

## The Grasser Surname

Before we get into the Grasser surname. I want to share an interesting story that I found about early 1800 and prior German names.

*“As historians, we cannot judge people from the past by the standards of today. We have to remember these people lived in a time when they did not understand the "whys" when a tragedy befell them. Because they lived in a time of little medical intervention (remember the Catholic Church taught them that suffering was necessary, it was the will of God whether they lived or died), they would turn to religion and superstition to answer these soul-anguished questions.*

*Now to answer the question why they named their children with the same first name: They believed that the devil would come for their children at night but he was only able to take them if he knew their first name. Hence, they believed if they named them all by the same first name, but called them by their middle name the devil would be confused and unable to take their child.*

*The first names were known as “love names”. The middle names were employed in everyday outside activities. Thus, (Johann) Thomas Schley was known as Thomas, and his wife (Maria) Margaretha Wintz as Margaretha. In order to emphasize this, these “love names” are placed in parentheses.*

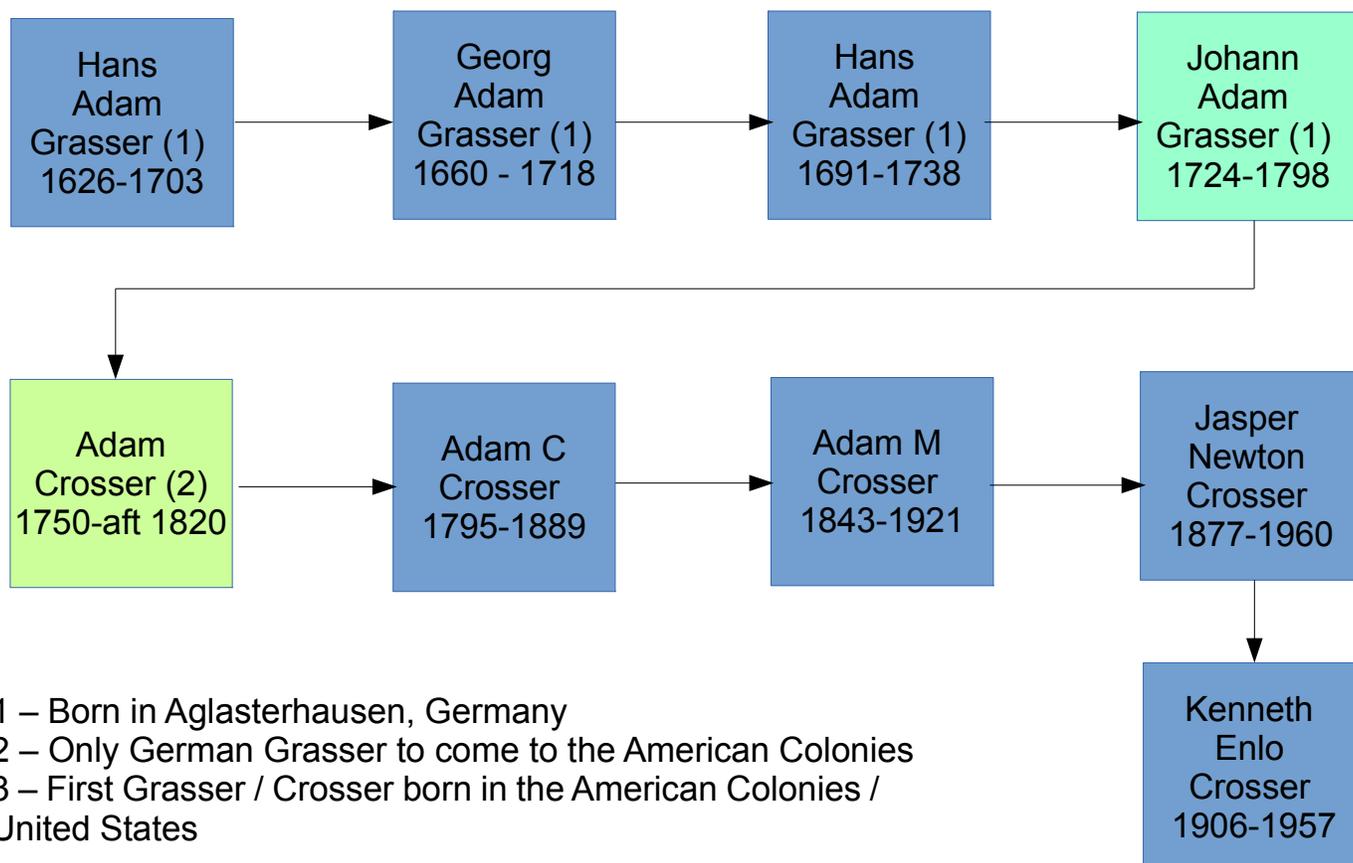
*Sometimes these "love names" were said to be the name of Saints. For example, for (Johann) Thomas Schley, the first or "love name," of John, was always spelled Johann as it was intended to not be used. If the man was to actually be called John, then the German spelling of Johannes was then always used.*

*Well, I don't know if it confused the devil, but it has certainly confused amateur genealogists through the years!”*

This author's direct line back to Johann Adam Grasser has 7 Adams in a row (from 1620 to 1921). All are middle names, and definitely cause confusion. Because of Johann Adam Grasser's name, a number of the early descendants are named Adam and John, and their birth dates are often relatively close because brothers would give their children the same names. It is for this reason that in our writings for Crosser Family History that in many cases we will reference the birth year following the name being referenced. Without such a birth year reference, it is confusing.

