

# Wolfensberger

Newsletter of the WOLFENSBERGER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

October 1997, Vol. 3, No. 4

## *Was It A Sheriff's Error?*

## *The Sparger-Spargur Surnames Came Into Being Around 1800*

*Author of this article is Lt. Col. (Ret.) Vendrell Spargur of Dayton, Ohio, a knowledgeable authority about the Sparger and Spargur families*

Curiosity is a condition of life. I'm sure many members of the Wolfensberger family have wondered where the Sparger and Spargur family names originally came from.

Of course, the number of ways to spell the original family name, Wolfensberger, is astonishing. It's fascinating to see how our family name evolved in religious and public records during our family's first three generations in America,

from 1730 to the early 1800s.

It was around the year 1800 when the first recorded use of the name Sparger is found. To keep the lineage straight, recall that the original immigrant's name was John Wolfensberger. Remember that a memorial marker was recently placed in a Schaefferstown, Pennsylvania cemetery for him at the grave of his wife, Anna Margaretha Ensminger Wolfensberger.

We'll refer to this immigrant as John #1, born about 1694 in what is now France's Alsace-Lorraine region. He died some time after 1761. His burial site is unknown. The marker also includes the names

*Continued on page 2*

## *Report From The '97 Reunion Celebrations: Attendance Is Growing*

Some 90 to 95 members attended the Spargur - Wolfensberger - Wolfensberger Reunion at Clatskanie, Oregon, on August 9, believed to be the first reunion in the northwestern United States to welcome members of all Wolfensberger families.

In effect, this 1997 reunion was a family-wide event open to all members, regardless of where they lived. Attendees hailed from Georgia, Texas and Oklahoma, as well as Arizona, California, Idaho, Washington, Colorado, Washington and Oregon.

This was an exceptionally well organized reunion that all attendees enjoyed greatly. Jimmy Lay Wolfensberger chaired the event and

*Continued on page 2*

## *Cast Vote for WFA Directors by Nov. 15*

Thirteen members of the Wolfensberger Family Association are nominees for the association's 1998 Board of Directors, said the chairman of the WFA nominating committee, WFA First Vice President Bob Wolfensberger.

A ballot inside this newsletter offers all currently registered members — members who paid this year's dues — an opportunity to vote for individual nominees, the slate or any another registered member. Ballots should be completed and returned to WFA Presi-

dent Larry Jones before November 15 in order to be counted.

This year's nominees represent a cross-section of family members. Each major branch of the family is represented, and nominees come from every section of the country.

Please look over the names of the nominees and cast your ballot as soon as possible.

Since the association was founded in 1994, members have voted twice for directors who serve without pay.

## **INSIDE STUFF**

'98 Reunion Set	2
Obituaries	4
New Members	5
Member Profile	5
Ex-Cowboy	6
Photo Gallery	7

## Report From The '97 Reunion Circuit Tells of Big, Increasing Attendance

*Continued from page 1*

received thanks from all attendees. Special congratulations to members of the Spargur families who outnumbered all others. Most who came to this event had never met other family members.. But all recognized the great opportunity for meeting other cousins.

This reunion was held in the Clatskanie city park and the weather was great.

At the conclusion of the get-together, members voted to hold another reunion in 1999 at a location and date to be determined. Bill Wolfenbarger of Palo Alto, California, requested that the event be held in Palo Alto.

Earl W. Spargur of San Jose, California, took a group photograph of some 60 attendees. If anyone wants a color photo, please send a check for \$7.00 to the WFA at 6400 N. Ann Arbor Terr., Oklahoma City, OK 73132.

### Other '97 Events

Some 68 family members attended the **Wolfenbarger - Wolfenbarger Reunion** at Wyandotte, OK on June 21, 1997. Most were from Oklahoma, Missouri, Arkansas and Oregon. Anna Ruth Crabtree of Neosho, Missouri., chaired this event. The next reunion of this family will be in 1999.

