

## Annual Benefit Auction

### Saturday, May 3, 2025

**BRING SOMETHING - BUY SOMETHING**

Auction starts at 9 am - Quilts 11 am - Dishes 11:30 am - Books 12 pm

#### **Eat & Enjoy!**

BBQ Chicken & Homemade Ice Cream  
Soft Pretzels, Pies & More!

#### **Shop Cool Finds!**

Old & New Books  
Quilts & Dishes  
Furniture & Crafts

#### **See History!**

Old Bibles & Magazines  
1700s Historic House Tours  
Museum Displays  
1800s Family Records Exhibit  
Old Cannon Demonstration

#### **Fun for Everyone!**

Meet Authors & Historians  
Kids' Bounce House & Games  
Meet Friends, Family & Neighbors!



***"Sharing our Amish History & Heritage in Berks County and Beyond"***

Auction Bus Schedule - May 3rd, 2025 - Bus Number 1			
Time	Location	Address	Comments
6:20 AM	Leola	98 Hellers Church Rd, Leola, PA 17540	Formerly Amos Zook
6:25 AM	Intersection - Creek Hill & Newport Rd	2754 Creek Hill Rd, Leola 17540	Intersection at Newport & Creek Rd
6:35 AM	Mascot Mill	2900 Stumptown Rd, Ronks, PA 17572	Meet in parking lot
6:40 AM	Pond Road	107A Pond Rd, Ronks PA 17572	Amos Zook's place
6:45 AM	Gordonville Fire Company	3204 Vigilant St, Gordonville, PA 17529	Meet in parking lot
6:50 AM	Fairview Grocery Store	96 Paradise Lane, Ronks PA 17572	Meet in parking lot
6:55 AM	Intersection - Ronks & Rt 30	167 N, Ronks Rd, Ronks, PA 17572	Ronks & Rt 30
7:00 AM	Fisher Harness Shop	267 N. Star, Ronks, PA 17572	meet in parking lot
7:10 AM	Fisher Houseware & Fabrics	1098 Georgetown Rd, Paradise PA 17562	meet in parking lot
7:20 AM	George Town Hydraulics	334 Christiana Pike, Christiana, PA 17509	meet in parking lot
7:25 AM	Lapp Lumber Paneling Sales	1640 Mine Rd, Paradise, PA 17562	meet in parking lot
7:30 AM	Gapview Mennonite Church	5324 Mine Rd, Kinzer, PA 17535	Meet in parking lot
7:40 AM	Salisbury Park/Gap	750 White Horse Rd, Gap PA 17527	Meet in parking lot
7:50 AM	SLC Rental - Woodworking shop - Buyerstown	5019 Newport Rd, Kinzers, PA 17535	Meet in parking lot
7:55 AM	Redwell Repair	15 S New Holland Rd Gordonville, PA 17529	Meet in parking lot
8:05 AM	Sheetz New Holland	698 W Main St, New Holland, PA 17557	Meet in parking lot
8;15/20	222 & 568 Adamstown Exit		Standing by the off ramp exit
8:45 AM	Arrive at NSH	1700 Tulpehocken Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610	
2:30/ 3:00	Depart NSH	To New Holland - and Leola	

