

THE

HOMESTEAD

December 2005

A Publication of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation Committee

Starting Early for the 4th Annual Auction **MAY 20, 2006**

The Auction is the main support for the preservation of the old house, a place of heritage for many

We Need Collectors For The Auction

For three years Mose Smucker has headed up an annual auction to raise funds for preserving the Nicholas Stoltzfus House. With growing interest in the auction the collection committee needs help.

We are not expecting anyone to make a huge sacrifice, because we know there are great needs in many areas. But, a little here and a little there from so many Stoltzfus descendants will add up.

Whether in Berks or Lancaster County, or in Brush Valley, or beyond, help is collect for the auction. If you collect items, and need them to be picked up, call one of the numbers below. If we get started early, items in distant places can be brought together. Even now we can begin to store items.



Photo courtesy of the NSHPC, 2005

A Scene from the 2005 Auction

From left to right: The Welcome House; The historic Nicholas Stoltzfus House; The Auction Tent

It's a house, what can this mean?

A house of memories:

The Schlegels, the Spies, in later years Madiera.

Who lived there first? We do not know

But Nicholas must have been early on -

After Morris and Youngman were gone.

The Creek still flows, the house still stands

A door that was opened by many hands.



Photo courtesy of J. Hodgkins, 2003

Donate, Lend a helping hand, Attend, Bid!

Help Make the next auction at the Stoltzfus House a great success:

Contact any of these:

Chris and Mary Stoltzfus	610-373-6206
Paul Kurtz	717-367-3906
Amos Zook.....	717-656-8360
Roy Smoker	717-656-2211
Mose Smucker	717-445-5956

A Place to Visit - Where Heritage Lives



Photo courtesy of the NSHPC, 2005

Paul Kurtz and his family enjoy an afternoon at the Nicholas Stoltzfus House.

Where Paths Cross

The following is a letter that depicts the way life paths cross. Nicholas Stoltzfus has numerous Amish descendants who left the Wyomissing area years ago. Many have not forgotten Nicholas, in fact, several place a tombstone in a cemetery in Bern Township, assuming that is where he would have been buried. Donna Paff stepped into this path of history by meeting Stoltzfus' descendants who came to care for the cemetery. Her letter is printed with her permission and with some editing.

But, what of her disappointment?

The Letter

Can you please direct me to the person who could answer a lifelong question my family and I have regarding Nicholas Stoltzfus?

From 1949 to 1982, my family and I lived on a property along the Schuylkill River which included a cemetery. We lived in what was originally Murphy Hotel. Our property consisted of 18 acres of rolling beauty and there was a small Amish cemetery located along our lane. Every year the descendants of those buried in this cemetery came to our house for a picnic while they attended to the needs of their cemetery. We enjoyed their visit very much.

My sisters and I were always intrigued by the German script on some of the stones, the farm rocks used for markers on others and **the outstanding tombstone with the name of Nicholas Stoltzfus. We knew this must have been an important man because his marker was in the center and stood larger than all the others.** We never could ask the Amish families these questions for we didn't speak German, plus they were very private during their picnic when they used our yard.

(I remember one time I offered a candy bar to one young man, his eyes lit up like Christmas Morn!)

A few years ago my sister and I attended the opening of the preservation of the Stoltzfus house along the Tulpehocken. We inquired if they knew about the cemetery-they heard about it but couldn't say for sure why a stone bearing his name would be on property they thought he never set foot on. We were disappointed with the answer and were told more research would be done to look into it.

As I recently read in your newsletter about the national tour, I didn't see that Peacock property or cemetery listed. It brought back the memory of this question. I feel somewhat connected because I spent many happy contented hours sitting on the concrete walls under the black cherry tree of that cemetery. It always felt calming - not scary as most cemeteries make a child feel. Before my sisters, my mother, or I die, I would like to be able to pass on the information to our next generation - especially in light of the fact that Nicholas Stoltzfus Preservation in the Berks County area seems newly important.

It is also somewhat part of our heritage as I was only nine months old when we moved to that property and thirty-two years old when my mom had to sell due to my dad passing on at age 60 with a brain tumor. It's so unfortunate that historical and conservancy societies weren't in a position to buy and preserve that richly historical property* back then-it saddens me every time I think of that loss to the community-but that was then and this is now.

My own children, nieces and nephews were very young but they, too, remember that cemetery, I would greatly appreciate knowing what connection that cemetery or that property played in the immigration of the Amish to Berks County, and if Nicholas Stoltzfus was buried there.

Thank you and bless you all.
Sincerely,
Donna Paff

But how do we respect the impressions as Donna Paff has revealed, and continue to gather facts that may give a different slant?

The answer given to Donna is explained in "Nicholas Stoltzfus Misplaced," *Mennonite Family History*. Vol. XXII, No. 3, p. 130, 131; Masthof Press, Morgantown, Pa.