About 50 people attended the **Wolfenbarger Reunion** at Bastrop, Texas, on July 19, 1997.

A **Wolfenbarger Reunion** was held in the Knoxville, Tennessee, area in June 1997. No report is

available on this reunion.

About 33 members attended the **Sparger Reunion** in Galax, VA was held on 16 August 1997. There were about 33 in attendance. Guy Mitchell Sparger of Mount Airy, NC, chaired this reunion. There will be another Sparger reunion on the third Saturday of August 1998. The location is to be determined.

About 50 people attended the **Wolfenbarger Reunion** held in Irvine, KY on September 6, 1997. The coordinator was Dick Gault, P O Box 295, Trenton, OH 45067. The next reunion is scheduled for 1998, location and date to be determined.

No report yet from the **Wilkinson - Wolfenbarger Reunion**, which was held on September 14, 1997 at Blue Springs, Missouri. Coordinator was Olen Wilkinson, 900 West "B" Street, Blue Springs, MO 64015.

### A 1998 U.S. Reunion Will Be In Knoxville

Another family-wide reunion open to all is scheduled for May 16, 1998, somewhere in the Knoxville, Tennessee, area.

Coordinators of the 1998 reunion are J. C. Wolfenbarger, 2527 Keith Ave, Knoxville, TN, telephone (423) 525-2936 and George Ella Rogers, 752 East Emory Road, Corryton, TN 37721, telephone (423) 687-5338.

### Sparger-Spargur Names May Have Begun Around 1800

*Continued from page 1*

of his seven children. Of the seven, four were born in the Alsace (a daughter Ursula died there at the age of three) and the others were born in Pennsylvania. The youngest at the time of immigration was John who was less than a year old at the time of their arrival in Pennsylvania on 29 August 1830 aboard the ship, the "Thistle of Glasgow". He will be referred to as John #2.

John #2 married Hannah Summer in 1751 and they lived near Lititz in Lebanon County, Pennsylvania where all nine of their children were born. In early 1769 John and Hannah, with their entire family, moved to Woodstock in Shenandoah County, Virginia. There are records of two lots purchased by the couple in Woodstock. Some records, public and Moravian, refer to John as the man from Lititz. Their children soon began to marry and disperse. John died on November 8, 1788. The date of Hannah's death is unknown. John and Hannah were probably buried in the old Woodstock cemetery where a church was constructed after relatives were notified to remove the remains. There is no record of remains having been removed.

The second of John and Hannah's children was also named John, referred to here as John #3. He was born on August 17, 1754.

*Continued on page 3*

# Where Do Sparger-Spargur Names Come From?

*Continued from page 2*

near present-day Winston Salem, North Carolina. Here he had a tract of land near Friedburg just south of Winston Salem. While living in this area he married a Moravian girl named Christina Frey some time in 1778. Christina was born in Pennsylvania on November 22, 1759, and was to bear nine children. Three of their children were born at Friedburg. John and Christina secured land grants in Surry County, North Carolina, just east of Mount Airy, North Carolina in 1792, 1794 and 1802. Records began to refer to John #3 as John W. Sparger.

This re-naming, not unusual for the times, may have occurred in the process of completing paper work on the land grants. Family legend has it that a county Sheriff, on his rounds to impanel a jury, grew frustrated with the spelling of the name, Wolfersberger. He recorded it simply as W. Sparger. However the transformation came about, the name became W. Sparger with the W. always present. For several generations, the W. was used as a middle initial, while others simply added an extra initial, such as A. B. W. Sparger. This practice of adding a "W" has mostly been discontinued now. In effect, John #3 then became the first Sparger, and his nine children also adopted the spelling.

