

# The Taufschein of Mary Margaret Houseal: A Glimpse Into German-American Life in the Dutch Fork, South Carolina

By Courtney Magill

*Taufschein*, or German-American baptismal certificates, were two-dimensional, often handcrafted objects that created ties for people to both their past and present. Due to their traditional roots in continental Europe, these specific types of fraktur connected owners to their ancestors and the larger community where they could feel grounded and a part of a formed culture distinct from the chaos and turmoil that was early frontier America. German-American *taufschein* often reflect a more secular tone, but the roots of the Christian meaning of baptism largely shine through in both the text and the decoration of the document.

Within the collections of the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts is the work of the Ehre Vater Artist, an unknown fraktur artist who created many pieces, largely *taufschein*, in communities throughout the east coast. This artist's work is a prime example of adaptation of American tastes to European traditions. He retains the Germanic Gothic lettering as well as the traditional information and catechisms or prayers displayed on the piece while also developing a subtle visual vocabulary that includes natural, architectural, and geometric forms to both entertain the eye and imbue the piece with subtle meanings.<sup>1</sup> Whether or not German settlers recognized this mastery of a new form of early American art or not cannot be determined, but the large body of work still remaining that is attributed to this particular artist shows that he was very popular. In the society centered around St. John's Lutheran church in Newberry County, South Carolina, the Ehre Vater artist's works serve as physical connections between an extended family and the community at large around the church.

The art of the *taufschein* has its origins in 16th century European baptismal certificates called *Patenbrief*, "written, painted, or printed paper with which the sponsor wrapped the gift of money for his godchild."<sup>2</sup> In the tradition of infant baptism, sponsors were the godparents and served to renounce Satan and promise Christian fidelity on behalf of the child. The tradition of a monetary gift from the godparents upon baptism dates to centuries before the Reformation, and creative little containers for the gift like silk bags, little boxes, and eventually *patenbrief* became popular. *Patenbrief*, however, became the most prominent due to their multi-purpose functionality. Not only could they be folded to hold money, but the decoration and writing served as a record of birth and baptism, offered congratulations, memorialized an important religious event, and celebrated the meaning of

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<sup>1</sup> John Bivens Jr., "Fraktur in the South: An Itinerant Artist," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 1, no. 2 (Nov., 1975): 14-19.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick S. Weiser, "Piety and Protocol in Folk Art: Pennsylvania German Fraktur Birth and Baptismal Certificates," *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 8 (1973): 20.

baptism.<sup>3</sup> In addition, these easily portable documents traveled with families on the ships to America, when there was little room to bring anything else of value.<sup>4</sup> Within the new German settlements of 18th century Pennsylvania, these highly religious pieces took on more secular feeling as they employed new forms of design, usage of earthly objects within decoration, and a lack of specifically religious symbols.<sup>5</sup> However, the undercurrents of religious meaning still remain through actual content in the pieces as well as through more subtle symbolism.

Once Frederick S. Weiser introduced new understandings of the significance and cultural meaning of fraktur in his influential 1973 *Winterthur Portfolio* article, material culture scholars looked more deeply at the examples of fraktur art already identified from early America. Two highly influential articles were published in *The Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* in 1975 and in 1979. The 1975 article “Fraktur in the South: An Itinerant Artist”, written by John Bivens Jr., is focused largely on the characteristics of the Ehre Vater artist’s works, especially those from North Carolina.<sup>6</sup> In their 1979 article “Fraktur in the “Dutch Fork” Area of South Carolina,” Christian Kolbe and Brent Holcomb examined the seven known pieces of fraktur art from the Dutch Fork, five of which are by the Ehre Vater artist.

The works of this artist have been found in Pennsylvania, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and purportedly Canada. Despite his location in North America, the artist retained a core stock of general format and images that were rooted in ancient texts such as the *Physiologus*, a Greek text from the 2nd c. CE that described animals and plants and provided them with meanings or moral content.<sup>7</sup> This manuscript was the predecessor to Medieval *Bestiaries*, illuminated texts of the same purpose in the symbolization of nature. A variety of artisans over hundreds of years adapted these early texts and symbols into their work, creating a symbolic vocabulary, whether conscious or not, that remains powerful today. Thus, the presence of certain motifs and forms within the realm of the household fraktur would have harkened to the greater Christian tradition that was the background of most early American settlers.

The *taufschein* of Maria Margaretha Hausihl located at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts is a beautiful and well preserved example of the Ehre Vater artist’s work. The work is 19 inches in length by 16 ½ inches in width, and consists of ink and watercolor on woven paper with two watermarks, one in the upper mid-section and one in the lower mid-section. Pre-conservation, the paper was slightly yellowed and fraying at the edges with some tearing along what could be creasing lines. The edges were stabilized and the tears and holes filled in with like material. The vertical formatting of the piece is fairly standard: it is written entirely in German and bears the “Ehre Vater Und Mutter” arced

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 22-23.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>6</sup> Bivens, “Fraktur,” 1-23.

