

A Publication of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation Committee

Amos J. at the Stoltzfus House?

Crystal is a great-great-granddaughter of Amos J Stoltzfus and Rebecca King. Their eldest son Fred and his wife Barbara Petersheim were the parents of our Chris and of Lydia (m. Carl Good, Crystal's grandmother). Crystal's parents are Don and Linda Joy.

Married in July, 2006, Matt and Crystal Brunk made their home in the house trailer vacated by Chris and Mary Stoltzfus when they moved to Goshen, Indiana. Although we miss the hospitality of Mary, we find Crystal of the same spirit. She studies nursing at the Reading Hospital, yet she and Matt, a pastoral student, make us feel welcome. To inquire, leave a message at the NSH phone, 610-373-6206.

Chris compiled writings of Amos J. in a book, *Golden Memories*. It is clear from these writings that he would have had a distinct interest in the Stoltzfus story of the early days. Last summer the Amos J and Rebecca family gathered at the Nicholas Stoltzfus House.

There probably are nearly 1000 descendants of Amos J and Rebecca living today. Could it be there are about 1200 family groups like this one who may wish to hold a reunion at the house? We could really get busy!!!



Here Crystal (in orange blouse) with Matt and cousins.



Lydia is pointing the way to a cousin.

Jack and the Stoltzfus House



If you are one of the million living descendants of Nicholas Stoltzfus you should meet Jack Parmer. Jack has photos of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House, beginning with one taken in 1997 when it stood with a permit – to be demolished – and now he has created a rendering with the house restored awaiting a “barniage” to be built on the site of an earlier barn.

This year on May 12, the fifth benefit auction to support the preservation efforts, Jack again will display his collection of photos of and in the House. His documentation provides fuel for the imagination. What story could the House tell us? Henry Janssen, as told by Oscar Sweitzer, believed this house to be the first built along the Tulpehocken Creek. It likely was built before 1750, so its stories span more than 250 years.

These include the years from 1771 to 1804, years in which the owners included Nicholas Stoltzfus, his son Christian, his son-in-law John Schmucker, and lastly Schmucker's son-in-law Solomon King (m. Veronica). King moved to Lancaster County in 1804, soon to die. John Schmucker's sons, Peter and Joseph, were the only descendants that stayed in Cumru Township. They owned the Stone House now in the Wyomissing Park.



Jack's photos give evidence of an original one-story dwelling with a half basement. Likely the wall in the cen-

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Finding Nicholas' Descendants

Jim Smoker and I waited for Mose, Ben, and his son David on the road side of the Red Bridge, Saturday, March 31. We had just had a tour of the Gruber and Canal museums. Here come Nolt and Horst couples towards the bridge. Not knowing them yet, **I asked Mr. Horst if he were a Stoltzfus.** Well, no. When they introduced themselves I could understand why. They had Mennonite names, and they represented a different immigration, and a different community of marriages over the years.

Now what is the chance the person you meet would be a Stoltzfus, or a descendant of Nicholas? Well, by considering the 18 grandchildren of Nicholas who had sizable families, and multiplying by five, the result should be a conservative estimate. The ninth generation is now nearing completion, so here we go:

Nicholas...1 union
 Christian(Catherine, Elizabeth) and Barbara (John Schmucker)...3 unions
 18 grandchildren

Third Generation: x 5 = 90
 Fourth.....= 450
 Fifth.....= 2250
 Sixth.....= 11,250
 Seventh.....= 56,250
 Eighth.....= 281,250
 Ninth.....= 1,406,250

So if we consider the possibility of well over one million now living descendants of Nicholas in the ninth, we can add for those living in the eighth and seventh, as well as the ones born already in the tenth. There **could well be as many as one and a half million living.**

Compared with the 301,516,364 United States population as of April 2, 2007, this may seem small. But in some areas, the chances of meeting a Stoltzfus descendant is much higher. Consider when I was being prepared for physical therapy. I learned the assistant's Aunt Mabel was the one who collected donations for the Stoltzfus House, and upon her death, willed the family Bible to the Stoltzfus House. All this with a married name, Zendt.

Not that all of the million will show up at the auction, or come for a family reunion. Some most certainly will, and others might. Then there are some, sadly, who couldn't care less!

I thought Mr. Horst looked a bit like a Stoltzfus. I was wrong, but even if I am right once out of ten tries, it is worthwhile!

Jack and the Stoltzfus House

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ter was the foundation for a center fireplace. But numerous observations give certainty to the conclusion that a second story was added later- we do not know when. The current fireplace and the stones on the west wall tell us this.

Just as Jack has been with us as we preserved the House he now is with us as we look ahead. His rendering of the "barniarge" helps us plan for the day when more family gatherings and reunions can meet here. They can come to the House to connect with their heritage then cross the Tulpehocken Creek for more. Read on!

So, who is this Jack Parmer that ties our history with our future by his photography? He graduated from Elizabethtown College in chemistry, developed his own paint manufacturing business in Akron, Pa., and was the first small business to purchase an IBM computer in their early days. This gave him entry to IBM's training, and

since then he has utilized many computer advancements – including the imaging skills that he used to place the "barniarge" in a photo behind the House!

Being widely active, Jack is currently applying his skill at and for the Cocalico Historical Society in Ephrata, Pa. He sings with the Gap Male Chorus. But bookplate frackur was his interest that led to the Stoltzfus House. First with Abner Beiler, deceased Amish historian, now with Aaron Peterheim, Jack has been assembling photos of this art. It was with Abner Beiler that Jack stopped in to see the House in 1997, and he has fallen in love with this house and its story. Without a drop of Stoltzfus blood!