John and William were the oldest and youngest sons respectively of John and Christina. They lived in Surry County, North Caro-

lina. John Sparger (b ca 1778, d 1834) married Sarah Lyon (b 14 Feb 1799, d 1 Jan 1860). Their children were: Murlin, Eliza, Benjamin, Christina, Henry, John, Mary, Jane and Nancy. John is buried with his mother, Christina. Also buried there are a sister, Hannah Sparger Deatherage; a son-in-law Robert Taylor, husband of his daughter, Jane; and possibly another brother, Reuben, who is in an unmarked grave in the old

***Family legend  
has it that the  
renaming occurred  
when a  
county sheriff grew  
frustrated with  
the spelling of the  
name, Wolfersberger.***

Taylor Graveyard. The Taylor Graveyard is a pioneer cemetery now vandalized and neglected, located about four miles east of Mount Airy, North Carolina.

William Sparger (b 1797, d 1836, killed by robbers near Fayetteville, North Carolina) married (6 Jul 1817) Nancy Bryson (b 13 May 1786, d 19 Jun 1884). Their children were: Sally, Ethel, James, Mary, John, William and Margaret. The children, with few exceptions, seemed to disperse

east and south of the Appalachians where many of their descendants are found today. Four other sons, Reuben (b 17 May 1779, d ?), Joseph (b 1 Mar 1781, d 6 Mar 1845), Philip (b 1786, d 31 Jan 1835) and Henry (b 1 Nov 1789, d 29 Apr 1878) undertook a venture of their own though not simultaneously.

## **Moves to Ohio**

In 1803 Ohio became a state and started encouraging settlement. Land became available through grants and sales. Lured by the prospects envisioned in this wilderness country, Joseph and his wife, Rachel Sumner Sparger (b 4 Dec 1785, d 4 Oct 1823), their two year old son, John, brother Reuben and Rachel's brother, Bowater Sumner, came to Highland County, Ohio in the fall of 1804. Joseph, his wife and son, moved into an old settler's cabin that they proceeded to make livable in this wilderness. Many times when she was alone apprehensive, Rachel would barricade the cabin and arm herself with two rifles, an axe, butcher knife and a dog. It took that much armament to feel secure enough to go to sleep, since wandering Indians were still seen daily in the area. Rachel's brother, Bowater, went back to North Carolina and returned the next fall with his family.

In 1809, Joseph's brother, Philip, and his wife, Rachel Sumner Spargur (b 1787, d 23 Jan 1870),

*Continued on page 4*



# Where Do Sparger-Spargur Names Come From?

*Continued from page 3*

arrived and settled nearby. (This Rachel is a cousin of Joseph's wife, curiously bearing the same name). They arrived with 10 children: Matilda, Caleb, Hannah, John, Mary, Christina, Reuben, Milton, Henry and Philip.

Joseph was a millwright. He built a grist mill on a small stream near his home. Later Joseph sold his mill and, clearing a path through the forest, moved to a larger stream where he constructed a larger mill. In 1815, he constructed a brick home which still stands, some 180 years later. The mill passed down through Joseph's descendants and remained in full operation until around 1950. Later the mill was torn down but the sturdy stone mill dam still retains the waters of Rocky Fork Creek much to the delight of the local fishermen.

There in the wilderness, Joseph suffered tragedy. His wife, Rachel, died October 4, 1823, having borne ten children. They were John, Bowater, Henry, Joseph, Phoebe, Christina, Allen, Rebecca, Philip, and Elizabeth. Joseph married a second wife, Abigail Moore (13 Jan 1807, d 23 Jan 1886), who bore Joseph eight more children. Their names were Rachel, James, William, Margaret, Lydia, Mary, Sarah and Reuben.

Sometime between 1830 and 1833, Christina Frey Sparger died. Her death left John #3, the first Sparger, an elderly widower. In 1833 John #3's son, Henry, with his

wife, Susanna Roberts Sparger (b 21 Sep 1789, d 1 Jul 1876) and probably all of their children: Maletha, Nancy, Jonathan, Christina, James, Alfred, Elizabeth and Henry also took the 400 mile trek to Ohio.

