

**GENEALOGY OF THE KEMPER  
FAMILY IN THE UNITED  
STATES: DESCENDANTS OF  
JOHN KEMPER OF VIRGINIA**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649591763

Genealogy of the Kemper Family in the United States: Descendants of John Kemper of Virginia  
by Willis Miller Kemper & Harry Linn Wright

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**WILLIS MILLER KEMPER & HARRY LINN WRIGHT**

**GENEALOGY OF THE KEMPER  
FAMILY IN THE UNITED  
STATES: DESCENDANTS OF  
JOHN KEMPER OF VIRGINIA**



GENEALOGY  
OF THE  
KEMPER FAMILY  
IN THE  
UNITED STATES

---

DESCENDANTS OF JOHN KEMPER OF VIRGINIA

With a Short Historical Sketch of His Family and of the German  
Reformed Colony at Germanna and Germantown, Va.

---

Compiled and Edited by  
WILLIS MILLER KEMPER AND HARRY LINN WRIGHT

---

CHICAGO:  
GEO. K. HAZLITT & CO., PRINTERS, 373 DEARBORN ST.

1899

WISCONSIN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

v. 25  
CS  
71  
K321  
1399

## PREFACE.

UNTIL the compilers of this Record were ready to print the "Genealogy of the Kemper Family," they had not intended to put anything historical into the work, but in the search for purely genealogical matter, so many interesting historical facts relative to the Germanna colony were revealed, which shed light upon the history of our ancestor, John Kemper, that it was thought best to print the historical sketch of the Germanna colony, which follows. The starting of the colony is given in full, with all that is known of it subsequently, for the reason that the history of this colony is the history of our ancestor, and almost all that is known of his life is what can be gathered from the story of this colony. Its history is his history. That a just estimate can be formed of his life and character is the main reason for quoting so largely from records relating to this colony. But the writer believes that new light is there given upon a very interesting period of the later Colonial history of Virginia, viz.: The beginning of the German immigration to that colony. This episode in her history seems to have been almost entirely ignored by Virginia historians, down to the present time. It certainly needs more study, and there is no doubt that further research in this direction will bring to light many interesting facts. Virginia owes a great deal to the German immigration, and not a little to the Germanna colony. It is hoped that the facts given and authorities quoted will stimulate additional research in this direction.

The Genealogical Record is just what it claims to be; not a history, but a genealogy. No attempt has been made to write historical sketches, however interesting they might have been, of the various members of the family, because it would have so largely added to the bulk and cost of the book. It is a genealogy pure and simple. If another edition should seem to be warranted, possibly much can be done in that direction. The arrangement of the work is apparent. The names are given by generations; all the members of one generation being given before the next begins. Every person is numbered and the numbering runs straight through from the beginning to the end. It will be seen that there are two columns of figures on every page, the outside column refers back to the previous generation, the inside one forward to the succeeding

generation. To follow the record of any person, take his number as given in the inside column and turn to the succeeding generation, where it appears in the outside column. Thus on page 56, John Peter Kemper, the eldest son of the emigrant, is No. 14. Turn to page 59 where 14 appears in the outside column, and John Peter Kemper's record is given. Should you wish to follow the line of James Kemper, the sixth child of John Peter, whose number on this same page is 53, turn to the next generation on page 66 where 53 appears in the outside column, and you will find James Kemper's record in full; and so on. Aid is given by following each name by the character, † if it appears in the next generation.

There are, no doubt, many errors to be found in this Record. The greatest effort has been made to avoid them, but from the character of the work, they are almost inevitable. The compilers will be under obligations to any one who will report to them errors in the "Record."

November, 1899.