Bus Number 2			
Time	Location	Address	Comments
6:58 AM	Philips Cheese House	433 Centerville Rd, Gordonville	Meeting along road
7:00 AM	Centerville Bulk Food	Centerville & Scenic	Meet in the parking lot
7:10 AM	Intercourse Candle Barn	3551 Old Philadelphia Pike, Intercourse PA 17534	Meet in the parking lot
7:22 AM	Mel Esh place	3666 E. Pequea Lane, Gordonville, PA 17529	Meet in the parking lot
7:25 AM	Spring Garden Mennonite Church	5157 Old Philadelphia Pike, Kinzer PA 17535	Meet in the parking lot
7:30 AM	White Horse Luncheonette	5562 Old Philadelphia Pike, Gap, PA 17527	Meet in the parking lot
7:35 AM	Old Road Mennonite Church	5795 Old Philadelphia Pike, Gap, PA 17527	Meet in the parking lot
7:40 AM	Hilltop Bulk Food Store Compass	1403 W Kings Hwy, Gap, PA 17527	Meet in the parking lot
7:50 AM	Brandywine Shoe Store	1620 Cambridge Rd, Honey Brook, PA 19344	Meet in the parking lot
7:52 AM	Bus Parking Lot (former Kerns Hardware)	450 Pequea Ave, Honey Brook, PA 19344	Meet in the parking lot
7:55 AM	Honey Brook Hardware	5004 Horseshoe Pike Honey Brook, PA 19344	Meet in the parking lot
7:58 AM	Jake Riehl's place	812 Churchtown Rd, Narvon, PA 17555	Meet in the parking lot
8:05 AM	Pool Forge	1940 Main St, Narvon, PA 17555	Meeting along road
8:10 AM	Gap Arborist Supply	2014 Main St, Narvon, PA 17555	Meet in the parking lot
8:15 AM	BB Grocery Outlet	150 Morview Blvd, Morgantown, PA 19543	Meet in the parking lot
8:45 AM	Arrival at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead	1700 Tulpehocken Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610	
2:30/ 3:00	Depart Stoltzfus Homestead	To Intercourse and White Horse	
<b>No need to make a reservation, be at the location and watch for the bus. For more info call 484-878-2916</b> suggested \$25.00 donation for transportation cost - Thank you!!			



## Paul Kurtz: A Life of Purpose

-- By Nic Stoltzfus

Paul Stoltzfus Kurtz passed away this March at the age of 94. As a longtime supporter of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, he played a key role in saving the Homestead from destruction. His clear vision and steady work are a legacy for our present-day successes.

After a long career in psychology in the Midwest, Paul and his wife Lydia retired to Lancaster County. Paul was never one to sit still and twiddle his thumbs idly, and he soon found a new project to occupy his time and energy. In his youth, his father, Christian Kurtz, joined Grant Stoltzfus and C.Z. Mast for the first Berks County Amish history tour in 1959. In the 1990s, Paul picked up the torch alongside Lemar Mast, co-founder of Masthof Press, and began leading these tours. He often joked that he was "bitten by the history bug," a spark ignited by reading his father's red notebook of notes. That passion connected him with the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead.

On a tour in 1997, the group entered the Homestead and saw a run-down house on the brink of decay. Paul quickly gathered others who cared for our past. With help from the Pequea Bruderschaft Amish Library and like-minded community members, he formed the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Preservation Committee (NSHPC). That committee worked to save the Homestead and later negotiated with the Leader family, who donated the property in 2017.

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On a person level, Paul was the reason I moved to Pennsylvania. I first met Paul in 2008, the summer after I graduated from high school. Our family was visiting the northeast from Florida, and my father Elam had never visited the Homestead and wanted to see it. At the time it was a detour, something quickly forgotten, and I hadn't given the Homestead much thought until 2016, when Dad and I were finishing up the Great Florida Cattle Drive documentary and book.

In the years following our 2008 visit, Dad stayed in touch with Paul. When he found out we were doing a documentary and book on the history of Florida's ranchers, Paul saw an opportunity. He wrote to my dad, "Elam, now is the time to tell the story of your family's history."

Paul was instrumental in shepherding us into the committee, introducing us to other volunteers, and encouraging them to take a chance with us to write a coffee table book on the Stoltzfus Homestead and family. In the summer of 2017, a group of us—Drs. Rose Beiler, Zach Stoltzfus, and Lucy Stoltzfus; my dad Elam; and I—traveled to Germany to do historical research on the Stoltzfus family. In the meantime back in PA, Paul was working behind the scenes to push to get the downstairs caretakers' apartment finished. When I moved to Pennsylvania from Florida in September, it was still a few months away from being done, but I was able to move in by the end of the year, the day after Christmas.