<sup>7</sup> Bird, Michael S., *O Noble Heart, O Edel Herz: Fraktur and Spirituality in Pennsylvania German Folk Art*, (Virginia Beach, VA: The Donning Company/Publishers, 2002): 91.

header that the artist is known for. The artist wrote the child's name in scarlet ink under the arc. He neatly drew the text as well as the imagery throughout the piece and delicately colored it in bright shades of yellow, pink, scarlet, blue, blue-green, and green. Doubtless, the ink would have been brighter upon its creation, but the colors have held well and have not faded significantly nor eaten through the paper. The blue-green color found throughout the piece appears powdery and fragile compared to the other pigments that are within the paper because artists and chemists did not develop a stable shade of bright green until the mid-18th century or later.



Fig. 1: *Taufschein* of Mary Margaret Houseal

The section of text on the bottom half of the page constitutes a prayer. The alternating lines of black and scarlet ink are written in German and the translated prayer states,

Dearest Jesus, Full of grace  
Heal the wounds of my soul  
Give me your spirit's strength  
That in my heart's keeping  
Good teaching, such virtues  
Shall adorn my youth  
Let my young and tender heart  
Learn no evil jests  
Rather let me with the years  
Experience more all that is good  
So will I with all my right  
Praise you strength, Jesus. Amen.



Fig. 2

The imagery of the piece is dominated by the two spotted parrots facing each other and sitting on flowered stalks on either side of the devotional text. These parrots, another of the Ehre Vater artist's more famous motifs, have more elongated necks than his normal birds. They are both colored in the same way, though the bird on the right appears to have

a red and blue crest, more than likely denoting it as male. Their bodies are pink with scarlet stylized dots, their heads yellow with grey dots, and their beaks are hooked and colored bright yellow. The feathered part of their legs are blue-green with dark blue shading that gives dimensionality, and the same blue-green color accents the folds in the wings and the plumage at the bases of the tails. The feathers of the wings alternate pink with red stripes and yellow with grey stripes, adding more dimensionality. The bird of the right has two 'feathers' with the stripes going the opposite direction of the others, perhaps a mistake or another attempt at dimensionality. The tail feathers have a yellow central feather with red feathers on either side and a blue-green feather on top with a blue feather on bottom.

The traditional meaning of parrots within Christian art springs from their ability to "talk." Parrots became aligned with the idea of the immaculate conception because they came from the Exotic East, where the Annunciation took place, and because of the old idea

that the conception occurred through the ear or hearing.<sup>8</sup> Through the *Paleologus* and other such texts, Christianity often adapted many animal legends to their purposes. For instance, the pelican, depicted as a long necked colorful bird much like the parrots depicted on this fraktur, was said to have pierced its own side in order to resurrect its children.<sup>9</sup> Whether or not the parrot can be aligned closely with the Virgin Mary is speculative, but in any case the plethora of birds in fraktur imagery closely aligns with the idea that the singing of the birds constitutes an offering to God.<sup>10</sup>

The stalks or vines that the parrots are perched upon have long, thin, pointed leaves with veining accents and faint shading with a reddish brown. The flowers on the stalks, six on each side, have blue-green bases and five petals. The flowers on the left have blue-green with blue shading central petals, yellow petals on either side, and pink petals with red dots on the outer edges. The flowers on the right have yellow center petals, pink petals with red dots on either side of center, and the blue-green with blue shading petals on the outside. These highly stylized flowers are hard to label with certainty, but they may represent lilies. As representations of purity and virtue and being closely aligned with the Virgin Mary, the lily would be an incredibly appropriate symbol on a *taufschein*, especially since it is the most prominent flower on the page.<sup>11</sup>

The three flowers on the thin vine underneath the arced title are tri-colored as well. The smaller flowers on either side having yellow centers with four alternating blue and yellow petals radiating



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

off of that, and six pink petals with red edges on the outside. The central flower has a yellow center, five blue petals, six yellow petals, and then eight pink petals with red edges on the outside. The thin vine has short rounded leaf with slight veining in the same green as the other leaves. This flower is almost certainly representative of the a rose, especially in its tripartite presentation. In traditional Christian meaning, three roses symbolize the

Holy Trinity, significant in a Baptism where the child is receiving the Holy Ghost. The rose was also closely allied with the Virgin Mary in the early Christian tradition, Mary being deemed 'the rose without thorns.' Whether it is a stylistic or a purposeful choice, the Ehre

<sup>8</sup> Hope B. Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art*, (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2006), 317.

<sup>9</sup> Bird, *O Noble Heart*, 91.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>11</sup> Heart, S.F., "The Lily," Accessed July 18, 2012, <http://www.sfheart.com/lily.html>.