The following chart includes this author's line back to Johann Adam Grasser. This chart is helpful to understand the starting point for our research on Crosser Family History. From this core line, we build out all the relatives that we can find. It is our goal to find and document every Crosser descendant of Johann Adam Grasser b 1724 and his spouse, Maria Magdalena Bard b 1721, along with their spouses, their parents, their children, etc. Our Crosser Family Tree tab on this web site includes a significant number of relatives and information.

# Grasser Descendants



- 1 – Born in Aglasterhausen, Germany
- 2 – Only German Grasser to come to the American Colonies
- 3 – First Grasser / Crosser born in the American Colonies / United States

The following is research that was provided to Crosser Family History in a packet of information **sent by Donald Crosser of Kentucky.**

*“The Crosser family surname was originally Grasser. Johann Adam Grasser (born 18 Jul 1724) migrated from Germany in 1749. The Grasser name means "grass, meadow guard". Often, the craft or the profession of an individual became their surname.*

*The Germans used a 'prefix' name in the early 1700's to early 1800's. Two common prefixes were John and Maria. The names were used mostly at the child's baptism. For example, Adam was baptized Johann Adam Grasser, but was known as Adam Grasser. Adam's brother was baptized John Henry but other records refer to him only as Henry.*

*Another interesting practice was reusing the name of deceased child. It's not too uncommon for parents back then to 'reuse' a name. That is, if they had a child named Jacob Conrad who died young, they might use that name for another child born later. This unusual practice can be seen in Hans Adam Grasser's Family group. Hans Adam and his wife Maria had a child Johan Adam born May 7th (no year given). Then, they had several other children, including Johann Adam Grasser born 18 Jul 1724.*

*The tax collectors / U.S. census takers wrote down what "they heard" the person said was their name. With a*

German accent 'Grasser" would sound like Crosser, Crasser or even Krasser. The Grasser name for Johann Adam's children changed to Crosser in the late 1700s and early 1800s. You can see a number of historical records during this time period with the spelling Crofser and Crosser.

By 1820, all the historical records reference the Crosser name. The detailed support for the transition in the name from Grasser to Crosser follows.

1. Johann Adam Grasser and his wife Maria Magdalena took communion at the Trinity Lutheran Church, Lancaster, Pennsylvania on October 15, 1749. The event was recorded in church records by minister Johann Friedrich Handchuch as follows "69. Johan Adam Grasser ---newly came into the land. 70. Mar. Magdal Grasser ----stay with J. G. Barth.
2. Johann Adam Croser (Grasser) paid taxes in Leacock Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1758/1759. Name recorded as "Croser, Adam".
3. Johann Adam paid taxes in Berwick Township, York County, Pennsylvania from 1764 thru 1789. Name recorded as "Crafser, Adam".
4. Jacob (b 1748), Johann Adam's son, paid taxes to Berwick Township, York County, Pennsylvania from 1792 to 1797. Name recorded a "Crafser, Jacob".
5. Jacob (b 1748), Johann Adam's son, paid taxes to Berwick Township, York County, Pennsylvania from 1799 to 1805. Name recorded a "Grafser, Jacob".
6. The first U.S. census in 1790 listed the surname as "Crosser".
7. Johann Adam Grasser made a will in 1795. He listed all six children by age, oldest first, in his will. Each name listed showed Grasser as the last name. The oldest child was Jacob. He eventually inherited his father's farm.
8. The Columbiana County, Ohio marriage records show John Adam Crosser (b 1791, his father is Jacob b 1748 and his grandfather is Johan Adam Grasser b 1724) marrying Margaret Roach on July 25, 1817. Name referenced as "Crosser". This document was most likely one of the first to officially change the Grasser name to Crosser.
9. As late as 1819 the Grasser and Crosser name was interchanged. The Columbiana County, Ohio deed transfer records shows Adam Grasser (b 1750, brother of Jacob) and his wife Barbara selling land to Jacob Grasser. The spelling on the deed was " Adam Grafser to Jacob Grafser".

The evidence above supports the theory that at one time the Crosser surname was spelled Grasser with a country of origin of Germany."

The information above is critically important because it provides the connection of the German Grasser name to the Crosser name used today in the United States.

The original 1795 Will for Johann Adam Grasser is critically important as well because it provides solid evidence as to who the child of Johann Adam Grasser b 1724 are. Those children are Jacob b 1748, Adam b 1750, Leonhart "Leonard" b 1752, Maria Catherina b 1753, Anna Maria b 1758, and Johann Heinrich "John Henry" b 1764. Johann and Maria did have one additional child not listed in the will, that being Maria Margaretha Grasser b 1747. Maria died in 1749 during the families travels to the American Colonies.

The link to the original 1795 Will of Johann Adam Grasser is [\*1795 Johann Adam Grasser Senior Will\*](#). The following link is to a retyped version of the original will. This one is much easier to read! [1795 Johann Adam Grasser Will retyped](#).