

A Brief History of Riddlebarger, Riddlespurger, and Related Families with a y-DNA Synopsis (2020)

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1). Our y-DNA (the male line) has been identified as H2-P96. The H2-P96 line probably arrived in Europe during the Neolithic Period (the New Stone Age: 10,000 BC-4500 BC) about the time the Ice Age was ending. Our ancestors were among the very first early modern humans to enter Europe associated with the spread of agriculture.

Note: Our y-DNA is very old and rare today. Our terminal SNP (the deepest level of DNA testing) is currently classified as H-Z19049. Since there are so few European HP-96s who have tested at this deep level, our current SNP classification will continue to change with more data.

2). The oldest H2-P96 human remains to date were found in Israel (dated about 7000 BC). Other H2-P96 human remains have been found in Turkey (6500 BC), Hungary (5700 BC), and Spain (3500 BC).

3). What limited evidence we have points in the direction that later arriving populations of people known as Proto Indo-Europeans, drove H2-P96 peoples into remote areas of Europe, such as the Alps, and Sardinia. Very likely, our ancestors have been in the Alps (Switzerland, near Bern) for several thousand years.

4). DNA testing indicates that Christian Retelsberger (see # 5 below) and his ancestors were Swiss and therefore German speakers. Y-DNA testing ties us directly to the Rötlişperger family of Bern, Switzerland, specifically to the region known as Heimisbach, near Langnau-Im-Emmental. The Rötlişpergers trace their well-documented history back to the 1520's. DNA tests establish a near-certain relationship at some point between 12-24 generations ago—I have a match near 100% to Mr. Urs Rötlişperger of Bern. The y-DNA line of Riddlebargers and related families is Swiss.

If you are wondering about our immediate family relationship to Ben Roethlisberger (the NFL football player), apparently our two lines diverged about 1520.

5). Our first Rötlişperger ancestor to arrive in America was Christian Retelsberger (his name was spelled phonetically, by an English-speaking dock clerk) who arrived in Philadelphia in September of 1733 on a ship named Pink Mary coming from Rotterdam, Holland (his port of departure). We do not yet know the exact connection between Christian and the Rötlişpergers (from the time he or his immediate ancestors left Switzerland, until the time he departed from Europe on the Pink Mary bound for the British colonies in the new world). We only know that DNA proves there is a direct connection. It is possible that a Rötlişperger family left Bern (in the 1600's), moved into the Alsace (the French side of Rhine across from the Palatinate). Christian likely came to America several generations after the family left Switzerland and relocated along the Rhine.

- 6). In the 1740's, Christian left PA, moved down the Shenandoah Valley, marking land but not settling. By 1742, Christian made his way to South Carolina and received a land grant near the present city of Orangeburg, eventually buying 1600 acres closer to Charleston (near a village named Rosinville on the old Charleston Road). Christian established an inn, and produced rice and indigo in an area known as Four Hole Swamp. Christian's surname is most often spelled Riddlespurger (although there are many variations in the spelling). He died in 1790, leaving behind a substantial will, much property, and sadly, fourteen slaves.

- 7). Christian had two sons by his first wife, Ann Struck: John Riddelsperger (1741/2-1827) and Abraham Riddlespurger. Christian had four children by his second wife Elizabeth Uldrick: Christian II, Thomas, David, and Ann (the Riddlespurgers of GA, AL, MS, and TX, descend from these sons of Christian and Elizabeth).

- 8). Christian's oldest son John, a blacksmith, made his way back to Pennsylvania by 1767, and then moved south near Fincastle in Botetourt County, Virginia, in 1787—buying land very close to land which Christian had marked on his journey down the Shenandoah (see # 6 above).

- 9). John had at least three sons. John II (whose descendants are the Riddlesbergers of PA), Samuel (also identified as John-Samuel causing much confusion) whose descendants are the Riddlesbargers, Riddlebargers, and Riddlebergers of VA and OH, and Jacob, whose descendants are the Riddlesbargers and Riddlebargers of IL, KS, OK, ID, and CA (my line).

- 10). DNA testing indicates a direct y-DNA connection between the Ohio and the IL, KS, OK, ID, and CA Riddlebargers (establishing both lines as descendants of John Riddelsberger of SC, PA, VA).

- 11). Y-DNA tests also connect the OH and CA Riddlebargers to the Riddlespurgers of GA, AL, MS, and TX, confirming that both lines descend from Christian Retelsberger (Riddlespurger) who arrived in Philadelphia in 1733.

- 12). There is no merit to the claim that Christian Riddlespurger is connected to the Georgia Salzbergers or came from Germany or Austria (as many, including me, once thought). Both traditional ancestral research and y-DNA testing proves this not to be the case.