Vater artist does not include thorns on the vine of this rose.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, upon inspection of Mary houseal's headstone in the private Summer Family Cemetery, the flowers carved in relief upon the stone appear to be roses. These flowers more than likely have the same

Christian meanings as those on Mary's fraktur, and they establish an interesting dialogue in flower symbolism through their representation on objects that document both the beginning and the end of this German-American woman's life.

The flowers in either of the upper corners are on similar stalks but with short, fat, pointed and veined leaves colored in the same green with reddish brown. There are five flowers on each stalk, each with what appears to be three petals with three sections of colors. The flowers on the left have blue centers with yellow with grey dots in the middle and pink with red dots on the outer edge.

The flowers on the right have red centers, yellow as the middle color, and blue-green outsides with blue edges. On the bottom two flowers it appears that the blue-green color has perhaps come off of the page. These flowers are highly stylized as well, but they appear

to be some species of violet, perhaps pansies. If this is the case, then according to Christian traditions they symbolize the humility of the Virgin, a quality that would have been praised in the good Christian.<sup>13</sup> The three-lobed quality of the flowers also suggests the Holy Trinity, much like the roses.



Fig. 6

The smaller sprigs of flowers that decorate the top section of the fraktur, especially the capital letters of E, V, and M appear to be smaller versions of the possible lilies. The leaves are smaller and rounded but they are long. Also, the flowers, though they have less petals, follow the same general form of the large matured flora.

The row of eleven trees at the bottom of the *taufschein* all appear to be evergreen trees, and are more than likely depictions of cedar trees. The cedar tree is a prominent symbol within the text of the Bible as a parable for one's growth as a Christian. Psalms 92 and 29 refer to the cedar of Lebanon and its capacity to grow both tall, wide, and deep so that



Fig. 7

<sup>12</sup> Heart, S.F., "The Rose," Accessed July 18, 2012, <http://www.sfheart.com/rose.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Hill, Susanne, "Flower Symbol in Christian Art: A Violet Represents Properties Beyond Its Obvious Meaning," *Classical Art History @ Suite 101*. Accessed July 18, 2012, [http://suite101.com/article/flower\\_symbols\\_in\\_christian\\_art-a11350](http://suite101.com/article/flower_symbols_in_christian_art-a11350).

only the voice of God could uproot it. In this way, the Christian faith was supposed to root itself and remain strong in its believers, a good life lesson to the newly baptised.<sup>14</sup>

In interpreting the possible early Christian meanings associated with the mid-18th century fraktur's visual symbols, the most significant symbol of all can be overlooked: the expression of individual faith with a larger world of both opportunity and religious freedom.<sup>15</sup> Faith was important enough in these cultures that these families left ancestral homes for a dangerous new environment where various sects of Protestantism could be practiced freely. This idea is carried forward by local accounts of early settlers in Newberry County and their immediate attempts to find a pastor and form a church.<sup>16</sup> Objects such as *taufschein* were imbued with so much meaning because the documents were reminders of religious reasons for migration in the first place, as they further affirmed freedom and purpose.

German-American communities in the backcountry of South Carolina largely developed around the centerpoint of a church for a religious and social haven within the tempestuous outside environment. Records from the pre-Revolutionary Newberry County suggest that along with incidences with local Indian nations, many instances of robbery, murder, and rape largely went unchecked because of a lack of a formal penal system closer than Charleston.<sup>17</sup> Organization around the church would have provided a grounding point for the community. This can be seen in Newberry through the five fraktur of members of an extended family that were all connected to the same Lutheran Church of St. John.

In the first of these fraktur to consider, that of Mary Margaret Houseal, the Ehre Vater artist uses scarlet ink in the main body of text to supply the viewer with a plethora of biographical and cultural information about the subject,

(Maria Margaretha Hausihl) was born in South Carolina in Newberry County in the year after Christ's birth 1787, 4 April. Her parents were Friedrich Wilhelm Hausihl and his Christian wife Anna Maria, nee Geiselhart. She was brought to Holy Baptism by Mr. Waller, Lutheran preacher. Her sponsors were Johann Benedict Mayer and his wife.

Mary's parents were both born in Germany, William in 1730 in Heilbronn and Anna Maria in 1751 in Württemberg. Anna Maria's parents, Johannes Geiselhardt and Anna Maria Herrmann, emigrated on the ship *Caledonia* to South Carolina in 1752, just 1 year after Anna Maria was born.<sup>18</sup> William Houseal also emigrated in 1752; however, along with

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<sup>14</sup> Temple, Dr. Joe, "Like a Cedar Tree," Accessed July 18, 2012, <http://www.livingbiblestudies.org/study/JT9/004.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Christian Kolbe and Brent Holcomb, "Fraktur in the 'Dutch Fork' Area of South Carolina," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* V, no. 2 (November, 1979): 44-47.

<sup>16</sup> Rosalyn Summer Sease, *A Brief History of St. John's Lutheran Church Pomaria, South Carolina: Founded in 1754, "The White Church"* (Pomaria, SC: St. John's Lutheran Church Historical Committee, 1970), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Thomas H. Pope, *The History of Newberry County South Carolina, Volume One: 1749-1860*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1973), 25.