In the two years that I lived at the homestead as caretaker, Paul and Lydia invited me down to their retirement home in Ephrata many times. He'd always have a funny joke to share, and a twinkle in his eye. We'd play Skip-Bo together after pizza, or Rummikub after a homemade Sunday dinner.

In the summer of 2020, my parents retired and moved to Pennsylvania to become the new caretakers of the Homestead. I bought a house a few miles away, got married to a local, and now I call Reading home.

Paul's legacy is not just in the old stones or the written records. It lives on in the hearts of those who now see history as a guide for what is to come. I hope that we can honor his memory by preserving our history and continue to pass it on to future generations.





Jack Parmer collected books and family records at auctions across Lancaster County for the past 30 years. A portion of his rare collection of German books with Fraktur art work of Lancaster County Amish families names will be sold at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Benefit Auction. These books are from the 1800s and early 1900s. See the list below of items that will be featured in the book catalog, Lots 126 to 148. Please share this information with the families of the names listed below. Wouldn't this be great if these books would be returned to the families that had owned these books?

Lots 149 and 150 have been donated to be designated for the Renno Pavilion fund.



126. 1938 Heilige Schrift Bibel, Martin Luther, with Fraktur Phares S. Fisher & Katie E. King, 1922 - Geburten, Eldern & Kinder records. In den Heiligen Ebestand record.

Family record 1943 by artist John F. Glick, bible is fair condition.



127. 1868 Ausbund Johann Bär's Söhnen, Fraktur by Barbara Ebersol - "Dieses Buch Gehöret mich - Maria Stoltzfus, Gesebribenh den 14ten November Im Jahr 1879." Book is fragile.



128. 1880 Ausbund Elkhart Ind., Fraktur by Barbara Ebersol - "Dieses Buch Gehöret Mir Anna Stoltzfus 1905," book is in fragile condition, front cover is loose.



129. 1908 Ausbund Johann Bär's Söhnen, Fraktur by Daniel Esh - "Dieses Buch Gehöret mir Barbara L. Smucker, 1911," Also owned by Katie E. King, book is in fair condition

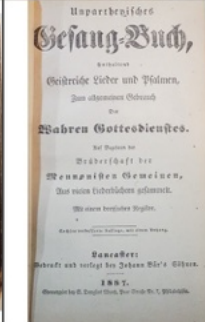


130. 1908 Ausbund Johann Bär's Söhnen, Fraktur by T.J. Stevens - "Dieses Buch Gehöret Mir Stephen U. Stoltzfus from Salome B. Beiler 1919," book is in fair condition.

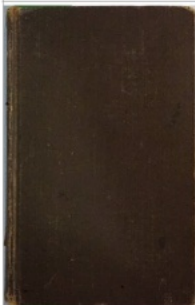




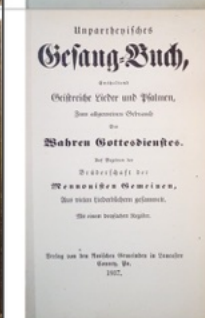
131. 1880 Ausbund Johann Bär's Söhnen, 1 Fraktur by Susanna Beiler - "Dieses Buch gehöret mir Anna L. Beiler, Geschrieben den 12 ten Junius 1897" and 2nd Fraktur T.J. Stevens, "Dieses Buch Gehöret Mir Susie M. Zook 1917" book is in fair condition.