With them came 79 year old John Sparger, who rode horseback all the way. John had to be a rugged senior citizen since he withstood the 400 mile horseback and lived on seven more years with his Ohio sons.

John died on November 17, 1840, at the age of 86 years and 3 months of age. He lies buried in the Hicksite Quaker Cemetery, a pioneer graveyard about 8 miles east of Hillsboro, Ohio, with his two sons, Joseph and Philip, and their wives.

Henry, the last son, is buried in the Methodist Cemetery in the village of Marshall. The burial site of Rueben, who never married, is unknown. He returned several times to North Carolina to visit his parents. Family lore has it that Rueben became ill in North Carolina and died there. It is very possible that Henry lies buried in the Old Taylor Graveyard near his mother, Christina.

The four brothers, Joseph, Reuben, Philip and Henry, who

moved to Ohio all adopted the name Spargur spelled with a "u" as did their descendants. Later the family moved westward, west of the Appalachians. Descendants of both branches, Sparger and Spargur, now can be found in almost every state.

In addition to six sons, John and Christina had three daughters: Hannah, Nancy and Sally. Hannah married Achilles Deatherage and is buried in an unmarked grave in the Taylor Graveyard. Hannah and Achilles have over 5,000 descendants. A descendant, Joseph Milton Barrett, and his widow, Lorna Barrett, have done an outstanding job of recording these descendants. Lorna now lives in Mount Airy, North Carolina. Nancy and Sally both married men named Jackson and had several children. These records are not available.

## IN MEMORIAM

**WOLFENBARGER, John** Melton, age 77 of Knoxville, Tennessee, died August 9, 1997. He retired from the Knoxville School System. Survivors: wife Trula Wolfenbarger; son and daughter-in-law, Rick and Debbie Wolfenbarger of Knoxville; grandsons and wives, Neal and Kristie of Savannah, GA, Craig and Vicki Wolfenbarger of Knoxville; great-grand son, Lane Wolfenbarger of Savannah, GA; sister Rosa Lee Powell. Burial in Greenwood Cemetery, Knoxville.

*Continued on page 5*

**WFA WEB SITE:**

**[www.icon.net/~wolfberg/](http://www.icon.net/~wolfberg/)**

## IN MEMORIAM

**THOMAS**, Janice Adeline passed away July 11, 1997, in her home near Temple, TX surrounded by her family. Janice was born October 25, 1942 in Austin, TX. She was a descendant of Samuel Wolfenberger who settled in the Bastrop, Texas, area in 1830. Janice is survived by her parents Gordon and Lois Smith. She is also survived by her husband of 35 years, James W. Thomas and their three sons and families Kevin and Shirley Thomas, Keith and Karen Thomas and Kurt Thomas. She had grand-children Christopher, Jannifer, Josuha and Kelsey. She leaves a brother Gordon A. Smith of Temple, TX; and two sisters and their husbands Connie and James Sublette of Tyler, TX and Elaine and Larry Bigham of Lorena, TX. Janice attended Southwest Texas University and the University of Texas. She excelled in academics and extra curricular activities and was a very talented worker. Janice was buried in Capital Memorial Park in Austin, TX.

**REED**, Harold Monroe, age 94 of Bates City, MO died August 2, 1997 at the Medical Center of Independence, MO. Harold is survived by his wife, Carmin Dean Reed, and a brother, Dr. H. Owed Reed. Harold was born 2 July 1903 in Odessa, MO. He was a farmer and a member of the American Horse Association, Tennessee Walking Horse Association and was a past president of the Odessa Bit & Spur Club. Carmin is a grand daughter of Elizabeth F. Wolfenbarger.

## Profile of a Member: Robert S. Kelly, Retired Lutheran Minister From Ohio

*The following article is a profile of member Robert S. Kelly of Toledo, Ohio.*

The principal ancestor who connects me to the Wolfensberger family is Sarah Wolfensberger. She

lived in Lebanon and Somerset Counties, Pennsylvania. She was born March 17, 1807 and died November 30, 1873. Her parents were Philip and Maria Haack Wolfensberger who are buried at the Campbelltown Reformed cemetery. Sarah married Samuel Bowman on November 30, 1826.