<sup>18</sup> "John Geiselhart Family," *Dutch Fork Chapter*, Last modified May 7 2004,

his brother the Reverend Bernard Michael Houseal and the family of Christopher Bartholomew Mayer, he first traveled to the Hague in Holland and then on to Annapolis, Maryland. Shortly after arrival, William departed for South Carolina, crossing over the Blue Ridge Mountains into the German community near Orangeburg. After his first wife Maria Elizabeth Straumann died around 1769, William moved a short distance away into the Newberry County section of the Dutch Fork and then married Anna Maria Geiselhart.

Angered by British harassment and the plundering of prosperous immigrant farmsteads of the Dutch Fork during the turmoil leading up to the Revolutionary War, William raised and equipped a troop of citizen horsemen to defend the area. He was a zealous fighter for American Independence and fought under regimental commanders Colonels James Lyle, Jonas Beard, and Philemon Waters as well as commanding his own militia companies throughout the War from 1776 to 1783. Afterwards, he served in Newberry County as a Magistrate, Justice of the Peace, and Sheriff in the early years of social and political organization.<sup>19</sup> The 1790 US Federal Census shows that three of his five sons still lived with the family along with his wife and two of his three daughters, two coming from his previous marriage. Also, the Census shows that he owned one slave on the property, marking him as a man of some wealth.<sup>20</sup> He endowed the land for St. Paul's Lutheran Church, an offshoot of St John's, and was known to be a well educated, liberal, good tempered, and charitable man.<sup>21</sup>

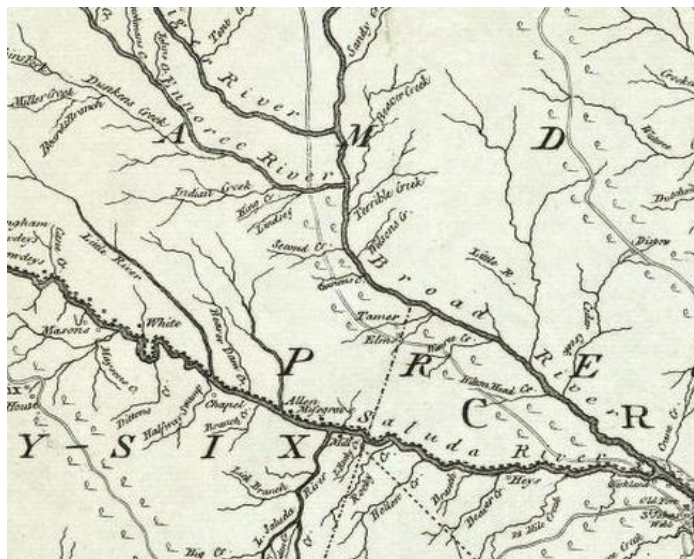


Fig. 8: Area of the Dutch Fork in the Province of South Carolina

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<http://dutchforkchapter.org/html/geislhart.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> Nix, William G., "Two Brothers Who Chose Very Different Paths or Their Adult Lives,"

<sup>19</sup> *Columbine Genealogical and Historical Society Newsletter* 34, no. 2 (April 1, 2008): 1-3,

<http://www.columbinegenealogy.com/pdfs/2008-Apr.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Year: 1790; Census Place: , Newberry, South Carolina; Series: M637; Roll: 11; Page: 61; Image: 55; Family History Library Film: 0568151.

<sup>21</sup> Nix, "Two Brothers," 1-3.

The text of Mary Margaret's *taufschein* lists Johann Benedict Mayer and his wife as her sponsors, or more familiarly her godparents. John Mayer was Mary Margaret's cousin through her mother's sister Maria Agnes Geiselhart. Maria Agnes married Ulrich Mayer in South Carolina in 1783 and their son John Benedict Mayer (1761-1817) married Eva Margaretha Summer, the daughter of the prominent Captain John Adam Summer and Mary Reese, making her the godmother in Mary Margaret's *taufschein*. They lived in the St. Peter's (Piney Woods) Church area and Ulrich was one of the founding Trustees of the original St. Peter's Church in 1794, yet another offshoot of St. John's.<sup>22</sup> John Mayer was also highly involved in St. John's Lutheran church, being its treasurer for 39 years.<sup>23</sup> Mayer's grandson, Dr.



Fig. 9: Daguerrotype of Benedict Mayer

Orlando Benedict Mayer (1818-1891), also served his community and in 1891 wrote a partial history of the Dutch Fork according to his childhood memories growing up in Newberry County.<sup>24</sup> Tragically, he died before completing the planned eleven installments for the local newspaper, the Newberry, South Carolina *Herald and News*.<sup>25</sup>

While the focus of this study lies upon the *taufschein* of Maria Margaretha Hausihl, the Ehre Vater artist also composed frakturs for two other women in Newberry County. These three *taufschein* are so similar in form, that there is little doubt that they were created around the same time. As documented by Kolbe and Holcomb in 1979, these three women were also related to each other and likely lived in a close community within the Dutch Fork that was served by a variety of pastors at St. John's Lutheran Church.