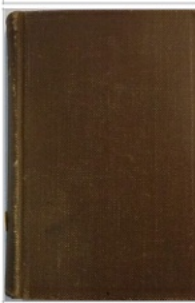
132. 1887 Unparthenisches Gesang=Buch Johann Bär's Söhnen, Fraktur (unknown) "Dieses Buch gehöret mir David B. Smucker", geschriben 1913, book fair condition



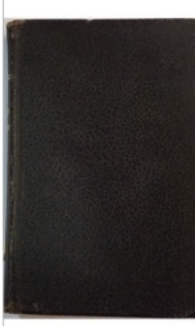
133. 1937 Unparthenisches Gesang=Buch Amischen Gemeinden, Fraktur by J.G.-John Glick - "Dieses Buch gehöret mir Samuel P. Glick", Jan 2, 1941, book is fair condition.



135. 1937 Unparthenisches Gesang=Buch Amischen Gemeinden, Fraktur by Albert Colona, "Dieses Buch gehöret mir, Amos L. Kinng", geschriebenen den Jan 12, 1940, book is fragile condition.



136. 1913 Das Neue Testament, Martin Luther, The New Era Printing Company Lancaster, PA. Fraktur by Daniel S. King, "Dieses Buch gehöret mir Katie F. Kinig, 1927", book is in good condition.

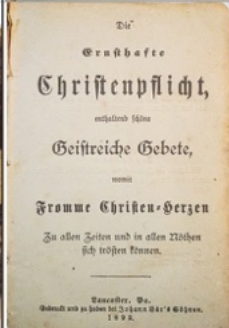


137. 1936 Das Neue Testament, Martin Luther, Amischen Gemeinden Lancaster, PA. Fraktur by Albert Colona, "Dieses Buch gehöret mir Amos L. Kinng, geschriebenen den Jan 12, 1940", book is in good condition

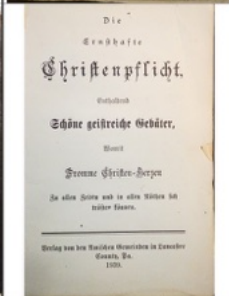




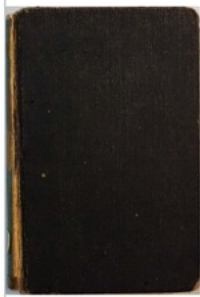
138. 1902 **Das Neue Testament, Martin Luther**, Berlin, Fraktur unknown, **"Dieses Buch gehöret mir Joseph Smucker, Empfangen von meiner Fater im Jahr 1904"**, book is in poor condition.



139. 1892 **Die Ernsthafte Christenpflicht, Geistreiche Gebete**, Johann Bär's Söhne Lancaster PA, Fraktur by Daniel S. King, **"Dieses Buch gehöret mir Christian S. King 1904"**, book is in poor condition.



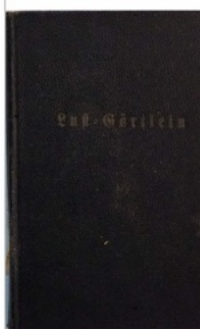
140. 1939 **Die Ernsthafte Christenpflicht, Schöne Geistreiche Gebete**, Amischen Gemeinden, Lancaster PA, Fraktur by Albert Colona, **"Dieses Buch gehöret mir Amos L. King, Geschrieben den 12ten Jan. 1940"**, book is in fair condition.



141. 1939 **Die Ernsthafte Christenpflicht, Schöne Geistreiche Gebete**, Amischen Gemeinden, Lancaster PA, Fraktur by Mary Lapp, **"Dieses Buch gehöret Mir Pharas Fisher, ward geboren Marz 10den 1922 ein geschenk von Daniel & Mary Lapp ihm Jahr 1940"**, book is in fair condition.

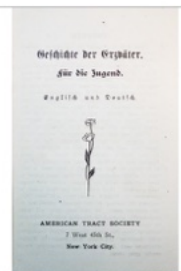
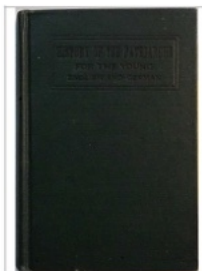


142. 1945 **Die Ernsthafte Christenpflicht, Schöne Geistreiche Gebete**, Amischen Gemeinden, Lancaster PA, Fraktur by unknown, **Susie Petersheim**, book is in fair condition.

