

## GENEALOGY OF THE WEISELL FAMILY William Beil Weisell, 1986

The name from at least colonial times was most consistently spelled "Weisel". Before, in Europe there were many variations. The second "l" was added only upon the move to Indiana by my Grandfather. (Actually, both spellings were used in Bucks County.-VWD)

The family in America dates only from George Michael Weisel and his wife Susanna Kiefer Weisel on their migration to Philadelphia from Alsace, France in 1732. Here only, the direct line leading from parent to child is traced. As will be seen, exact identities are known and traced—and documented.

In Europe the prior descendents can only be traced through family name—not specific persons—but the general path of migration is fairly clear leading to this couple who were married and had their children along the border (East to West) of southern German Palatinate and Northern Alsace in France. The family is considered to have derived in Upper Hesse in Germany although the Kiefer family was French Huguenot. A short geographical description of the European areas involved. The Rhine River, of course, runs from south to north in the western part of Germany. Frankfort is in Southwest Germany some 50-75 miles east of the Rhine. The area across the Rhine is called the German Palatinate and is a southwest extension of Germany. Below the Palatinate is a French area called Alsace. It too borders the Rhine on the west and so is an east extension of France.

The name first appears in the latter part of the Age of Chivalry when Knights or Lords still controlled and protected areas of people and land. There still is a small town (Weisel) 3 kilometers from the East bank of the Rhine between Bingen and Koblenz and it is believed that this Weisel was a minor knight or squire attached to a Lord whose castle dominated the east bank. During this period of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century, the Lord of the Palatinate was becoming more powerful and extending his territory. He had a castle in an island in the Rhine called "The Pfalz". This is located within sight of the bend in the Rhine called "The Lorelei" and in the immediate vicinity of Weisel. The Pfalz, probably in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, conquered the area on the east bank and the Weisel, with his attached people, moved about 60 miles east to a hill 30 miles north of Frankfort. This location was and is called Hochweisel and today has under 1000 inhabitants. In time a village sprang up at the base of the hill or mountain and it was and is called Niederweisel. It is larger and has around 1,500 inhabitants. (By the 14<sup>th</sup> Century the Age of Chivalry and strict lordly control was dying out and an economy of crafts and independent agriculture was developing.) This area was called Upper Hesse. In the 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries the Burgomeisters rolls at Niederweisel were full of Weisel's, as were the rolls of the University of Marburg, the closest one to the Weisel area.

In time there was the usual migration of the families and our ancestor line moved across the Rhine into the Northern Palatinate and stayed 2 or 3 generations before moving to Zweibrucken in southern Palatinate, only a few miles from the Alsace border. There we identify our colonial ancestor, George Michael Weisel, born 1690. In the same area, either north or south of the border was the French Huguenot Kiefer family, whose Susanna he married around 1714. This family was originally Tonnelier and upon the attack on the Huguenots in Paris where they lived they moved south to Zweibruchen and adopted the name Kiefer, which is German for Tonnelier. A military drive through the Palatinate, probably religiously induced, forced the family across into Alsace. We don't know the location then although at the time of World War 2 the inquiries of historians about the family to Wissenberg, just across the border into Alsace, were interrupted. At any rate George Michael and Susanna left for America from Alsace in 1732 with their 7 children, perhaps because of their Protestant faith.

The father was a weaver and he landed at and stayed in Philadelphia 10 years until 1742. In the late 1600s William Penn was chartered this area west of New Jersey with intent of religious freedom. The 4 sons continued opening up the territory and by 1740 there was a large number of German and Swiss immigrants settling Bucks County, the next county north of Philadelphia. In 1742 George Michael purchased a 300 acre parcel in Bucks, several miles north of Doylestown towards Quakertown at what is now Hagersville. A map is explanatory.



The family travelled up Tohickon River and began clearing and farming the land. The father, three sons, Michael, Jacob and George, and a daughter Magdalina, who married into the prominent watch maker family, Solliday or Saladi, were prominent in the development of the pioneer community. A short distance north of his land he, George Michael, was a founder of the Tohickon Reformed Church (Huguenots were in the Reformed Church) and a local school. Some years after a post office was named Weisel further north before coming to the Tohickon River. All three sons fought in the Revolutionary War, as did the grandson Michael, who is in our direct line. Below is a more detailed map of the Bucks County environ of the family since it is the Colonial home.



The 7 children were: ( 1) Frederick, 1<sup>st</sup> son (after passage, no record); ( 2) Appolonia; (3) Marie; (4) Michael; ( 5) Jacob; (6) Christine; (7) George.

From the time of George Michael Weisell, born 1690 to William Beil Weisell, born 1912 and still living there have been only 7 generations, only 5 born in America. The men—and wives—were all relatively long lived (from the high 60s to the 80s). Those in our direct line were younger children in large families and the mothers were in their 30s, and some in 40s at births. As an instance my Grandfather and Grandmother had 4 children born in Ohio who all died before they migrated to Indiana and then 2 sisters in Indiana before my father the 7<sup>th</sup> and last child when mother 42.

**1. George Michael Weisel** – born 1690, died 1770. No present marked grave. Before his last years he conveyed the farm to son Jacob who in turn conveyed a part to son Michael. The present village of Hagersville stands in the center of the farm.