The three women are Mary Margaret Houseal; Eva Margaretha Süss, Eve Margaret Sease; and Maria Magdalena Sommer, Mary Magdalene Summer. Eve Margaret (1756-1840) was the oldest of the three. She was the mother-in-law to Mary Houseal, Mary having married her son Captain John Adam "Peg Leg" Summer in 1804; she was also the aunt by marriage to Mary Summer, Mary being the daughter of George Adam Summer the brother of Eve's husband Nicholas Summer. Mary Magdalene Summer (1780-1849) and Mary Margaret Houseal (1787-1871) were cousins by marriage through the same brothers George Adam and Nicholas, both sons of Hans Adam Summer and Anna Maria Josten, immigrants from central Germany and local legendary founders of the Newberry

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<sup>22</sup> "John Geiselhart Family."

<sup>23</sup> Sease, *St. John's*, 11.

<sup>24</sup> Mayer, O.B., *The Dutch Fork*, ed. James E. Kibler (Columbia, SC: Dutch Fork Press, 1982), 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

community. George Adam Summer (1760-1834) also served in the Revolutionary War and even fought under Captain William F. Houseal's command in February 1781.<sup>26\*27</sup>

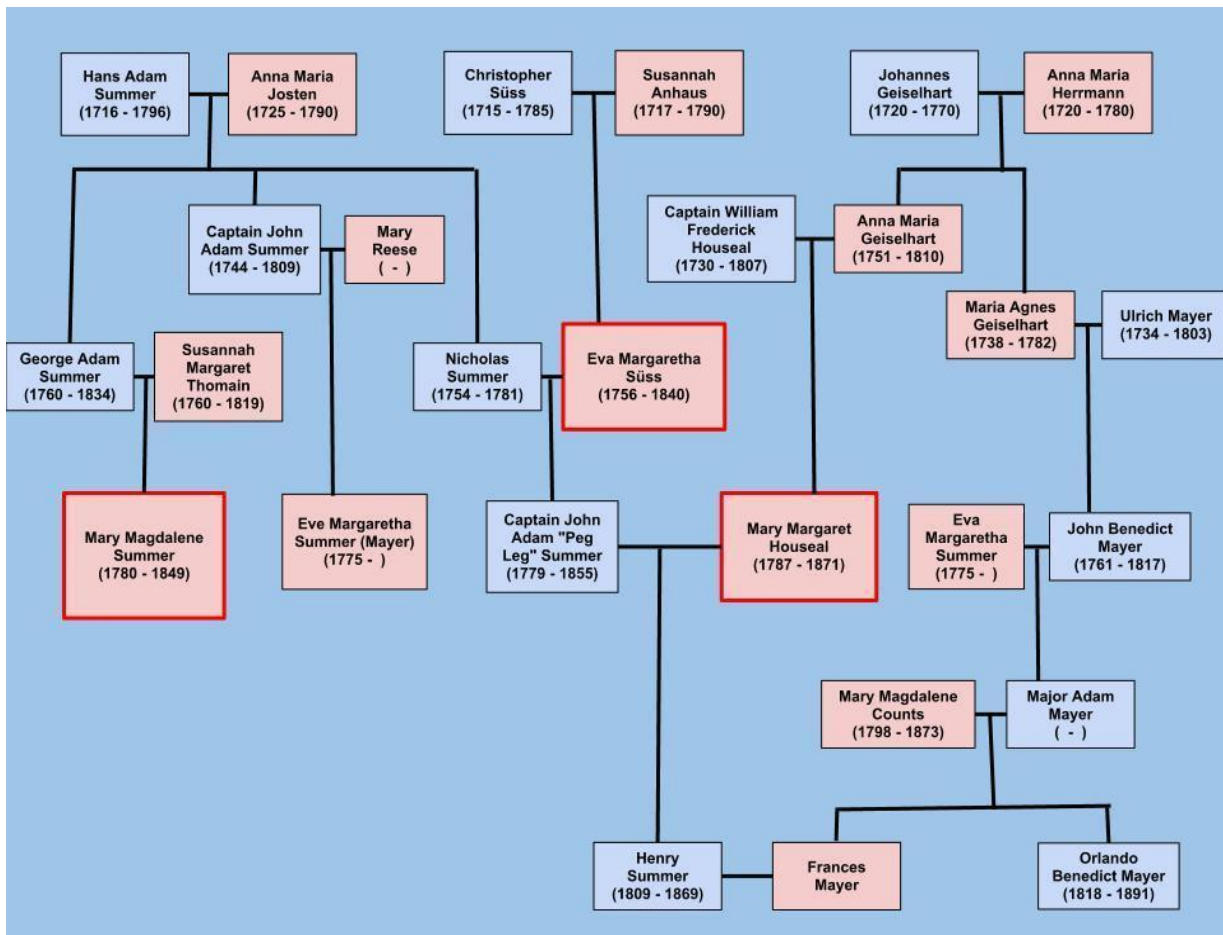


Fig. 10: Family Tree Centered Around the Three Ehre Vater Fraktur Found in the Dutch Fork Area

