometowns overseas. In this case, expanding the search to include variant spellings finally led to evidence of Leonard and Elizabeth's origins.

Local histories, a family Bible, Leonard's will, museum pieces, a painting and gravestone inscriptions all tell us something about Leonard and Elizabeth. Here's a rundown of the key sources of information on this family:

1. Esther Clark Wright's biography of Leonard Slip. In the 1940s New Brunswick historian Esther Clark Wright wrote a series of articles on the pioneer families of New Brunswick, including this biography of Leonard Slip:¹

At the age of 18, a young lad, Leonard Slip, left his village, Frankfurt on the Cross, in what is now Germany, and came to the new world to seek his fortune in 1766. He settled in New York and there married Elizabeth Ryson. In 1783, with their two children and Elizabeth's mother, Catherine Ryson, he came to the St. John River with the Loyalists

Leonard Slip (the name is always spelled Slip in the early documents, but became established as Slipp) drew land on Salmon River, but found it unfit for cultivation and asked for a lot on Long Island, which was granted. He had evidently prospered sufficiently in New York to be able to purchase land, for he bought half of Lot 20, Gagetown, from the man who drew it, and would have liked to have the whole lot but was ordered to divide it with Hersey, a Pre-Loyalist settler. Leonard Slipp settled in the part of the township of Gage which was erected into the parish of Hampstead, and some of his descendants still are to be found on the property at Central Hampstead.

Leonard Slipp was born Aug. 20, 1748, and died Sept. 29, 1833, at the age of 85. His wife, Elizabeth, was born Dec. 18, 1756, and died Jan. 11, 1821, at the age of 64. Her mother Catherine Ryson, died July, 1812, at the ripe old age of 94. Leonard and Elizabeth Slipp had 10 children, who grew to maturity and all but one married.

The article goes on to name Leonard and Elizabeth's children and notes their dates of birth, marriage and death and their spouses' names. Note that Wright says Leonard came from Frankfurt on the Cross, Germany, and that his wife's name maiden name was Ryson.

2. A history of Queens County, New Brunswick. The "History of Queens County, N.B.," by E. Stone Wiggins, L.L.D., published in the *St. John Watchman*, 1876, includes a biography of Leonard Slipp:

Slipp, Leonard, a German and a United Empire Loyalist, born at Frankfort-on-the-Cross, Aug 20th 1748, came to Saint John in 1783 and settled at the mouth of the Otnabog, on the

¹ E. C. Wright, "Slipp: Pioneer Families of New Brunswick," *The Saint John Telegraph-Journal*, 16 September 1943, in the vertical file, Archives & Special Collections, Harriet Irving Library, Univ. of New Brunswick, Fredericton.

farm now owned and occupied by Elias Gerow. His wife, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Riemer, was born Dec 18th 1756.

The article also names Leonard and Elizabeth's children and gives their dates of births and the names of their spouses and some of their grandsons. The same information appears in *The Early Baptists of Cambridge Parish, Queens County, N.B.*, by Rev. Walter R. Greenwood (1941), page 78. Like Wright's biography, these accounts say Leonard Slipp was born in Frankfort-on-the-Cross, but they identify his wife Elizabeth's maiden name as Riemer.

3. An unattributed biography of Leonard Slip. This is the only known account that says Leonard was born in Amsterdam. The sources used to compile this sketch are unknown.

Leonard Slipp was born in Amsterdam, Holland in 1746. His mother died and his father married again. Leonard did not get along too well with his new step-mother; he set out to walk to the sea coast with the intention of emigrating to America. It is said that on his way to the coast he got pepper in his wooden shoes, fulfilling his step-mother's wish that he should get enough pepper some day.

Slipp signed articles with a sea Captain to serve three years on the condition that at the end of that time he would be landed in New York. At the end of two and one half years, being in the port of New York and the Captain about to depart on a long voyage, Slipp was allowed to have his indenture transferred to a potash maker in New York whom he worked the remaining six months. The year was 1767.

While in New York, Slipp was noted for his great strength of body. He could do what only two others of one hundred able men could do - he could place three barrels of potash one on top of the other.

In 1769, Slipp started a tavern and made a large amount of money in a short period...

