

"Mr. Belsley lived in Peoria for some years and then came to Woodford County, and in the southwestern part rented land for a time, and then bought a tract on Section 24, Spring Bay. There was a log cabin on the place and a few acres of the land were broken and under cultivation. He carried on farming there until 1852, when he rented it out and bought a larger tract of land on the same section, on which he resided the remainder of his life..."

'Black Joe' became a deacon of the Partridge Creek congregation in 1834, and married Marie Rosenkranz in 1836.³²⁶ She died within a few months. On Feb. 25, 1840 he remarried to Barbara/Barbe Engel, a daughter of Joseph Engel and Barbe Roggy, and the granddaughter of Metamora elder Christian Engel. She was born at Zommange, Moselle Feb. 8, 1821, and died Feb. 26, 1880. They had 12 children; five died in infancy, leaving seven sons.

The Past and Present of Woodford County contains a brief biography stating that, "By industry and indomitable energy he ['Black Joe'] has accumulated a nice property; as a farmer he has ranked among the most enterprising, and as a citizen is much esteemed."

'Black Joe' and Barbara Engel are buried in the Engel Family Cemetery.

Anna/Anne Belsley and Christian Ackerman

According to *The Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online*, "Since the beginning of the 19th century there has been a Mennonite congregation with Regensburg as its meeting place. It was formed by families from Alsace and Lorraine who leased the larger farms in the vicinity of Regensburg; most of the members are still farmers. The first preacher was Jakob Ackermann (1785-1841), who had a large farm in lease at Köfering near Regensburg." Köfering is 3 miles southeast of Regensburg.³²⁷ Jakob Ackermann married Catherine Rediger.

Jakob Ackermann and Catherine Rediger were the parents of Johann/John Ackerman of Groveland. He was born near Regensburg May 24, 1817, and died at Groveland Oct. 28, 1891. He married Magdalena/Madeleine Birkey and Elizabeth Sutter Miller. (See BIRKY/BIRKEY, THE LITTLE RED BIRKYS for more on Johann/John).

It is presumed that they were also the parents of Christian Ackerman. He was born near Regensburg, Bavaria Dec. 25, 1813, and died at Morton March 29, 1903.

He is found as 'Christian Ackermann' on the steerage passenger list of the *Bark Atlantic*. The ship sailed from Bremen and arrived at New York Sept. 12, 1838. He sailed with his second cousin Peter Ringenberger (see RINGENBERGER), who later lived at Elm Grove.

According to a brief biography collected by Sam Ackerman, Christian went directly to Butler County, Ohio. His obituary says he lived 'near Hamilton.' He remained there six months before heading on to Spring Bay.

On May 25, 1839 in Tazewell County Christian married Anna/Anne Belsley. There is an odd coincidence here. The spellings found on the online *Illinois Statewide Marriage Index* are often inaccurate, but they usually express the original handwritten marriage certificates. This can be helpful for descendants who would like to request them from the county clerk's office. In this instance, the index says that on May 25, 1839 Ann Belsley married 'Christian OConnor.' Was this a clerk's mistake in transcription? Or had Christian departed Germany eight months earlier to evade military conscription, and feel uneasy about having an official record of his true name? (Jump ahead to VERCLER for the story of another creative entry from 1833).

Anna/Anne Belsley was born on Neuohof farm at Bihl (later Buhl Lorraine in Moselle) March 28, 1819 (her obituary says Strasbourg, May 1820), and died at Morton May 2, 1903.³²⁸ She was a daughter of Michael/Michel Bältzli/Belsley and Catherine Schertz, who immigrated in 1837 (see BELSLEY).

The 1840 census of Tazewell County shows 'Christa Acrement.' The four names listed before him were Peter Summers [Sommer], Joseph Belsey [Belsley], Joseph Kemp [Kempf, later Camp], and M[illegible] Belsy [either Michael or Magdalena Belsley]. Although the census does not give exact locations, we know that Joseph Kempf was living in what is now Green Township, Woodford County.

In 1841 they settled at what is now Groveland. Their household appears on the 1850 census of Tazewell County: farmer Christian Ackerman, 45 [eight years older than his true age], Germany; Anne, 33, Germany; Christian, 7, Illinois; John, 3, Illinois; Barbara, 1, Illinois; and John Schrock, 50, Germany (see SCHROCK).

Circa 1852 they resettled on a 40-acre wooded property near Evans Corner at Morton. They built a brick house there. Christian appears on the 1855 state census of Morton, along with other familiar names such as (as

³²⁶ It is possible that she was the 'Maria Rosenkran.' 36, who appears on a Baltimore passenger list with the '100 Hessian Mennonites' of 1832; she would have been 16 years older than 'Black Joe.'

³²⁷ In German an *Ackermann* is a field worker.

³²⁸ The birth date March 28, 1819 is found on the *état civil* entry for her birth. Her headstone says May 1820; this may have been taken from the 1900 census.

written) Joseph Staker, Christian Staker, John Oswald, Jacob Schwarztraub, John Switzer, Peter Belsly, and Jacob Rich (found as Ja. Ritch).