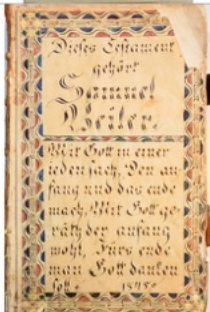
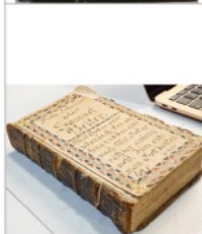


143. 1927 **Lust=Gärtlein Schöne Gebete und Gesänge**, Amischen Gemeinden Lancaster PA, Fraktur by David Hoke, **"Dieses Buch Gehöret Mir Rebecca B. Kinnig geschrieben den 9th Oct 1928"**, book is in fair condition.





144. No year published, **History of the Patriarchs for the Young, English and German**, American Tract Society, Fraktur by **Daniel S. King, Dieses Buch gehöret mir Joel F. Kinig, 1930**, book is in good condition.



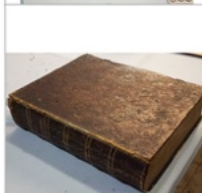
145. 1844 **Das Neue Testament, Martin Luther**, Johann Bär, Lancaster, PA. Fraktur by Benjamin Beiler, **"Dieses Testament Gehöret Samuel Beiler, (Prayer 1845)**, book is in poor condition



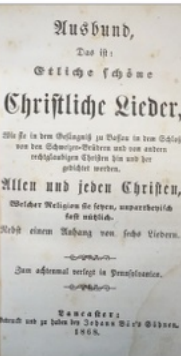
146. 1838 **Christliches Gebet=Büchlein, Morgen und Abendsegen**, (pocket size) Johann Bär, Lancaster, PA, **signature of Mattie Deiner 1870 in pencil**, book is in poor condition.



147 Book plate, Fraktur by David Hoke, **"Dieses Buch Gehöret Mir Fannie E. Kauffman**, geschriben den 8ten June 1910.



148. **Märtyrer=Spiegel, Taufs=Gesinnten**, Thiele J.v. Braght, Publisher by Shem Zook, near Lewistown, Mifflin County, PA Printed by King & Baird, Philadelphia, PA. **1849**, book is in fair condition. Latches missing, front cover loose, no name.



149. 1868 **Ausbund** Johann Bär's Söhnen, Lancaster, PA, Fraktur by Frene Lapp - **"Dieses Gesang Buch Gehöret Mir Daniel Lapp, Geschrieben den 16ten December ihm Jahr 1885"** book is in fair condition.



150. 1564 **Biblio/replica of the 1564 Ausbund hynmbook**, in fine leather cover with latches. A rare one-of-kind collectors book, This Ausbund includes the 53 songs that were written in 1535 to 1540 in the Oberhaus dungeon in Passau Germany. Only one original known copy in the world exists. The copy is at the Goshen University Mennonite Museum.



# Keeping History Alive: The Story of the Renno Cabin

- Written and compiled by Elam Stoltzfus

In the 1700s, there was a busy Amish community here in Berks County. One of the families who lived here was the Renno family.

Joseph Renno was born in Berks County in 1745. Around 1765, he married Elizabeth Miller, whose father was Christian Miller Sr. Joseph and Elizabeth had a big family – 13 children. These children grew up and married into many other well-known Amish families in the area, like the Hochstetlers, Kings, Speichers, Kauffmans, and Rickenbachs.

People who knew the Rennos back then said they were hard workers, careful with their money, and always busy. They were good farmers and committed to a Godly faith.

Sketch of a pioneer lifestyle by Jere Brady.

Around 1760, Joseph Renno built a home for his family. It was a two-story cabin made of logs, located on land he purchased from his father-in-law, along a road we now call Jungle Road. There's even a fun story that a strong Native American man nicknamed Bigfoot helped build it!