W. M. K.  
H. L. W.

## SKETCH OF THE KEMPER FAMILY OF VIRGINIA AND OF THE GERMANNA COLONY.

The word Kemper can be traced a long way back among the dialects of the Germanic people. The German word Kemp or Cämp, perhaps akin to the Latin Campus, means a field, a place where an army is encamped. The old German verb kempen means to contend, to fight; a kemper was one who contended, a fighter, a warrior, a champion. Down to the middle ages the word was used even among the Saxons in England; with them "a kemper old man," meant, a hale, vigorous old man, one able to fight. The word is in occasional use among the Lowland Scotch to this day, in the sense of one who contends. They speak of "kemper men" as of mowers contending in a field.\* In a Latin note to the ballad "King Estmere" in Percy's Reliques of English Poetry, vol. 1, p. 74, the name Kemper seems to be identified with the ancient German tribe, the Cimbri. Whether the Cimbri were so called because they were recognized *par excellence* as "the warriors" among the Germanic tribes; or whether after this tribe, celebrated for its fighting qualities, all brave, good fighting men were called Cimber, Kimber, Kemper, the note leaves it uncertain.† Whatever the truth may be, the word Kemper seemed to be in common use, under a variety of spellings, as Kempfer, Kempfer, Kimber or Kemper, depending upon the tribe, but with the same meaning, in many of the ancient German dialects.

The modern German form of the verb is kâmpen or câmpen, and of the noun Kâmpfer or Câmpfer. If our name had originated in

\*For a fuller explanation of the above see the Century Dictionary under Camp-Kemp-Kemper.

†This note is as follows: Kempe = a soldier. Kemperye man, soldier, warrior, fighting man.

NOTE: Germanis *Camp*, exercitum, aut locum ubi exercitus castrametum, significat: inde ipsis vir castrensis et militaris, Kempfer et Kampher et Kemper et Kimber et Kamper pro varietate dialectorum vocatur; vocabulum hoc nostro sermone nondum penitus exolevit. Norfolciensis enim plebio et roletario sermone dicunt: "He is a kemper old man," i. e. senex vegetus estp. Hinc *Cimbris* suum nomen Kimber enim homo bellicosus, pugil, robustus miles, etc., significat." Sheringham, de Anglor gentis orig., pag. 57.

Rectius autem Lazius (apud eundem pag. 49.) Cimbras a bello quod Kampf et Saxonice Kamp nuncupatos crediderim: inde bellatores viri, Die Kempfer, Die Kemper."



modern times, the correct spelling would be Cämper, because K is seldom used in modern German, C hard taking its place; and usually after C hard the A has an umlaut. A present-day native German, unfamiliar with the name will invariably write it Cämper.

The name Kemper does not seem to be a very common one in Germany at the present time. There were only two persons of the name in the Berlin directory of the year 1892, one of whom came from Cologne. There were only six in the Siegen directory of the same year. A look into the directories of the large cities of this country for the year 1898, shows comparatively few persons of the name. There seem to be more in Cincinnati than in all the others, about one hundred, of whom about twenty belong to our family. The others have come to this country within the past 40 or 50 years. Occasionally the name is spelled Camper. Nearly every one of these people with whom the writer has conversed or corresponded, came, either himself or his ancestors, from the Rhine country, from Essen to Manheim, seeming to point to some common origin.

The proper spelling of our family name is Kemper. In the records of the Reformed Church at Müsen, every time the family is mentioned, the name is spelled Kemper, but once, when it is spelled Kempfer. This is an evident mistake, the records showing there was a Kempfer family in Müsen at this same time. The earliest document in this country now known, containing the name, is a lease dated 4 March, 1726, from the proprietors of the Northern Neck to John Peter and Hermon *Kemper* for 264 acres of land on Great Run, said to be in King George County, Virginia, now in the possession of Charles H. Kemper, of Cedar Grove. There is a similar conveyance to John Peter *Kemper*, dated 2 June, 1777, for 70 acres, two and one-half miles from Fauquier Court House. There is a similar conveyance to John and Jacob *Kemper*, of Stafford County, for 327 acres, in Stafford County, dated February 10th, 1729.†

There is a further grant to "Henri, Catharine and Mary, sons and daughters of John *Kemper*, of Prince William County," for a tract of land on both sides of a branch of Rappahannock, commonly called Great Run, containing 362 acres in Prince William County, dated January 22nd, 1749‡

These persons are all children of the emigrant, and the name in the grants is spelled Kemper every time.

In addition to the spelling of the name, these grants show the thrift and energy of John Kemper, for by 1729 he had acquired a

†Northern Neck Grants Book, C, p. 19, Richmond Land Office.