At the time of the American Revolution, Slipp remained loyal to the British Empire and was subsequently driven out of the new United States (losing all of his property). He came to Saint John, New Brunswick in 1783 and later Long Island where it is said he purchased 1/2 of Lot #20. Here he established a tavern at Blizzards (and so named) near the head of the creek coming in from the west...

A painting by John Hewitt, *Meeting of the officers of the Garrisons of St. John and Frederictown [sic], on Long Island, in the River St. John, New Brunswick*, depicts the tavern or inn. See Figure 1. You can just make out the name Blizzard, singular, on the sign above the entrance to the building on the right.²

4. Leonard Slip's will. The will of Leonard Slip of the parish of Hampstead, Queens County, New Brunswick, was dated 27 March 1833 and proved 2 November 1833. The estate, consisting of cash, book debts and notes, was valued at 1,609 pounds. Leonard, a widower, left 180 pounds to each of his five sons, 100 pounds to each of his four surviving daughters and varying amounts to several grandchildren.³

They aren't named in his will, but two 9-inch pewter candlesticks and a 6½-inch-long silver candle snuffer brought from New York by "German Loyalist Leonard Slipp" are held by

² The New Brunswick Museum in Saint John has the painting. The National Archives of Canada has an 1824 lithograph, by D. Dighton, based on the painting. The lithograph is reproduced in Paul Hachey's book, *The New Brunswick Landscape Print 1760-1880* [exhibition catalogue] (Fredericton: Beaverbrook Art Gallery, 1980) p. 27.

³ R. Wallace Hale, *Early New Brunswick Probate Records 1785-1835* (Bowie, Maryland: Heritage Books, Inc., 1989) pp. 410-411.

the New Brunswick Museum in Saint John. The articles are pictured in *The Loyalists: A catalogue featuring selected pieces of Loyalist history from the collections of The New Brunswick Museum*, edited by A. Gregg Finley (Saint John: The New Brunswick Museum, 1975).

5. The Slip gravestone. Leonard Slip and his wife, Elizabeth, are buried in the Slipp/Merritt Cemetery in Queenstown, just across from Central Hampstead in Queens County, New Brunswick. See figure 2. The center part of the stone has these inscriptions:

In memory of
LEONARD SLIPP
Loyalist of Dutch descent
Born Aug 20, 1748.
Came to New York from Germany, 1766.
Settled in Hampstead, N.B. 1783.
Died Sep. 29, 1833
Aged 85 years.

Also his wife
ELIZABETH RYSON
Died Jan. 11, 1821
Aged 64 years.

Erected by descendants bearing the family name, Nov. [1903?].

The names, ages and years of death of their daughters are listed on the left side of the stone and the same information for their sons is engraved on the right side of the stone. Another gravestone has the name Catherine Ryson. Apparently her year of death, 1812, was once legible. See [Betty Damery's "Slipp Graveyard, Hampstead, Queens Co., New Brunswick, Canada"](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~damery/QU/Hamp-01/Hamp-01.htm) <<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~damery/QU/Hamp-01/Hamp-01.htm>> for photographs and transcriptions of these and other gravestones in the cemetery.

6. George Leonard Slipp's family Bible. The family Bible record of George Leonard Slipp (1819-1890)⁴ gives the names and dates of birth and death of several generations of Slipp's, beginning with his grandparents, Leonard Slipp, born 20 August 1748, and Elizabeth Ryson, born 18 December 1756.

Leonard Slip's Origins

The International Genealogical Index (IGI) on FamilySearch <www.familysearch.org> lists the names Slipp in Germany, Slippe in the Netherlands and Slip and Slipp in England, but church records in those localities show no Leonard Slip baptized in about 1748.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries immigrants and their relatives in Europe sometimes communicated through notices placed in American newspapers. The key to Leonard Slip's hometown turned out to be a notice, apparently placed by his relatives, in a German-language newspaper published in Philadelphia about 25 years after Leonard had emigrated. Here's a translation of the notice in the *Philadelphische Correspondenz*, 9 September 1791:

Inquiry for Johann Leonhard Schloepf and Johann Maar, from Mt. [Markt] Taschendorf, in Frankischen Kreis [district] of Germany (Franconia), belonging to Reichsfreyherr [Baron] von Kuenstberg Amt [parish of] Obersteinbach, who left there in 1766 for America. Shloepf

⁴ Slipp family Bible, publisher unknown, possibly in the possession of John D. Templeton.

wrote his parents, June 16, 1774, from the potash factory in New York, where he was employed as a cooper.⁵

There's no doubt that Johann Leonhard Schloep and Leonard Slip were the same person. Both immigrated in 1766 and worked in a potash factory in New York. By the time this notice appeared in the Philadelphia newspaper, Leonard had just turned age 43 and about eight years had passed since his family fled New York with other Loyalists for New Brunswick. Who knows if he ever saw this message from his family back in Germany?

What about Leonard Slip's hometown of Frankfurt-on-the-Cross? A village called Frankfurt, located just two miles southwest of Markt Taschendorf, has about fifty houses today. Both towns are located in the district (Kreis) of Scheinfeld and the province of Mittelfranken (Central Franconia). Frankfurt is in the Evangelical (Lutheran) parish of Obersteinbach and Markt Taschendorf is in the Evangelical parish of Taschendorf.

The church records of Frankfurt and Markt Taschendorf have not been microfilmed by the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. The Reformed Church predominated in Franconia in the eighteenth century, but the Lutheran and Reformed churches in Germany have now combined. I wrote to the Lutheran churches in Obersteinbach, which includes the village of Frankfurt, and Markt Taschendorf. The pastors could not find a record of baptism of Johann Leonhard Schlöpp, but the pastor in Obersteinbach reported a Schlöpp baptism in 1796 and a Schlepp baptism in 1798 and said that a Schlöpp family now lives in his parish.

A genealogist who lives in Franconia says that Schlepp is a more common name in Central Franconia and she suspects that Schlöpp was originally spelled Schlepp. As for Johann Maar who emigrated with Leonard, the genealogist noted that a couple of families with the name Mahr now live in Markt Taschendorf.

Online phone directories list eight Schlöpps in Germany and all live within thirty miles of Markt Taschendorf, including one in Obersteinbach. I contacted a couple of the German Schlöpps by e-mail and they plan to do some checking on the family's early history.

I also joined the Gesellschaft für Familienforschung in Franken (the Genealogical Society of Franconia). A volunteer found only a few Schlöpp entries in the society's database and none pertains to a place near Frankfurt.

The Ryson Family's Origins

Elizabeth Ryson and her mother Catherine seem to have been the only people ever named Ryson. Searches for an Elizabeth Ryson or Riemer born in 1756 turned up nothing, so again I considered similarly spelled names.

The Reformed Church predominated in Leonard Slip's homeland of Franconia, so perhaps he belonged to a Reformed Church during his residence in New York City. The German Reformed Church in New York City was established in 1758 and translations of its records from 1759 to 1776 have been published in *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*. The names Schlöpp, Slip, Reimer and Ryson don't appear in these records, but a Reissner (Reisner) family is mentioned:

- The following persons were admitted to communion in part because of their confession of faith and in part on certificates... [1759 or 1760?]
69. Anna Catharina Hausauer, Reisner's wife, with certificate.⁶

⁵ Edward W. Hocker, *Genealogical Data Relating to the German Settlers of Pennsylvania and Adjacent Territory...*, Typescript, p. 200, Family History Library microfilm 21,591 item 17.

⁶ Charles Farrell, transcriber, "Records of the German Reformed Church of New York City," *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, vol. 128, no. 1 (Jan. 1997), p. 56. The original German registers and an English translation are held by the New York Historical Society.

- 1765. Jan. 4 Buried Johannes Reissner, native of Kragenburg. Note. Age 68.⁷
- [Members, about 1765-1767] Reissner/: Cathar:/ born Hauser, of Schoaebisch Hall.⁸
- March 4th, 1774. The following persons were admitted as members of our Congregation. Viz: Godtlieb Müller, Christian Bluhm, Jacob Boshart, Elizabeth Reisner, Anna Christina Debusen.⁹

Were Leonard Slip's wife Elizabeth Ryson and her mother Catherine Ryson the same people as Elizabeth Reisner and Anna Catharina (Hauser) Reissner? The ages fit about right. Elizabeth, born 18 December 1756 according to the Slipp family bible, would have been 17 years old when she became a member of the church in 1774. Her mother, Catherine, said to be 94 years old when she died in July 1812, would have been about 41 when she joined the church in about 1759.