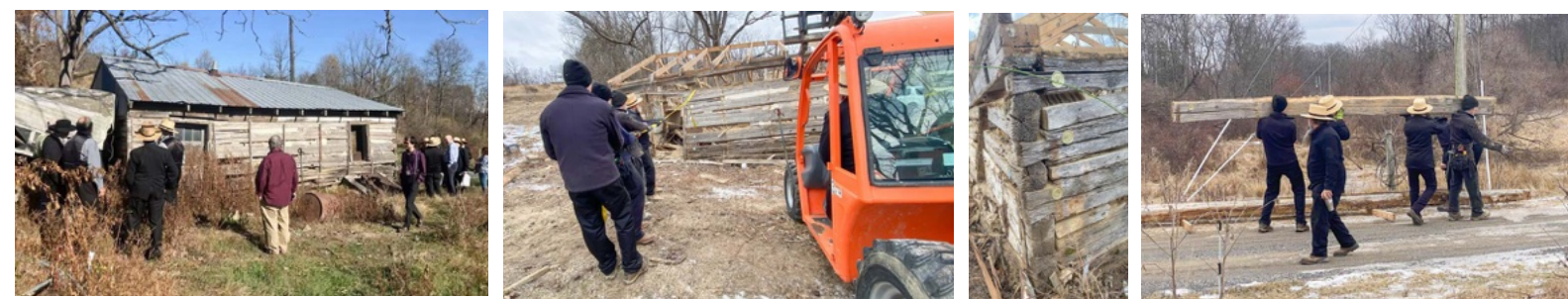
Over time, the old log cabin started to fall apart. In 1995, the top part was sold to help fix another old cabin. The rest of the Renno cabin slowly got worse.

Four years ago, I met the owner of the land, Bill Hoster, and asked about the logs. Mr. Hoster said, "If you want them, you can have them!" But it seemed like too much work at the time.

Then, last year, something exciting happened during the Berks Amish History Tour. When the tour bus stopped at the old Renno cabin site, people got off to look around. I mentioned to the group, if anyone wanted to help take the logs, now was the chance because the land had a new owner.

Several people were interested, including some of Joseph Renno's own family. A big help came from Mervin King of MK Construction. He offered to bring the equipment needed to move the heavy logs to the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead.

On February 20th, a group of 15 volunteers got together at the old Renno cabin. They carefully took apart what was left of the cabin. Now, the history of this old home will be saved! A big thank you to everyone who helped with this important job.