**2. Michael Weisell**, 4<sup>th</sup> child and oldest surviving son of George Michael, born 1720, died 1795 and buried in Tohickon Cemetery a half mile from farm. Married to Magdalene Drach. We do not know more about her family.

**3. Michael Weisell**, Born 1750 and died in Tincum Township, buried 1828 in cemetery of Upper Tincum. His grave has a Revolutionary War marker. He married Catherine Gearis of another Tohickon Church family in 1775. He moved to Tincum, only 15 or 20 miles, around 1798. The records of Tohickon Church are informative. The marriage records are not complete but baptisms show Michael Weisel and Catherine Gearis “unmarried female”, were joint sponsors or witnesses to baptisms in both the Weisel and Gearis families 1770-1774. Then in 1776 Michael and Catherine Weisel’s first child was baptized.

**4. Michael Gearis Weisell**, born 1787, either Bedminster or Tincum and died in Trumbull County, Ohio, near Lordstown, 1870. He married Catherine McIntyre, who may have grown up across the Delaware River in New Jersey. Her brother, Will McIntyre, had a prominent record in Mount Pleasant, NJ.

Michael G is the history of migration West. As a young man he owned a mill on the Delaware River at Point Pleasant. At the time there was developing there a commercial area of factories and mills utilizing the Delaware’s water power. This continued into modern times and was largely razed when a nuclear power site was assigned there. (In construction the site was opposed and then revoked.) In those days before the prevalence of banks in all commercial enterprises it was the practice for individuals, often relatives, to go on the bond of others. Reportedly, through this, he lost his mill when the debtor defaulted. Soon after, approximately 1824 he left Bucks County to go west. The first children were born before this, including Robert in 1820. He stopped at Tompkins County, NY near (supposedly north) of Ithaca and stayed until 1830. There in 1828 William Wilson Weisell was born. The NY census record of 1830 does not contain Michael but William’s birth is recorded.

Then begins the Ohio period. A brother Dan had moved to northeastern Ohio in the vicinity of Warren, Trumbull County. Michael joined him in 1830 and built and farmed at what is still called Weisel Corner, a crossroads, southwest 2 ½ miles from Lordstown. He had a blacksmith’s shop at the N.E. corner. A second Weisell home still stands (and remodeled) a short distance south of the corner within sight of both the modern GM plant and the Ohio Turnpike.

Michael Gearis and Catherine had additional family in Lordstown. He then died in 1860 and is buried along with his wife and some children in a cemetery west of Lordstown.

**5. William Wilson Weisell (Sr.),** 1828-1910 grew to manhood at the farm near Lordstown. He married Elizabeth Woodward from North Jackson in Mahoning County. She worked before marriage as a milliner either in Niles or Warren.

W.W. Weisell never farmed in Ohio. He in time became a stock trader and travelled to Bucks County, Pittsburgh and west buying stock.

At this time because of large families the farms were getting crowded and several of the children in the area took new land in northeastern Indiana. Among them were William W. and Robert, who both bought farms in northern Wells County in the early 1860s. William bought horses for the Union Army thru the (missing). As aforesaid, 4 children had died in Ohio and on the farm near Ossion (Ind.) they had Bert and Coe. The farmland proved to be only fair and so in early 1870s he ran for and was elected Sheriff of Wells County. He put a tenant on the farm, then 160 acres, moved to Bluffton, at the residence attached to the jail, and began duty as Sheriff. There, December 23, 1874, William Wilson Weisell, Jr. was born.

After his term as Sheriff, he went into manufacturing, the Bluffton Mfg. Co. He obtained a patent on the first round regurgitating washer called the American Round and produced it and other wooden products. He became one of the leaders of the area—in politics and business—and led the movement to get the Erie through Bluffton (this failed). In later years he retired to his brick home on a 100 yard square plot on Oak St, Bluffton. He died 1910 and is buried in Fairview Cemetery as are all the subsequent members of the family to date. Elizabeth died 1920.

**6. William Wilson Weisell (Jr.),** born at the jail in 1874, died 1939. He married Lillian Lela Beil in 1896. She was from the Beil and Lesh families, the latter being very prominent and extensive in Rockcreek Township, Wells County. She graduated from DePauw University in music, returned to Bluffton to teach and throughout her life was one of the leading organists, pianists and directors in Northeastern Indiana. Will began a business career as a clothier and soon owned his own store in Bluffton which he operated until 1927. Thereafter he became a foreman in the depression-instituted Civilian Conservation Corps, reclaiming land and died at this job in 1939. Lela lived until 1958.

**7. William Beil Weisell,** 1912--- is the only surviving child of Will and Lela. He married Mary Craig of Denton, Texas in 1941. He received his higher education at Columbia University in the City of New York and began practice of law in Indianapolis 1940. But for 4 years, 1942-46 in the Army Air Corps he practiced continually with the same firm, now is called Locke, Reynolds, Boyd and Weisell. Presently he is the sole surviving founding partner of this 1954 firm, which (under) other names has existed since 1921.

*This history was handwritten by William B. Weisell (1912-2009) in 1986.*