Anna Catharina Hausauer is called "Reisner's wife," not his widow, in 1759, so apparently her husband was still living. Johannes Reissner, who died in 1765 at age 68, is the only other Reisner or Reissner mentioned in these records. Apparently he was Catherine's husband and Elizabeth's mother, but he would have been about 21 years older than Catherine and about 59 years old when Elizabeth was born, old enough to be her grandfather.

Fortunately, the records of the German Reformed Church of New York City identify some members' hometowns. Johannes Reissner is called a native of Kragenburg. As far as I know, no such place exists, so the name might be misspelled or incorrectly transcribed. Other church members are described as natives of Hagenburg, Haagenburg, Haagenberg, Hagueburg or "Staugenburg in Hesse." Apparently they all refer to the town of Hachenburg, formerly within the borders of Hesse-Nassau and today part of the Rhineland-Palatinate in west-central Germany. A check of the Reformed church records of Hachenburg on Family History Library microfilm 1,340,481 didn't turn up anything on the Reissner or Reisner family in the eighteenth century. Maybe Johannes actually lived in a rural parish near Hachenburg. The town lies in the Westerwald, an area that sent many emigrants to America in the eighteenth century.

The records of the German Reformed Church in New York City say Anna Catharina (Hauser or Hausauer) Reissner had come from Schoaebisch Hall. Presumably that's Schwäbisch Hall, a free imperial city chartered in the 12th century which ruled considerable surrounding territory in Württemberg until 1803. A popular tourist center known for its saline baths and a health resort, the city now has a population of 35,500. I asked Schwäbisch Hall's archivist to check his index to church records for the city's five parishes. He found many Hausers and similar spellings, but nothing for Anna Catharina Hauser. Anna Catharina might have been born in one of the 22 parishes in the territory of Schwäbisch Hall.

Johannes Reissner's hometown of Hachenburg, Hesse, and his wife Anna Catharina Hauser's hometown of Schwäbisch Hall, Württemberg, are located about 135 miles apart, so they weren't close neighbors. Maybe the couple met and married in New York and their daughter Elizabeth was born there.

A Plan for Future Research

The information discovered on these families so far suggests follow-up research in both American and German records:

1. Most of the German-speaking Reformed attended the Dutch Reformed Church before the establishment of the German Reformed Church in New York City in 1758. Later on, the congregation of the German Reformed Church evacuated New York City during the Revolutionary War and no records were kept between 1776 and 1783. Leonard Slip and Elizabeth Ryson were probably married during this period and their first child was born in 1780. So it

⁷ Farrell, *NYGBR*, vol. 128, no. 3 (July 1997), p. 164.

⁸ Farrell, *NYGBR*, vol. 128, no. 2 (April 1997), p. 116.

⁹ Farrell, *NYGBR*, vol. 128, no. 2 (April 1997), p. 120.

would be worth checking the records of Dutch Reformed Churches in the area for mention of Johann Leonhard Schlöpp and the Reissner and Hauser families.

2. Further investigation might turn up a record of Johann Leonhard Schlöpp's baptism in Frankfurt or Markt Taschendorf, Franconia, in 1748, and the names of his parents who were probably still living there in 1774 and possibly as late as 1791 or later.

3. Records of Reformed congregations near Hachenburg, Hesse, should be checked for the baptism of Johannes Reissner in about 1697.

4. A check of the church records of the 22 parishes in the territory of Schwäbisch Hall, Württemberg, outside the city proper, might turn up the baptism of Anna Catharina Hauser in about 1718.

Anyone researching an immigrant ancestor from a non-English-speaking country needs to be on the lookout for alternate name spellings. Sometimes the change can be fairly dramatic, such as when Johann Leonhard Schlöpp became Leonard Slip and Elizabeth Reissner became Elizabeth Ryson. But, as these examples show, finding the immigrant's original name can help you identify his or her hometown—and that's a necessary first step before you can begin tracing your ancestry overseas.

