

Sensebach Heritage

A family history newsletter for:

Sinsabaugh Sensibaugh Sensenbaugh Sensebox
Sinsapaugh Sencabaugh Sencenbaugh Sencerbox
Sincebaugh Sencebaugh Sincerbeaux Sincerbox
Sensabaugh Sencibaugh Cincebeaux Sensaboy
Sensebaugh Cencebaugh Cincebox Senciboy
and other variations of the name

How Did You Spell That?

The Surnames of Andrew Sincerbox' Descendants

by Steven L. Sinsabaugh

In the last issue of this newsletter we focused on the descent from Johann Philip Sensebach, who was born in Westerwald and came to America.¹ He first settled on Staten Island by 1729, then joined the rest of his relatives in Ulster (later Orange) County, New York. By 1766 Philip, or possibly a son by the same name, had moved across the Hudson River to Dutchess County, where he had a son named Andrew. By 1787, sixty years after Johann Philip Sensebach had arrived as a young man in the New World, Andrew was the only known male descendant of this line.²

But Andrew was certainly not the end of this line. All of the families with the Sincerbeaux, Cincebox, Sincerbox, Sencerbox and other similarly spelled variants of Sensebach descend from Andrew Sensebach of Dutchess County, New York.

What's in a name?

The first thing one notices about this branch of the Sensebach tree is the unique twist to the "...bach" spelling. While his various cousins back on the Wallkill almost uniformly went with the "...baugh" ending, Andrew and his descendants settled on "...box".

We don't know for sure why Andrew's lines so radically diverged from the rest of the family tree, but a few observations can be made. The first is that the Philip Sensebach who arrived in Dutchess County by 1766 was probably the first of the family to migrate any significant distance from the 'New World home' of the Sensebachs on the Wallkill. At this time the existing records show the spelling was typically still in the "...bach" pattern. The "...baugh" pattern appeared only after Philip had left for Dutchess County. Later migrants from the Sensebachs on the

Wallkill retained the '...baugh' spelling, which apparently had become well established.

A second observation pertains to the literacy of that era. With families struggling on the frontier (and that area of New York in the early 1700's was the frontier) there was little time for traditional schooling. Many (though not all) Sensebachs of that era would probably have been illiterate, at least in English. With many of the officials who wrote the documents of English descent, it is not terribly surprising that the strange German surnames would be misspelled. As later generations in the latter half of the 1700's learned enough to write their names, the spelling variations stabilized. Of course with Philip and Andrew off by themselves in Dutchess County, their surnames just happened to settle on a different spelling.

A final observation regards the phonetics of our name. We don't know exactly why this branch ended up with the "...box" spelling, but consider the pronunciation of the original German "...bach". The guttural 'ch' sound could easily, to English ears, have sounded phonetically like an 'x'.

In the rest of this article, we will review Andrew and his known children, with a particular focus on how they diverged into the various unique spellings of Sensebach.

Andrew's Children

Like many other Sensebachs of that era, it is difficult to ascertain who all of Andrew's children were. The oldest evidence of his children is found in the 1790 census. Here we find two males under age 16; 1 male 16 and up (Andrew himself); five females and one slave. The slave was likely Prince, mentioned in his father's estate. Naturally, as in all of the pre-1850 censuses, the names of the children are not listed.

By 1800 Andrew's family had expanded. It included three males under age 10; one female and two males age 10-16; one female age 16-26; one male and one female age 26-45; one female age 45 and over; and one slave.³

While the census records show that Andrew and his wife had a number of children, scant direct evidence exists of the children's names. However, a number of children of Andrew have been identified, based on indirect evidence. Helping our efforts are both the unique spelling variants used by this family and the apparent fact that Andrew's was the only Sincerbox family in Dutchess County records until 1810, when Phillip Sincerbox appears. It is thus reasonable to assume that Sincerboxes from Dutchess County born much before 1810 were children of Andrew. Let us now review the known sons of Andrew, with a focus on how the surname evolved over the decades to follow.

Andrew's Son Phillip: Sincerbox and Sincerbeaux

Phillip Sincerbox first appears in the 1810 Dutchess County census as a male age 16-26 (i.e., born between 1784 and 1794). He had a wife and a boy and girl, both under age 10. In the 1830 census he appears as "Philip Sinsibox"; however in later censuses he appears to settled on the Sincerbox spelling.⁴

By 1850 Phillip and his wife Elizabeth had moved to the Finger Lakes region, settling in the town of Ledyard, between Cayuga Lake and Owasco Lake in Cayuga County. They lived there with children Harvey and Sarah still at home. Phillip died 27 January 1858 and was buried in the Kelloggsville Cemetery in Sempronius, Cayuga County; his wife Elizabeth died 5 March 1879 and was buried beside him. Their gravestone lists their surname as "Sincerbox".

continued on page 5