I was born September 17, 1932 in Wooster, Ohio to Paul S. Kelley and Miriam Zufall. My childhood was spent in Wooster. I graduated in 1954 from Wittenburg University in Springfield, Ohio, and the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia in 1957. I was ordained into the Lutheran ministry in 1957.

I married Gloria E. Albright November 23, 1956 in Canton, Ohio. We have three grown children and 7 grandchildren.

### Served Ohio Parishes

I have served parishes in Doylestown, Marshallville, North Canton and Toledo, all in Ohio, and retired from full time ministry in 1992. Since then I am engaged in part-time visitation ministry.

My father was a Lutheran clergyman raised in the Scranton, Pennsylvania area, and my mother was a language teacher raised in Mechanicsburg. My children are Sharon Kelly Kerlin, David Kelly and Cynthia Kelly Lennartson. My hobbies and interests include genealogy, tennis and all sports, and basket weaving.

I genuinely enjoy receiving the WFA Newsletter. It is informative to me in my family history.

## 40 New WFA Members Sign Up In Past Months

In recent months, the Wolfensberger Family Association added these new members.

Adah HENNING, (Wolfenbarger) MO  
Del WOLFENSPARGER, CA  
James R. WOLFENBARGER, OK  
Nita BAKER, (Spargur) WA  
Michael ELLIOTT, (Wolfenbarger) VA  
Anita MASON, (Sparger) GA  
Barbara PHILLIPS, (Wolfenbarger) AR  
Peggy WARD, (Wolfenbarger) WA  
Terri MELLINGER, (Wolfenbarger) CA  
Adair WOLFENBARGER, KY  
Dorothy DAVIS, (Wolfenbarger) TX  
Herbert WOLFENBARGER, Jr. OH  
Gregory CARPENTER, (Wolfenbarger) OH  
Jack WOLFENBARGER, GA  
Barbara BUSH, (Wolfenbarger) IN  
Anna COFFEY, (Sparger) TX  
Valerie ALTMAN, (Spargur) LA  
Victoria JICHA, (Spargur) IL  
Rachel YURK, (Spargur) WI  
Cara SHIPLEY, (Wolfenbarger) WA  
Bettie Jo HACKFORD, (Spargur) UT  
Terri SMITH, (Spargur) WA  
Jean HENRY, (Spargur) WA  
Myrna KELLOFF, (Spargur) CO  
Dorothy BASTIAN, (Spargur) WA  
Milton BASTIAN, (Spargur) WA  
Mary SPARGUR, CO  
Robert KORNEGAY, (Spargur) AZ  
Dwight W. SPARGUR, CA  
Patsy MULKEY, (Wolfenbarger) MO  
Thomas C. WOLFENBARGER, OH  
Kay PENN, PA  
Nancy RHAN, PA  
Robert C. PETERSON, AZ  
Jennifer WOLFENBARGER, TX  
William Russell DAVIS (Spargur), MD

## ***D. D. Lewis On Mom's Memories of Grainger***

*By D. D. (Dwight Douglas) Lewis, ex-linebacker for pro football's Dallas Cowboys*

My mother, Bessie Ermine Wolfenbarger was born in 1922 at Liberty Hill, Tennessee. She often spoke about those early childhood days in Grainger County above the Clinch River. She had fond memories about growing up in the real country, where most people fished, hunted or butchered their own meat and grew their own vegetables. Life was hard without electricity or running water. Just imagine washing, starching and ironing a white dress shirt.

Mother was the oldest of two boys and three girls. Her father was Joseph Peter Wolfenbarger. Her mother was Sallie Josephine Acuff. Grandfather Wolfenbarger worked for the railroad and he moved his family to Knoxville, Tennessee, when mother was between the age of seven and nine.