GENEALOGICAL SUMMARY

Generation One

1. Johannes Reissner, probably born in about 1697 near Hachenburg, Hesse, was buried 4 January 1765 in New York City. He probably married **Anna Catharina Hauser** who was probably born in about 1718 near Schwäbisch Hall, Württemberg. They probably had a daughter Elizabeth.

- + 2. i. ELIZABETH REISSNER was born 18 December 1756.

Generation Two

2. Elizabeth Reissner, aka Elizabeth Ryson, born 18 December 1756,¹⁰ died 11 January 1821¹¹ or 9 February 1827.¹² She married **Johann Leonhard Schlöpp, aka Leonard Slip**, who was born 20 August 1748¹³ at Frankfurt, Franconia, now a region in northern Bavaria, Germany, and died 29 September 1833¹⁴ or 1 October 1833¹⁵ at Gagetown, Queens County, New Brunswick. Leonard, Elizabeth and her mother Catherine are all buried in the Slipp/Merritt Cemetery at Queenstown, Queens County, New Brunswick.

Leonard and Elizabeth were the parents of the following children. Unless otherwise indicated, all the dates were found in the family Bible owned by George Leonard Slipp (1819-1890), described above. The children spelled their last name either Slip or Slipp.

- i. MAGDALEN or MAGDALENE SLIPP, born 20 October 1780¹⁶ or 23 October 1780, died in 1858. She was married, 29 January 1799, to Abraham Good.¹⁷

¹⁰ Slipp family Bible record.

¹¹ Gravestone, Slipp/Merritt Cemetery, Queenstown, N.B.

¹² Slipp family Bible record.

¹³ Slipp family Bible record.

¹⁴ Wright.

¹⁵ Slipp family Bible record.

¹⁶ Wright.

¹⁷ Wright.

- ii. CATHERINE SLIPP, born 20 March 1783, died 4 May 1816. She was married, 15 October 1799, to Elisha Clark.¹⁸
- iii. JOHN SLIPP, born 24 August 1785, died 16 September 1860. He married Hannah Merritt.¹⁹
- iv. ELIZABETH SLIPP, born 5 November 1786, died in 1869²⁰ or 1870. She married Thomas Musgrove.²¹
- v. GEORGE SLIPP, born 1 November 1787, died 10 October 1860. He was married, 4 March 1813, to Susan Peters.²²
- vi. WILLIAM SLIPP, born 14 November 1789 or 14 November 1790,²³ died 13 November 1864²⁴ or 15 November 1864. He married Hannah Gaunce.
- vii. MARY SLIPP, born 10 March 1792, died 13 February 1858. She married Charles Palmer.²⁵
- viii. LEONARD SLIPP, born 17 February 1794, died 23 June 1858. He married Sarah Merritt.²⁶
- ix. HANNAH SLIPP, born 9 July 1796²⁷ or 19 July 1796, died in 1874. She married David Currey.²⁸
- x. JAMES SLIPP, born 19 July 1799, died 29 January 1857.

Thanks to Murray S. Thomson, Marke L. Slipp & John J. Johnston—all Slipp descendants, and to Ernest Thode, the author of several guides to German genealogy, for help in researching the Slipp family history.

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¹⁸ Wright.

¹⁹ Wright.

²⁰ Wright.

²¹ Wright.

²² Wright.

²³ E. Stone Wiggins, L.L.D., “History of Queen’s County, N.B.,” *Saint John Watchman*, 1876.

²⁴ Wright.

²⁵ Wright.

²⁶ Wright.

²⁷ Wright.

²⁸ Wright.

Captions

Figure 1. Lithograph based on a painting, *Meeting of the officers of the Garrisons of St. John and Frederictown [sic], on Long Island, in the River St. John, New Brunswick*, by John Hewitt. Leonard Slip is said to have operated *Blizzard*, the tavern or inn shown on the right.

Figure 2. Slipp family gravestone in the Slipp/Merritt Cemetery, Queenstown, Queens County, New Brunswick. This photo, courtesy of Murray S. Thomson, is said to have been taken in 1903 when the gravestone was set in place.