The history of St. John's Lutheran Church on Crim's Creek, near present day Pomaria is of great importance to the Dutch Fork Community, for it was one of the only churches available for much of the early days of Newberry County, "The few churches served... as nuclei for civilized society...the need for churches and for schools was seen as imperative by the leaders of the backcountry."<sup>28</sup> Due to the general disorganization of the government in the backcountry until around the end of the 19th century, the high demand of establishing a church had to be met by the citizens of the Dutch Fork rather than be mandated by the authority through Charleston. According to remaining records, St. John's was the one of

<sup>26</sup> (B.G. MOss, "Roster of SC Patriots in the American Revolution," 1983, P. 907, Accounts Audited 7524, Stub Indent 2666).

<sup>27</sup> Nichols, Carl. "Carl Adam Summer Family," *Dutch Fork Chapter*, Last modified May 1, 2004, <http://dutchforkchapter.org/html/summer.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Pope, *History of Newberry County*, 77.

the oldest, if not the oldest church established in Newberry County. The early Dutch Fork area came to be populated largely by German speaking Swiss from Oberland and Germans from the Odenwald. Their common language was Deutsch but the Swiss generally identified with the German Reformed Church while the Germans identified with the Lutheran Church. However, the demand for ministers was so great that both Reformed and Lutheran pastors could easily find congregations of either, or both, sects to tend to. The beginnings of St. John's was rooted in the group meetings of much of the community under the Reverend Christian Theus, a German Reformed pastor whom Hans Adam Summer had met in the Saxe-Gotha township in Lexington County around 1752.<sup>29</sup> Reverend Theus spent well over 50 years, from 1739 to 1789, serving as an itinerant minister in the Saxe-Gotha and Dutch Fork communities. Evidence of his ministry can be found in a variety of church documents, most importantly in the *taufschein* of Eva Margaretha Süs where he is listed as the presiding minister in her baptism in 1756.



Fig. 11: The Old White Church of St. John's Lutheran Church, 1809

The first actual building attributed as St. John's was constructed in 1754; it consisted of a little log cabin to serve as the church and the school house and was located on vacant land adjacent to the property of the newly arrived Reverend John Gasser, a Reformed minister from Switzerland.<sup>30</sup> The 100-acre tract was bordered by four landowners, and

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<sup>29</sup> Sease, *St. John's*, 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

roads and paths crossing the area led to a variety of other properties including that of the Summers, making the church an accessible physical center of the settlement.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, in his recollections of the Dutch Fork, Orlando Mayer states that, “The center of Dutch Fork, with such circumference, might be fixed at St. John’s church.”<sup>32</sup> Church and county history recall that the settlers did not have the means to fully support a minister, so Pastor Gasser dedicated himself to fundraising, finally gathering enough money for a new church and schoolhouse by 1763.

The second church of 1763 “was built of logs, hewn 6 x 10 inches, the corners dovetailed in the old German style.”<sup>33</sup> It is today commemorated by an upright engraved stone and stood about one hundred yards away from the location of the third church at the other end



Fig. 12: Tombstone of John Adam Summer

of the field, The Old White Church, built in 1809. All of the nails, hinges, and other hardware used in the building of this third church were purportedly handmade in the workshop of Captain John A. Summer, Mary Houseal’s husband; this claim is supported by the image of an anvil on Captain Summer’s headstone, marking him as a blacksmith. It was obviously well constructed, for the Old White Church of St. John was in use for worship for over 141 years and still stands today. The church was built under the leadership of the Reverend Frederick Joseph Wallern, the eighth pastor of the congregation and, more importantly, the presiding pastor of the *taufschein* of Mary Margaret Houseal in 1787, though his name is spelled Waller there.<sup>34</sup> Pastor Wallern is also mentioned in another of the Ehre Vater artist’s *taufschein* from nearby Lexington County. The baptismal certificate of Elisabeth Mütze lists Wallern

as the baptising minister in 1786, and it is also visually similar to the three *taufschein* from Newberry County. Elisabeth’s relationship to the Newberry Summers family through her mother’s side along with the visual similarities of the four fraktur and the presence of Pastor Wallern on two of the four documents leads to the conclusion that families within the greater area of the Dutch Fork largely remained connected through St. John’s Church. It is very likely that the Ehre Vater artist had passed through the area in his travels, or

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<sup>31</sup> Pope, *History of Newberry County*, 79.

<sup>32</sup> Mayer, *The Dutch Fork*, 7.