‡Northern Neck Grants, Book E, 408, Richmond Land Office.

large amount of land, and was evidently farming it. The taking of these grants in the name of his children, then quite young, in all probability was because he had not been naturalized. The last grant, from its wording seems to show that John Kemper was certainly still living in 1749.

The earliest known signature of our ancestor in Virginia is as a witness to the will of Henry Hager, dated April 10th, 1733. The original of this will is now lost, but in the order book where the will is copied the name appears as Johannes Camper. In the next year he is named as an executor in the will of John Fishback, and in the body of the will, as it appears copied in the order book, he is called John Kamper. The original of this will is also lost. The bond of the executors of this Fishback estate is still preserved in Prince William County, with the signature of our ancestor attached to it, and the name is spelled Kamper. This signature is in a round, beautiful hand, indicating a man of education, intelligence and natural refinement of character.

There was some diversity in the spelling of the name so far as the records in Virginia show, down to the beginning of the present century, and one branch of the family in Virginia to-day is spelling the name Camper; everyone else, everywhere, is spelling it Kemper. The Pennsylvania branch of the family has always spelled it Kemper.

Our ancestor did not keep up the spelling Kamper; for on a carved poplar plank, in 1754, which will be described later, he spelled it Kemper. His eldest son John Peter Kemper, in his family record commenced 1738, spelled his name Kemper. The beginning of this record is so unique that it is here given. "ANO † 1738, den 7th September habe ich Johan Peter Kemper, mich mit Elizabet Fishbackin verehlicht." "In the year, 1738, September 7, have I, John Peter Kemper, myself, with Elizabeth Fishback, married." He seems to have done it all. This may be the German way of doing, but the writer thinks this has not been the experience of John Peter's male descendants.

On the plank, still in existence over the door of the Cedar Grove house, built in 1745, John Peter Kemper spelled his name and the name of his wife, Kemper, yet this same John Peter Kemper in giving his consent to the marriage of his daughter Elizabeth, to Benjamin Morgan, in 1782, signs it Camper. The above are the only two genuine signatures of any member of the family, where the name is spelled Kamper or Camper, and other members of the family at the same time were putting their names on record as Kemper. On most of the other early occasions when the name appears on record, it was written by the County Clerks, and some-

times it is Kemper and sometimes Kamper. The latter spelling is apparently an attempt to modernize or anglicise the name. Apparently when the name was written for use among themselves it was invariably spelled Kemper.

In this connection the following advertisement which appeared in the newspapers of Southern Ohio, is interesting, and in point: "The changes of language having introduced improperly, early in the last century, the letter A instead of E in spelling the antient name of Kemper, the public are informed that by common consent, the original spelling will be resumed after the present date by the subscriber and that branch of the family issuing from him.

Hamilton County, State of Ohio. March 4th, 1809.

JAMES KEMPER, Senr."

Why for a time the name was spelled Kamper cannot now be determined with certainty, but they soon returned to the old way, Kemper. This very spelling proves that the family originated before modern German, with its missing K and its umlaut was invented.

The first that is known of our family, so far as our present information extends, is that it was living about the year 1650 in the little German village called Müsen, about fifteen miles north east of the city of Siegen, in the then principality of Nassau-Siegen, the present Prussian province of Westphalia. Our knowledge of the family in these early times, is obtained wholly from the records of the little Reformed Church in that village. The church is a very ancient one, no one can tell just when it was founded. A note on the first page of the new records states that the church with all its records was destroyed some time during the thirty years war, which ended with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The new records of the church begin with January 4th, 1649. The church was rebuilt about 1675 when all the gravestones about it were removed. The tower, however, which dates from 1625 still stands. Siegen, Müsen and the surrounding territory, belonged at that time to the House of Nassau; there is still in the church a slab of black marble about six feet long and two and one-half feet wide, forming the top of the communion table, which was presented to the church by one of the princes of the Nassau-Orange family, so long ago, no one knows when.

Somewhere about the year 1650 there was living in this village of Müsen one Johann Kemper, together with Anna his wife, whose maiden name was Löw. The marriage record of this couple cannot be found in the present records of the Müsen church. Perhaps the bride came from another parish. On August 5, 1657, O. S., a child named Belshaser was born to them. This is the earliest record