Eberhardt, Johann Ludwig [1]

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by Maury York, 1986

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Johann Ludwig Eberhardt, clockmaker, the son of Johann Gottfried Eberhardt, was born in Stadtilm, Thuringia (southeast Germany). Raised in a devout Lutheran [2] family, he was educated in a Lutheran school and confirmed by and admitted to the Lutheran church. His career as a clockmaker began at the age of fourteen when he was taught in his father's shop. In 1783 he moved to the Moravian [3] town of Gnadau, working as the community clockmaker and locksmith. After living in several other places, including Zeist, he moved to Gnadenfeld in Silesia, where he served as master of the Single Brothers' clockmaking shop.

In November 1799 Eberhardt migrated to Salem [4], N.C., at the request of the Moravians [3] there. His excessive pride, impatience with the public, and especially his frequent drunkenness caused conflicts, however, and the authorities excluded him from the Communion on several occasions. Nevertheless, he was a talented and industrious craftsman, undertaking some impressive projects while in Salem. In 1801, he added a minute hand to Salem's town clock and moved it to the gable of Home Church. Five years later he altered the clock so that it would strike the first, second, and third quarter hours. In 1805, he made a musical clock for a Quaker [5] in Randolph County [6]. The organ placed in its base could play one of several tunes on the hour, and it could be adjusted to repeat the songs from three to six times so that entire hymns could be sung. Eberhardt crafted many movements for tall case clocks, over thirty of which survive. He also repaired watches and clocks; in 1806 he reconditioned the Hillsborough town clock at the request of Duncan Cameron [7], a lawyer there. His craftsmanship was not limited to the field of horology, for he made some jewelry, silverware, and other metal objects, including five chandeliers for Home Church. He performed his work first at the Single Brothers House, then at the Christoph Vogler Shop, and finally at his house on Salt Street where he moved in 1814.

Throughout his life Eberhardt was plagued with financial difficulties. In 1835, the Congregation Diacony considered securing his house and unsold clocks to help defray his debts, but no action was taken. The next year, his salaries for caring for the town clock and ringing the noon bell were raised in an effort to help him financially. Lewis Ferdinand Eberhardt assisted his father in March 1837 by buying his house and assuming his debts, though he allowed Eberhardt to live in the house until his death.

Eberhardt married Julianna Michel on 2 June 1800. They had four children: Carolina, Lewis Ferdinand, Christian Thomas, and Carl Theodore. Eberhardt died in Salem and was buried in the Salem Moravian Graveyard.

References:

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