Several Amish historians have thought it more likely that Nicholas Stoltzfus was buried in the Gerber-Fix Cemetery, rather than the King Cemetery.

This newsletter is written and compiled by Paul Kurtz. Questions and concerns should be addressed to him at psku@aol.com or 717-367-3906. Lay-out by Pam Shenk, production by Kathy Mast.



Photo courtesy of the NSHPC, 2005

The Gerber-Fix Cemetery

This cemetery is located between the 422 bypass and Route 10, south of Lancaster Ave. This cemetery was largely taken out by the highway construction. Several factors point to the possibility this would have been the Nicholas Stoltzfus burial.



Photo courtesy of the NSHPC, 2005

Mary and Chris Stoltzfus at the King Cemetery

Mary and Chris Stoltzfus, residents of the Welcome House, stand by Nicholas Stoltzfus' memorial stone, placed in the King Cemetery in 1923, by descendants assuming it to be his burial place.

* Chris interviewed Donna and her mother, Mrs. Sitlinger, who said the Peacock Locks on their property were in very good shape in 1982 as told to George Meiser. They also gave an account of trees cut down by the cemetery on a workday. This surprised Mr. Sitlinger, who went to Morgantown to talk with a Mr. Stoltzfus. He was then given an amount to settle. Mr. Sitlinger, before he died, wanted his wife to promise she would not sell. She said she would try, but with the children gone, no phone, and a long lane, she had to take a small price because the railroad no longer would keep up the bridge. Today there are peacocks on the farm, which is primarily a dog kennel.

Like the patriarch, Abraham, these ancestors were looking for a city whose builder and maker is God. Here they considered themselves pilgrims and strangers. Their example has been a continuing influence upon each generation.

Where We Are Going

The strong impetus to preserve the Stoltzfus House came as result of a 1997 heritage tour. At that time the House was in near ruins. From that time the Pequea Bruderschaft Library lead the effort to secure and restore the House. Today it is a place to visit and appreciate the heritage the Stoltzfus immigrants brought. The House holds a promise for the future as interest increases.

In the future we plan to have a facility with rest rooms, a kitchen, and a room for meetings, as well as suitable storage rooms. Also, we plan to have a pavilion to accommodate family summer events. Nearby are hiking and riding trails, a Union Canal museum, and the Gruber Wagon Works. This will be ideal for outings including appreciation of our heritage, plus, a good time.

Even now Chris and Mary Stoltzfus are making such visits interesting. Call them at 610-373-6206.

Report of Meeting

Planning the future of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House

Friday, August 19, 2005, Aaron Petersheim and Paul Kurtz met with Michael Leader, President and C. E. O. of Country Meadows Retirement Community and owner of the Stoltzfus property. The meeting was to discuss the plot of land that includes the Stoltzfus House.

Mr. Leader clearly supports what has, and is, occurring at the Stoltzfus House. He approves the proposed carriage house and of the scheduled auction. He is also pleased Chris and Mary Stoltzfus are settled into the Welcome House. He envisions another housing unit attached to the unit nearest the Nicholas Stoltzfus House. He needs to provide sufficient parking and a water basin.

Ludgate Engineering has begun preliminary planning on the personal care expansion and the future needs of Nicholas Stoltzfus House. This includes locating the carriage house, providing a pavilion, and creating a natural noise baffle. Mr. Leader addressed the question of ownership of a future carriage house. He noted the current agreement with the Committee was drawn up before it was clear how things would develop. Now that the project has moved forward, he noted the need for a long term lease agreement that would satisfy any potential donor.

Mr. Leader's positive expressions with progress on the Nicholas Stoltzfus House was much appreciated, as was his accommodating of its future needs. We feel secure in past efforts, and in the viability of soliciting additional interest in the preservation of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House.

Many, Many, Thanks to all who made the 2005 auction a go!

Items already collected for the May 20, 2006 Auction:



- Mary's pear butter and crab apple jam from the tree hiding Chris and his Latino friend
- A handbag by Lizzie Beiler
- A quilt in the making
- Need one of these signs?

Thanks to Scott Stoltzfus who has featured the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation project on the web. <<http://nicholasstoltzfus.com>>

DavCo's 2006 Lancaster County Business Directory features the Nicholas Stoltzfus House, on page 248.

Numerous descendants of Nicholas bear the name Schmucker, Smucker, or Smoker. Contact Roy Smoker (717-656-2211) for information on their reunion July 19, 20 and 21, 2006. The meeting place is the Stumptown Mennonite Church. bus tours are planned from there.

**The Nicholas Stoltzfus House
 Preservation Committee
 1700 Tulpeocken Road
 Wyomissing, PA 19610**

Non-Profit
 Organization
 U.S. Postage
PAID
 Elverson, PA
 Permit No. 99