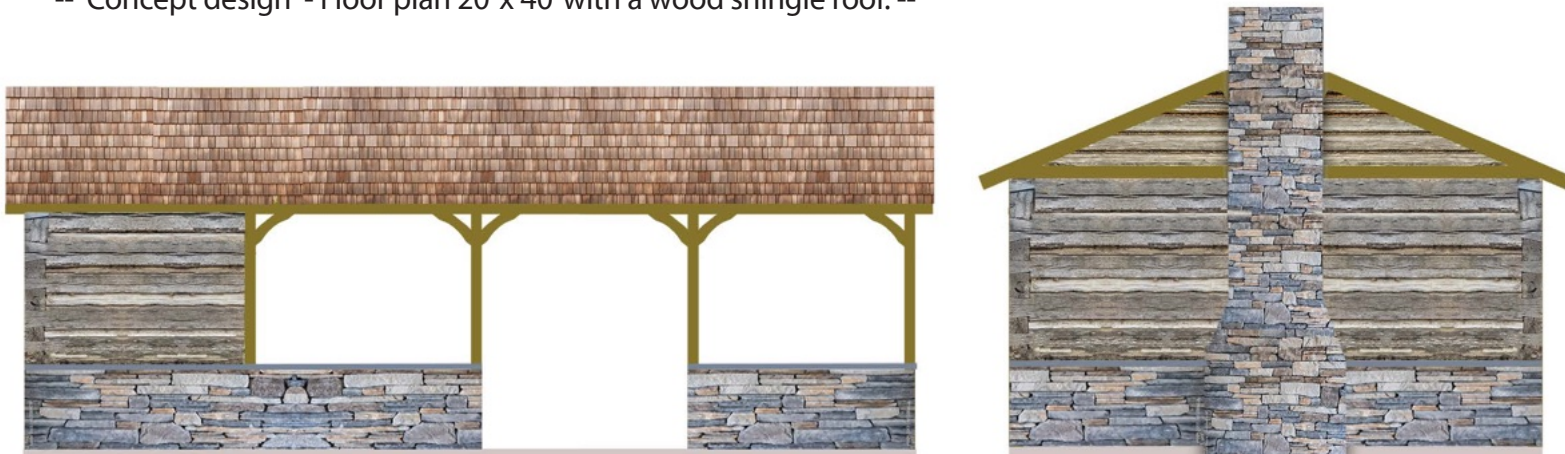


## What's next?

The plan is to use these logs to build a pavilion at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead. This pavilion will be a special place to remember the Renno family and their history. It will be a spot where families can gather for reunions, young people can have activities, companies can have a get-away event, and everyone can enjoy a picnic.

**But to make this happen, we need your help!** We need to get permits, find someone to build the pavilion, etc. If you'd like to support this project and help us honor the Renno family, we would be very grateful for your contribution. This pavilion will be a wonderful way to keep our local history alive for many years to come.

-- Concept design - Floor plan 20' x 40' with a wood shingle roof. --





# PETER GLÜCK SITE FOUND

- by Ervie L. Glick, Professor Emeritus, Eastern Mennonite University

In 2006, I combed the area of Windsor Township, Berks County, for clues as to where my progenitor, Peter Glück had died, along with his wife and five children, at the hands of Indians on March 24, 1756. Little Hans, later to be called Johnny, a three-or-four-year-old, survived. I wanted to find where the Indian attack had occurred. Sadly, I failed in that attempt. Now I know that I was too naïve not to think of checking tax records in the Berks County archives.

I had essentially abandoned the search for the location of Peter's demise, but instead turned to tracing what happened to little Johnny. Glick family records indicated that he was taken in by a childless Amish couple, was raised Amish, and turned up again as a father and grandfather in the Kishacoquillas Valley far to the west of Windsor Township. Family records show a clear line of descendants from "Indian John" down to me. This I recorded in my book, *"From the Judith to the Round Barn: A Peter Glück Family History,"* first published in 2009 by Masthof Press, now available on amazon.com KDP. Much remains unknown about Johnny from the time of the Indian attack to his appearance in Big Valley. Only word-of-mouth accounts, family to family, from 1756 to 1800, may have kept a faint trail.

I had found snippets of information about this tragic event taken from documents recorded in early publications, such as Colonel Conrad Weiser's records of violent Indian assaults in his area of Berks County, and I had collected details from the Pennsylvania State Archives about Peter Glück. All pointed to Windsor Township as the location of the event in question. I learned that Peter was a weaver, not a farmer like most Palatine immigrants who had already established themselves on the western side of the Schuylkill River. Likely from Switzerland, he had arrived in Philadelphia on the Judith in September of 1748. Peter died "intestate", without a will, but two Rothermels, Lawrence and Peter, twin brothers, had been assigned to settle his estate. Now I know that the Rothermels were prominent landowners in Windsor Township who likely were acquainted with Peter, a weaver. My early search for Peter had led me to try to find land to the north of Blue Mountain in Northumberland County near Greenbriar which Peter had been given a warrant for surveying 30 acres. There I discovered a Rothermel descendant, Marlin Rothermel, who verified his relationship with the Windsor Rothermels. Peter died before finishing that land purchase.