<sup>33</sup> Sease, *St. John’s*, 3.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

maybe even had been invited like many previous pastors, and thus had accepted several commissions from St. John's congregation. All five of his known fraktur from the area, including the two from Lexington County, are officiated by pastors that are known to have ministered at St. John's Church: Süss by Theus in 1756, Mary Summer by Frolich in 1780, John Herrman Aull by Hochheimer in 1786, and Maria Houseal and Elisabeth Mütze by Wallern in 1787 and 1793.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to conjectures that the Ehre Vater artist sent pre-designed pieces to South Carolina to be filled in, a variety of components within the contents of the five Dutch Fork fraktur support the conclusion that he resided in South Carolina and created these pieces sometime around the turn of the 19th century. As mentioned before, the central focus on the pastors of St. John's and thus on their baptismal congregation, as

dispersed as it might have been, shows that commissions more than likely would have spread through the church families. The five subjects were born and baptised within a thirty-seven year period (1756-1793) and the latest dating on any of the pieces is the recorded wedding of Mary Summer to Jacob Schleich in 1799. The text denoting the wedding event is the exact same as that in the rest of the fraktur and is not squeezed to fit, so Mary Summer's *taufschein* dates to at least 1799 or afterwards. The only other fraktur containing marriage information is that of Eve Süss. It states that she was married to Nicholas Summer, that he had died in 1781, that she had remarried to Wilhelm Summer in 1782, and that she had three sons.



Fig. 13: Tombstone of Reverend Wallern

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 14.



Fig. 14: *Taufschein* of Elisabeth Mütze



Fig. 15: *Taufschein* of Eva Margaretha Süß



Fig. 16: *Taufschein* of Maria Magdalena Summer

Eve's third and last son was born in 1792, so the document must have been made after this in accordance to the dating of Mary Summer's fraktur. The other three *taufschein* of

Mary Houseal, Elisabeth Mütze, and John Aull do not contain marriage dates because they were not married until 1804, 1810, and 1818 respectively.<sup>36</sup> Thus, like Kolbe and Holcomb suggest in their 1979 article, there is a five year window, from 1799 to 1804 in which the Ehre Vater artist more than likely created this group of fraktur. The fraktur of Eve Süß may cause some doubt as to its date of creation for it appears as if some of the sections have been left blank and then were filled in later by a different hand. These sections include the name of the pastor, the name of the godmother, and the mention of her 3 sons; they are odd pieces of information to have been left blank. Normally forms left the date, all of the names, and location blank but this fraktur was definitely almost fully completed by the original artist. As to why this occurred is up to interpretation. Also, yet another hand has added Eve's age upon death at the bottom of the text; this, of course, would have been added much later by a younger relative more than likely. The other five *taufschein* are completed entirely by the same artist. The formal similarities between the four fraktur made for the women openly demonstrate that the pieces are related. They are all in a vertical format with the arched heading, a form that the Ehre Vater artist is known for, though only three say "Ehre Vater Und Mutter." Eve Süß' *taufschein* has the heading "Jesus mein Zuversicht" or "Jesus my Confidence." The four all have elements of the typical decoration that the artist uses including parrots, various flowers including pansies and roses, evergreen trees, towers, and hearts. Since, each detail has different meanings within the Christian range, and so the artist could have developed an overall message for each woman or simply created a spectrum between all four pieces so that they could be unique. While the four are generally similar, the three fraktur from Newberry County have the same elements of red text, alternating black and red text in the catechism, and rows of eleven evergreen trees along the bottom. They also overlap in various elements like columns and parrots. Alternatively, Elisabeth Mütze's fraktur, especially in its highly damaged state, has quite a few unique formal elements including three hearts enclosed in a circle at the bottom of the page, a spiralling catechism around that circle, geometric starbursts or flowers at either bottom corner, larger tulips on either side, and two groupings of seven evergreen trees. This juxtaposition of similarities and differences in form reflects that there is a relationship between the women through extended family, but that the fraktur of this particular woman was born in an adjoining community.

The fraktur for John Aull, however, has an entirely different format. The horizontal composition is relatively rare in the Ehre Vater artist's known work, and while it shares most of the usual decorative vocabulary of the other pieces, the presence of the geometric designs at either bottom corner sets it apart from the other South Carolina examples. Nevertheless, the piece is most definitely related for it shares the same inspirational choral

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<sup>36</sup>"Mary Margaret Houseal," accessed July 16, 2012, <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/12226819/person/2018726365>.

<sup>36</sup>"Elisabeth Meetze," accessed July 16, 2012, <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/6180117/person/52107002?ssrc=>.