The 1860 census of Morton shows farmer Christian Ackerman, 46, Bavaria; Anna, 41, France; Christian, 16; Barbara, 12; John, 13; Mary, 7; Anna, 5; Lydia, 3; and Madaline, 2; all children born in Illinois. Their property in the southwest quarter of Section 4 is labeled 'C. Ackemann' on the 1864 plat map of Morton. The 1870 census of Morton shows farmer Christian Ackerman, 55, Bavaria; Anna, 50, France; farm laborer John, 22; Barbara, 19; Mary, 17; Anna, 15; Letty [Lydia], 14; and Magdalena, 11.

In 1880 Christian and Anna were living next door to John Oswald and his son John, and son-in-law Samuel Butler Hirstein and daughter Lydia Ackerman. They appear on the federal census as retired farmer Christian Ackerman, 67, Bavaria; Anna, 61, Bavaria; Barbara, 28; and Lena, 21. The 1900 census of Morton shows: Christian Ackerman, 86, born Dec. 1813, immigrated in 1838, Germany; Anna, 80, born May 1820, Germany; Barbra, 51, born March 1849; and Lena, 41, born July 1858.

Christian and Anna are buried in the Old Apostolic Cemetery at Morton, where their headstones describe them as 'grandpa' and 'grandma.'

Their children born at Morton include:

1. Peter Ackerman was born March 17, 1840, and died young.
2. Jacob Ackerman was born March 5, 1842, and died young.
3. Christian Ackerman (Jr.) was born Feb. 12, 1844, and died Sept. 18, 1884. He died from injuries suffered in the explosion of a cider and sorghum mill at Morton three days earlier. On Aug. 30, 1868 in Peoria County he married Maria/Mary Gerber.³²⁹ She was born in Wayne County, Ohio Aug. 23, 1850, and died at Morton Sept. 11, 1908, a daughter of John Gerber and Mathilda Zimmerman. (See GERBER AND GARBER, THE APOSTOLIC GERBERS OF MORTON). They are buried in the Old Apostolic Cemetery.
4. Catherine Ackerman was born Oct. 15, 1845, and died young.
5. John Ackerman was born Feb. 13, 1847, and died at Morton Feb. 22, 1925. On Jan. 23, 1873 he married Nancy Naffziger. She was born at Wilmot, Ontario Oct. 24, 1849, and died at Morton June 24, 1929, a daughter of John Naffziger and Catherine Miller. In 1878 they donated land for the new Defenseless Mennonite Church of Groveland. They are buried in the Apostolic Christian Cemetery at Morton.
6. Barbara Ackerman was born April 3, 1849, and died March 23, 1913. She is buried in the Apostolic Christian Cemetery.
7. Joseph Ackerman was born Dec. 26, 1850, and died young.
8. Mary Ackerman was born Feb. 22, 1853, and died in Kosciusko County, Indiana Nov. 23, 1913. On Sept. 28, 1873 in Peoria County she married Heinrich/Henry Rassi. He was born at Falkenstein near Schweinfurt, Bavaria July 17, 1847, and died in Kosciusko County, Indiana July 18, 1916, a son of Jacob Rassi and Magdalena Musselman. They lived at Cissna Park and later Milford, Indiana. They are buried in Milford Cemetery at Milford.
9. Anna Ackerman was born June 9, 1855, and died Oct. 2, 1903. On Sept. 10, 1876 in Peoria County she married Johann/John Wittmer.³³⁰ He was born at Elgin, Iowa March 24, 1854, and died at Lacrosse, Indiana Jan. 12, 1939, a son of Jacob Wittmer and Mary Reusser. They are found on the 1880 census of Morton as farmer John Wittmer, 26, born in Iowa to parents from Switzerland; Anna, 24, born in Illinois to parents from Bavaria; and two children born in Illinois. On Oct. 2, 1905 Johann/John remarried to Mattie Naffziger, a daughter of John Naffziger and Catherine Miller.
10. Lydia Ackerman was born Feb. 28, 1857, and died at Morton Jan. 30, 1892. She is buried in Hirstein Cemetery at Morton. On March 21, 1877 in Peoria County she married Samuel Butler Hirstein. He was born at Morton July 22, 1852, and died Sept. 28, 1838, a son of Samuel Hirstein and Gertrude Butler. They had 10 children. Samuel Butler Hirstein remarried to Louise Kuehner in Tazewell County Sept. 14, 1892, and they had seven more children. The Hirsteins relocated to Wing (adjacent to Fairbury) in 1874, and Fairbury in 1906.
11. Magdalena 'Lena' Ackerman was born Aug. 15, 1858, and died April 5, 1945. She is buried as 'Miss Lena' in the Apostolic Christian Cemetery.
12. Samuel Ackerman was born Aug. 22, 1860, and died young.

³²⁹ The *Illinois Statewide Marriage Index* lists her as Mary Garber.

³³⁰ The *Illinois Statewide Marriage Index* lists her as Annie Akermann.