

Why the Riedesels Went to Ohio in 1844/1845
Dr. Paul Riedesel
(Revised March 2016)

The “whys” of history are more difficult to answer than the “whats.” One of the most persistent questions I have had in studying our family history is why the Riedesel group from Haase house in Wunderthausen went directly to Crawford County, Ohio, in 1844 and 1845. Middle Ohio was a semi-frontier and a thousand miles from the port cities of the east. The many pieces of this puzzle have finally come together and I offer this narrative.

We have to begin in Wunderthausen and not immediately with the Riedesels. Instead we begin with the family of Georg Hermann Althaus (1765-1824) and his wife, born Johanna Maria Christina Mörchen (1766-1842). He was the tenant in the house known locally as “Haase.” Married in 1791, they had six children we know of. Four of them were to go to America and they are at the center of the story.



Haase (later Müsse) house about 1910

The oldest child, **Florentine Althaus**, was the heir to the house by local custom. She married Ludwig Riedesel from Weymers house in 1818. He would assume the status of *Hausmann* on the death of his father-in-law (which occurred in 1824). Extended families were the norm so Haase was home to a large number of people: the unmarried Althaus siblings, mother-in-law Christina, as well as the children of Ludwig and Florentine. They had eight in total.¹

Another daughter of the house, **Elisabeth Althaus**, had a son in 1823 by Georg Ludwig Dürr. They did not marry but his paternity was acknowledged. The child took the name Ludwig Dürr and grew up in the same (small) house.

In 1833, two more siblings—**Maria Elisabeth and (Johann Georg) Ludwig Althaus**—left for Baltimore. The name of the ship is lost to history but their fellow passengers included several Gerhardt siblings from the village of Elsoff, a few kilometers south of Wunderthausen.² How well they knew each other in advance is unknown. What we do know is that Maria Elisabeth Althaus and Christian Gerhardt were married in 1834. His parents were in America by then and they all settled in Crawford County, Ohio where the father and sons all acquired land. I have a strong hypothesis about what took them a thousand miles inland but that is tangential to the present narrative. Of brother Ludwig Althaus we know nothing more.

More than a decade later, Haase house was again to send some residents to America. This time it was the young cousins, J. Ludwig Riedesel and Ludwig Dürr. With them in 1844 came the latter's mother, Elisabeth Althaus.³ There can be no doubt that they came as an advance party to settle in near their aunt and uncle (Maria Elisabeth and Christian Gerhardt). A year later, father Ludwig Riedesel had sold his property and the entire extended family headed for America as well⁴:

- The parents, Ludwig and Florentine
- L. Heinrich Riedesel (later L. Henry, born 1818)
 - His wife Amalia Beitzel/Riedesel
 - Their two children Ludwig (later Louis) and Elisabeth
- Anna Elisabeth Riedesel (born 1820) and now married to
 - Franz Homrighausen
- Georg Ludwig Riedesel (later George, born 1825)
- Johannes Riedesel (later John, born 1829)

Quite how they lived at first is not known but they must have had a plan. We know that an epidemic of some kind claimed several members of the family in 1847-1848. In 1852, brothers L. Henry and George Riedesel walked to Iowa to secure land. They successfully did so around what would become the town of

Wheatland in Clinton County. All but George actually settled in Wheatland by around 1855. He stuck around Ohio and married his cousin Elisabeth Gerhardt in 1860. They did not settle in Wheatland until 1869 (though he already owned land there). In 1873, the now-elderly Gerhardts came to the Wheatland area as well.

The family of J. Georg Schneider from Altehäusers house in Wunderthausen came to America in 1848.⁵ Their daughter, Catherine, had preceded them with the Riedesel group in 1845 and had immediately married J. Ludwig Riedesel. Her younger sister, Caroline, would marry Ludwig Dürr. The Scheiders also spent a few years in Crawford County before settling near Wheatland. These two family groups were the essential nucleus of what became a New Wunderthausen. Well over one hundred souls from that small, isolated German village would live at least for a while around Wheatland.

L. Henry, George and John farmed immediately east and north of the town. Franz Homrighausen (married to sister Anna Elisabeth Riedesel) had land close to town initially but eventually owned a very large farm south of Wheatland. J. Ludwig Riedesel also lived close to Wheatland at one point but his main farm was a few miles north in another Township. J. Ludwig and Catherine were the only ones to leave Clinton County. They moved on to the Glidden area (Carroll County) around 1880 as did several of their children.

¹ Vital statistics from Wunderthausen are taken from the registers of the parish. The LDS publishes transcriptions but I rely on a compilation by the late Georg Lauber of Wunderthausen, privately published.

² The name of the ship is unrecorded but the records pertain to Baltimore and German sources strongly suggest a crossing in 1833. The National Archives at Washington, D.C.; Washington, D.C.; Records of the US Customs Service, RG36; NAI Number: 2655153; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787-2004; Record Group Number: 85. Accessed on Ancestry.com 3/29/2016

http://interactive.ancestry.com/8679/33128_b068191-00587

³ They traveled on the ship Lesmona out of Bremen, landing in New York on June 24, 1844. Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 055; Line: 38; List Number: 488. Accessed on Ancestry.com on 3/29/2016

http://interactive.ancestry.com/7488/NYM237_55-0093

⁴ Curiously the ship's name is not preserved but they arrived in New York on June 7, 1845. Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 058; Line: 32; List Number: 372. Accessed on Ancestry.com on 3/29/2016

http://interactive.ancestry.com/7488/NYM237_58-0125

⁵ The Schneider group landed in New York on May 31, 1848 aboard the ship Amazone out of Bremen. Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 072; Line: 38; List Number: 499. Accessed on Ancestry.com 3/29/2016

http://interactive.ancestry.com/7488/NYM237_72-0833