At some point our grandfather divorced his wife and moved the entire family to Raymond, Washington. This had to be a very difficult time for the children, moving to a country without any friends or family to support them emotionally.

I am sure Mother had to play the role of surrogate wife and mother to the unsettled family. Lonesome, homesick and growing apart, she must have been looking for someone to rescue her. My father, Henry Robert Lewis, was born in 1895 at Robertsedale, Alabama. In his early adolescence, his

family moved to the Buckstuna, Mississippi area. He joined the U S Army during World War I and served his enlistment in Washington State cutting timber.

Mother married Dad when she was fifteen years old and he was twenty two. After Dad left the Army he moved mother back to the foothills of Knoxville, Tennessee. My parents had 14 kids, of which I am the youngest. Three died in infancy.

I was born in 1945 and was named after two great World War II generals, *Dwight* Eisenhower and *Douglas* MacArthur. We were a close family, if you count bodies per square foot. Although we lived only a mile and a half from downtown we lived like we were in the rural countryside.

I remember our first electric range and refrigerator, which replaced a wood-burning stove and an ice box. Chopping wood and carrying coal made us all very strong and healthy. We had a vegetable garden and chickens running around in the front yard.

### **Nephew Encouraged Me**

My nephew, Robert E. Lee, talked me into playing high school football in the tenth grade. I weighed 145 pounds and was scared to death. But it didn't take long before I got the attention of the coaches with my aggressive style of play. By my senior year, I was awarded a scholarship to attend Mississippi State University.

I guess growing up rough

made me tough enough to make All America teams at MSU. In 1968 I graduated from MSU, married Margaret Smith and was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys.

### **14 Year Cowboy Career**

With a lot of fear and uncertainty I made the squad in 1968 and went on to enjoy a 14 year career with the Cowboys. Tom Landry was our legendary coach and I am grateful to have been under his tutelage. We played in five Super Bowls, winning the world championship in 1971 against the Miami Dolphins and defeated the Denver Broncos in 1977.

I retired after the 1981 season and today hold an NFL record for playing in the most post season games at 27. While playing against the Seattle Seahawks, my mother's half brother, David Wolfenbarger, located me and we began a long relationship. David explained how my grandfather happened to move to Raymond, Washington, and when he remarried. Grandfather and Nina had three children, David, Anita and Josephine.

Presently I am in customer relations with the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, a world leader in producing nitrogen, phosphate and potassium chloride. I remarried in 1989 and we have a seventeen year old son, Brook. We attend the Fellowship Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

It has been a wonderful experience looking back into the past and understanding my ancestry.





1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9

1. William W. WOLFENBARGER, Palo Alto, CA, Third great grandson of Peter Amos WOLFENBARGER, b 1796; 2. William Forrest SPARGUR, Palmdale, CA, Third great grandson of Phillip W. SPARGUR, b 1786; 3. Nita Spargur BAKER, Vancouver, WA, Fourth great granddaughter of Joseph W. SPARGUR, b 1781; 4. Dr. Gregory Sparger SANFORD, Spokane, WA, Fourth great grandson of William SPARGER, b 1797; 5. Opal Wolfenbarger HOWERTON, Boise, ID, Third great granddaughter of Joseph WOLFENBARGER, b 1780; 6. Jimmy Lay WOLFENBARGER, Clatskanie, OR, Third great grandson of Joseph WOLFENBARGER, b 1780; 7. Thelma Spargur O'DONNELL, Vancouver, WA, Third great granddaughter of Phillip W. SPARGUR, b 1786; 8. Dwight Douglas "D. D." LEWIS, Plano, TX, Fourth great grandson of Peter Amos WOLFENBARGER, b 1796; 9. Rev. Robert S. KELLY, Toledo, OH, Fourth great grandson of Philip WOLFERSBERGER, b 1775

