

Gottlieb Christopher Grammer, Sr.

(16 May 1787 – 14 Jan 1857)

Grammer. On the afternoon of the 14th inst. after a long illness which he bore with patience and christian resignation, G.C. Grammer in the 70th year of his age. He was born at Ludwigsberg in the kingdom of Wirtemberg, Germany on the 16th May, 1787. He emigrated to America in July 1807 and settled in this city in 1809. His friends are invited to attend his funeral from his late residence at the corner of 4 1/2 and C streets on Saturday next to the 17th inst., at 11 o'clock a.m.

Douglas Zevely, *Old Houses on C Street and Those who Lived There*, (4-1-1901), Vol. 5, pp. 151-175

On the northeast corner of the 4 1/2 and C streets is where Mr. Gottlieb C. Grammer lived for 27 years until his death there in January 1857. One of the surviving children of the family, Rev. Julius E. Grammer, who has been a resident of Baltimore for many years was born there in 1831. The house was built very early in the last century by a Mr. Caldwell of Philadelphia, a seafaring man. It still stands on a high terrace as originally built, but the old-fashioned gable roof and attic were replaced with a mansard roof when the late F.A. Lutz purchased the property in 1861, and he also added one story at the same time. One peculiar feature of the interior of this house was the high mantles elaborately carved to represent the rigging and equipment of a seagoing ship, such as spars and anchors, a fancy, it is supposed, of its builder. These were removed by Mr. Lutz, however, when he became the owner of the property.

Gottlieb Christopher Grammer

Gottlieb Christopher Grammer, a man of "striking personality", was born May 16, 1787 in the town of Ludwigsberg, Kingdom of Wertemberg, Germany. He was the only son of John Andrew and Elizabeth Eckhardt Grammer.

On July 1, 1807, young Gottlieb, age twenty, emigrated to the United States (of the same age) to avoid serving against his own country in the armies of Napoleon. Upon his arrival at Philadelphia on December 2, he made his way to Annapolis, Maryland and the gracious home (Pleasant Plains) of his uncle, Frederick Grammer, the first Grammer in America. Eighteen months later, young Gottlieb moved on to Washington, D.C. to begin, in partnership with his cousin, Henry Meyer, his own very successful career.

The following is taken from a family letter dated May 29, 1914. A third person is being quoted:

"I had a slight business acquaintance with [Gottlieb Grammer] sixty-odd years ago. I thought him a fine old German gentleman all of the olden times. He was one of the most successful businessmen in the city. His instinct for the acquirement of what was not then considered filthy lucre was considered infallible. His specialty was improved Real Estate. When it was known that G.C. Grammer had bought property in such and such part of the city, the cry would go up 'Look out Old G.C. has got the inside track -- as usual things are going to boom out that way'. Some of the best and oldish men in the city told me that G.C. Grammer had always been a trustworthy and honest man, his word as good as his bond and his success would have been impossible without it. He had never been known to build a house, yet it was said that he had paraphrased the well-known proverb, 'Fools give feasts and wise people eat them.' into 'Fools (you know the rest).'"

I'm not sure that we do know the rest. "Fools build houses and wise people buy them"?? At any rate, Gottlieb didn't see the need to trouble himself building houses in order to make money in real

estate. Banking was a different matter. Banking fit in with his modus operandi and he eventually became president of The First National Bank. A second source indicates he was also an officer in "The Patriotic Bank." One thing is certain! Gottlieb Christopher Grammer was a man of substance -- and character.

A Lutheran upon his arrival in this country in 1807, young Gottlieb "soon connected himself to the communion of the Protestant Episcopal Church." He became a vestryman at St. John's and, later, a member of the first vestry of Trinity, a new parish formed from portions of St. John's and Christ Church. Gottlieb Grammer supported the new church liberally, both with his time and with his money. He was described by his contemporaries as being a man of few words on religious subjects but "beneath the strong features of the German -- a warm and generous soul". And he gave a son to the Christian ministry.

On April 8, 1813 young Gottlieb married. He was a month shy of his twenty-sixth birthday. So, at the age of twenty-five, and just four years after he left Pleasant Plains, Gottlieb was sufficiently established to ask for a young girl's hand in marriage. And she was young! Eliza Doyne of Washington, D.C. was eighteen years old. Together they had three children, Mary Rosina, Elizabeth, and Christopher. (The oldest, Rosina, grew up to marry William Stettinius of that prominent family.) But on May 16, 1823 -- Gottlieb's birthday -- tragedy struck. Eliza, now age twenty-eight, died from "water on the brain." The busy thirty-six year old widower was left with three small children to care for, a condition he endured until on March 25, 1825 he married for the second time. The new Mrs. Grammer, just twenty years old, was Mathilda Ann Wilms, ward-daughter of his uncle, Frederick Grammer. And while Gottlieb Grammer's first marriage had lasted only ten years, this second marriage was to span almost thirty years, and produce seven more children. The children were Annie Elisa, Matilda L., Julius E., G.C. Frederick, M. William Henry, Louis Montgomery, and Alice. (Julius became an Episcopal minister and married Elizabeth Sparrow, daughter of the brilliant Dr. William Sparrow, Dean of the Virginia Theological Seminary.)

The years passed and then on July 26, 1855 Matilda Ann Wilms Grammer died. She was forty-nine years old. And Gottlieb Grammer had outlived two wives! He was now sixty-eight years of age, and in failing health. "The valley of the shadow of death was before him -- and he calmly prepared himself for the great event". Before he died, he stated that he "was ready at any moment it should please the Lord to call him" and soon thereafter "surrounded by his children and grandchildren, he submissively sank to rest and resigned his soul to the Saviour Christ, in the confidence of a 'certain faith', at peace with God and with all mankind."

Thus it happened that on January 14, 1857 Gottlieb Christopher Grammer, born in Ludwigsberg, Kingdom of Wertemberg, Germany, died in Washington, D.C., United States of America. He was within four months of the Biblical three-score years and ten.

Carl Grammer Croyder
College Park, Maryland
January 25, 1988

N.B. Prepared from family memorabilia proved by Katharine Douglas Woodford of Baltimore. Mrs. Woodford and I are great-great grandchildren of Gottlieb Grammer. However, her great-great grandmother was Eliza Doyne Grammer and my great-great grandmother was Mathilda Ann Wilms Grammer. -CGC