Now if he could devote so selflessly all this to the story, why would the one-million plus descendants living today ignore the story, and why would they not call for a visit, send a check (payable to NSHPC, mail to 1700 Tulpehocken Rd., Wyomissing, PA, 19610), or give and buy items for the 5th Benefit Auction, May 12, at the House?



Carriage house rendering



Jack Parmer

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. Layout and production by Masthof Press.

Crossing the Creek?

On Saturday, March 31, after enjoying Rebecca Stoltzfus' chicken corn soup and her lemonade, about twelve persons crossed Wertz's "Red" Bridge to tour the Gruber Wagon Works and the Canal Museum. We needed to know if such a crossing fits in with a visit to the Stoltzfus House.

Will this possibility enhance a day at the House for families and groups, with the morning seeing the House, then a picnic lunch, after which the tours? So we tried it out.

There are three bridges nearby to cross the Tulpehocken Creek and enter the Berks Parks area. The foot bridge is nearest the House and leads to the trails along the Creek. At Grings Mill there is a bridge. The Red Bridge is about two miles up the Tulpehocken Road and opposite are the museums. We parked along the Road and walked across the bridge which is closed to traffic.

Why did I melt a bit when I saw the Gruber Hay Wagon? I tried to recall the features ours had on the farm as a boy. Our guide, Russell Riegel, detailed how the Gruber family was totally involved in the Works, making their own tools, designing the wagons, and marketing items other than wagons! Their problem



solving skills outdo any we might claim today.

Unfortunately the Canal Museum had a different flavor. Glenn Wenrich, our guide, faults the Union Canal Company for their many mistakes. They never saw black ink! The canal crossed the Creek at the foot bridge, and came between the Tulpehocken Road and the Creek, just East of the House. Although the canal plan may have begun while the Stoltzfus clan lived there, it was not built until later.

Eleven year-old David Riehl liked the Wagon Works. I asked him if he could make a wagon, do they have a blacksmith shop? Yes, so he seemed to think he could!

John Esh and his boys fished in the Creek, the first day of trout fishing. With very little to pull in.

Yes, everyone I asked said they agreed we are on the right track to tie the House with the Parks. The proposed "barniarge" will be important to accommodate groups who would see the House and cross the Creek. However, our key purpose is keeping the true story of how our ancestor Nicholas made this his home, and gave us our "foundation".

(Thanks to Cathy Wegener for arranging this tour).

Mission Statement for The Nicholas Stoltzfus House Restoration

Our mission is to preserve the history of the early Anabaptists through one of the remaining structures in the original settlement of Berks Co., PA, namely "The Stoltzfus House" which was occupied by Nicholas Stoltzfus. His roots reach into 98% of the descendants of Lancaster County Amish.

The Stoltzfus House and other artifacts of the Stoltzfus family are being restored and preserved as an example of the humble attitude of obedience, forgiveness and in their willingness to share and help others in need.

All to the glory and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Keeping the Heritage Story True

The Amish historian, Levi Stoltzfus, wrote a summary of the life of Nicholas Stoltzfus in which he included translations of the documents detailing the reason for immigration, namely, the fact he had taken on the Anabaptist way. His son, Christian, became a leading bishop in the Amish districts in Pennsylvania. Christian's name is on the list of twenty-two that gathered in 1809 to clarify points of agreement. Taking the vow in adult baptism, a serious step, meant that a person would yield to the oversight of the church. Keeping one's word and being honest, forgiving others as Christ has forgiven, has been a hallmark of the Amish districts.

An old Bible, a Martyrs' Book, an Ausbund, and a prayer book – these are in the House are the devotional books which Nicholas adopted when he chose an Amish girl (likely named Anna) to be his wife. This marriage caused them to migrate to Pennsylvania since he gave up rights in being married outside the Lutheran faith

We aim to have this heritage of faith well and accurately portrayed. In looking after the house, we recognize the key role of Nicholas in our history, and it is this foundation that makes the preservation worthwhile.

Thus we invite any stories that help to establish the true history of these early families. Mail to NSHPC, 1700 Tulpehocken Rd, Wyomissing, PA 19610

The Auction – May 12, 2007

Bring items and bid to make it real good!

It almost slipped by. This house, only ten years ago, seemed lost in luscious overgrowth, threatened by a demolition permit. Now it houses spiritual mainstays of the 18th century Amish (which included the Stoltzfus Family) such as an old Bible, a Martyrs' Book, and hopefully someday an Ausbund and a prayerbook. Here visitors can observe the "first house built along the Tulpehocken" and learn of the 70 Amish families that had settled in Berks.

Even today families and tour groups have been stopping in, spreading out their lunch on the lawn. Here they see the house preserved by efforts of very many people. **Call 610-373-6206 for reservations.**



Call to make a donation or request directions:

717-367-3906

610-373-6206

717-445-5956

717-656-2211

E-mail: psku@aol.com

<http://nicholasstoltzfus.com>

We didn't allow the house to slip us by. Now we do not want to let a larger opportunity slip by. Imagine bringing your family (or a school) to the house for visit, then cross over the footbridge to the Berks Her-



itage center with its Gruber Wagon Works and Canal Museums, or explore the trails along the Tulpehocken Creek. Or paddle a canoe on the Creek.

Saturday, May 12, 2007, is the 5th auction on site to preserve and continue to improve this opportunity. In addition, we have plans to build a "barn" to accommodate future activity. It will contain rest rooms, a meeting area, archival space, and a small apartment for keeping up the area.



Call for your cap today!

or 717-367-3906

open. Call 610-373-6206

arrange for the House to be

or just a visit, and we will

time at the house for a picnic

Your family group can reserve a

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

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