<sup>36</sup>"John Hermon Aull," accessed July 16, 2012, <http://trees.ancestry.com/tree/33067709/person/18383835784?ssrc=>.

verse from “Das Blut Jesu Christi, des Sohnes Gottes, Machet uns rein von aller Sünde” as that of Eve Süs,

Jesus, your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Mid flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.<sup>37</sup>



Fig. 17: *Taufschein* of Johann Herrmann Aal

Though it can only be conjecture at this point, perhaps that the format of John Aull's piece was different as to make it distinctive from the female pieces or maybe the artist allowed for some creative input from his commissioners within the realm of his usual designs formulas.

The presence of the watermark on Mary Houseal's *taufschein* further affirms the creation of the document in the area, for another fraktur from a different artist in the same general area has the same mark. The marks on the Houseal piece include "AB 1799" underneath Mary's name in the arc and a crest with the Britannia figure central, a crown above, and the initials "AB" in cursive script underneath the catechism at the bottom of the page.

The 1797 fraktur of the Death Memorial of Elisabeth Lohrmenn by an unknown maker in Lexington County carries a mixture of both of the Houseal marks. An encircled cursive "AB" mark similar to the text below the Britannica crest sits above "1797" done the same text as the "1799" of the first watermark on the Houseal piece. The marks appear to be that of Ann Blackwell, a papermaker at Nash Mill in Hertfordshire, England.<sup>38</sup> This

<sup>37</sup> Kolbe and Holcomb, "Fraktur in the 'Dutch Fork': 44-47.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas L. Gravell, *A Catalogue of Foreign Watermarks Found on Paper used in America, 1700-1835*, (New York: Garland Pub., 1983), 3, 6, 25, 50, 221, 270.

imported paper likely was obtained through a merchant or chain of merchants from either Augusta or Charleston. The evidence of more than one example of nice imported paper in the Dutch Fork shows that by the late 18th century the community had the trade routes to attract and acquire luxury goods.



Fig. 18 and 19: Watermarks from the *Taufschein* of Mary Margaret Houseal

Fig. 20: Watermark from the Death Certificate of Elizabeth Lohrmenn

Fraktur have been extensively studied since the 1970s, but the influx of new research, especially in community life of the areas in which they were created, can shed new light on the importance of the pieces and the meaning of the symbolism within them. By way of thirty years of further research on fraktur art and the community of the Dutch Fork, the re-examination of five previously studied *taufschein* has led to a better perception of life in the early days of the South Carolina backcountry. In commissioning these illustrated documents, this community of German-American settlers centered around St. John's Lutheran Church perpetuated their European heritage and incorporated it into their new American identity. Upon further investigation of the Old White Church and other early Lutheran churches in the area that branched off of the original St. John's congregation, St. Paul's and St. Peter's, more information may be gleaned about the environment in which the Ehre Vater artist worked, especially if he was an itinerant schoolmaster working in the area as previous research suggests. By working with Newberry County family historians and pursuing fieldwork in the buildings central to this community in the Dutch Fork, perhaps the identity of the Ehre Vater artist will finally be determined.

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### **Image References**

Figures 1-7: Ehre Vater Artist. *Taufschein* of Mary Margaret Houseal. Ink on Paper. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

Figure 8: Cook, James. Zoomed Area from *A Map of the Province of South Carolina*. 1773. Ink on Paper, 76 cm x 81 cm. David Rumsey Historical Map Collection. <http://www.davidrumsey.com/maps4112.html>.

Figure 9: *A Daguerreotype Portrait of Orlando Benedict Mayer Around 1850-1860*. Daguerreotype. Courtesy Mrs. Harriet Mayer Reid. From: *The Dutch Fork*. Columbia, SC: Dutch Fork Press, 1982. Frontispiece.

Figure 10: Tree Centered Around the Three Ehre Vater Fraktur Found in the Dutch Fork Area.

Figure 11: The Old White Church of St. John's Lutheran Church, 1809. Pomaria, SC.

Figure 12: Tombstone of John Adam Summer. Summer Family Cemetery #1.

Figure 13: Gravestone of Reverend Frederick J. Wallern. Cemetery of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Pomaria, SC.

Figure 14: Ehre Vater Artist. *Taufschein* of Elisabeth Mütze. Ink on Paper. Private Collection.

Figure 15: Ehre Vater Artist. *Taufschein* of Eva Margaretha Süss. Ink on Paper. Private Collection.

Figure 16: Ehre Vater Artist. *Taufschein* of Maria Magdalena Summer. Ink on Paper. Private Collection.

Figure 17: Ehre Vater Artist. *Taufschein* of Johann Herrmann Aal. Ink on Paper. Private Collection.

Figures 18 and 19: Watermarks from the *Taufschein* of Mary Margaret Houseal. Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts.

Figure 20: Death Certificate of Elizabeth Lohrmenn with Watermark Detail. Private Collection.

Figures 21 and 22: Watermarks of Ann Blackwell. From *A Catalogue of Foreign Watermarks Found on Paper Used in America, 1700-1835*. New York: Garland Pub., 1983.

Figure 23: Tombstone of Mary Margaret Houseal (Summer). Summer Family Cemetery #1.