

## EVOLUTION OF A NAME

There are many variations in the spelling of the name “**Keyser**” in the United States. Even in the records from Germany, the name can be found written in different ways. In the translation of the Möckmühl church records of the 1726 baptism of “**Carl Sebastian**”, the father’s name is transcribed as “**Andreas Keyser**” in one place, and “**Andreas Kayser**” in another. In earlier documents, the name was written “**Kaißer**” and “**Kheyser**”, and in the German language book, “*Möckmühl - Bild einer Stadt*” by Dr. Erich Strohhäcker, the name is spelled “**Kaiser**”.

For our purpose, we will use the spelling “**Carl Kayser**” during the time Carl was a citizen of Möckmühl, and the spelling, “**Carl Kayser**”, when referring to the German immigrant, because that is how he signed his name upon arrival to Philadelphia in 1749.

After his arrival, it appears the umlaut\* was dropped, and we see his name spelled “**Carl Sebastian Kayser**” in the 1750-1751 church records in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Sometime between his last sighting in Pennsylvania and his appearance in Frederick County, Virginia, the “Carl” changed to the English equivalent “Charles”. His last name, “**Kayser**”, varies according to how it was rendered in certain documents; in transcriptions of the military proceeding of 1755, it appears as “**Charles Kyzer**” or “**Charles Kyzar**”; in the deed of 1765, it appears as “**Charles Kyser**”. After the time Carl purchased land across from the Hawksbill Creek, his name is most often found recorded as “**Charles Kayser**”, and so that is the way we will generally refer to him during the time he lived in Virginia.

*\* In the German language, umlauts are markers, usually two dots, placed over certain vowels to indicate a change in their sound. During Carl’s time, they could also be used with other letters, and we see that Carl has placed an umlaut, using strokes instead of dots, over the “y” when he signed his last name “**Kayser**”.*

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Carl Kayser". The letters are written in a cursive style, with the 'y' in 'Kayser' having a long, sweeping tail that extends downwards and to the right.

*In writing umlauts, German school children before the 1970s were officially taught to use two upward strokes, because apparently they could not create proper dots on a slate that was used to teach writing. Examples of that can still be seen in the handwriting of some older Germans today. [<https://german.stackexchange.com/questions/32628/can-an-umlaut-be-written-as-a-line-in-handwriting>].*

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