To my delight, I received an email message on December 19, 2024, from Elam Stoltzfus, executive manager of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead in Wyomissing, inviting me to see the reported location of the Indian attack on the Peter Glück family 269 years ago. Elam had read my book; he said that he and his two new friends agreed that I should see the spot. Those friends were John Rausch, a long-time resident of northern Berks County and regional historian, and Craig Long, owner and dairy farmer on the land where the Indian attack occurred. That message was the best Christmas present for me of 2024. We immediately took steps to arrange a visit to Berks County from our home in Virginia on March 25 to 27, 2025.

While based at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, Elam graciously took us on a tour of the Northkill early Amish settlement, with an important stop at the home of John Rausch. John was prepared for us with copious printouts of baptismal records from Lutheran sources which I continue to peruse for hints of Indian John's route westward. Elam had earlier been told of a farm site location of Peter's demise, but John corrected him. The official site was on land further east owned by his wife's relative, Craig Long's farm in Windsor Township. We then proceeded to the Long property. Craig, too, was prepared for us and took us to "holy ground" on a strip of pasture along a recently erected hoop machine shed and near his house. There we found scattered stones, once the dry-laid foundation to a log house, forming a faint outline of a 15 by 22-foot structure. The 269 intervening years no doubt disturbed that placement of stones, as perhaps did the archaeological digs of a team of scholars from the University of Massachusetts Boston in 2008, two years after my unsuccessful search.

The work of this team of scholars came to light for Elam through John Rausch, and it is pivotal to the story of Peter Glück in America. Peter's story became the focus of their study of tenancy among colonial settlers. Artisans, such as Peter the weaver, were permitted to live on land, building a house and planting a garden, while earning a livelihood plus working part time on the farm, especially during seasonal peak times, such as harvest, to pay for rent. The results of the scholar's work were published in 2013 and is the master's thesis in historical archeology by Thomas J. Kutys, entitled *"On Long Run Under the Blue Hills: An Archaeology of Tenancy on the Pennsylvania Frontier."*

Walking among the foundation stones, scanning the environment for a sense of a pioneer existence, imagining little Johnny escaping to nearby woods as the house burned around him, and touching the stones, brought to me a profound sense of fulfillment of a dream.



Above Photo: Ervie, Elam & John Rausch  
Right Photo: Elam, Craig Long & Ervie





## Printing The Ausbund, Part 2: Origins - By Elam Stoltzfus (Part 2 of a 8 part series)

Your Word is a lamp for my feet, a light to my path. -- Psalm 119:105

Can you imagine not having any books in your home to read? No articles to read on your phone? No hymn books or screens to sing from at church? Without books, printed material, hymnals, libraries, and media, my brain would be a lot emptier, and my imagination would be much duller.

This, however, was the reality for most everyone in Europe before the arrival of Gutenberg's printing press. Before the 15th century, scrolls and books were handwritten, mostly by monks and artists, and most of this information was owned and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church. Because it was so time-consuming to produce books—since they were laboriously written by hand—these books were way too expensive for the common people to buy, or even dream of buying. Furthermore, even if a commoner did manage to buy a book, they likely couldn't read it, since many commoners were illiterate. And even if a commoner could read, they still likely couldn't decipher the language, since most books pre-Gutenberg were written in Latin—the language of the elite—and not in their common tongue.



Replica of 1440 Gutenberg's Printing Press

In Europe, Johannes Gutenberg played an important role in bringing books and other texts to the common people. Gutenberg created his printing press around 1439 using metal movable type. Although he was not the first to invent a printing press with metal movable type (there are earlier records of such presses in Korea and China), Gutenberg did move the technology forward; for example, one important invention by Gutenberg was perfecting ink that could be affixed to the metal letters. This was followed by designing a method using the winepress concept of pressing the ink into a flat sheet of paper.

Gutenberg started experimenting with printing in Strasbourg, France. Later, he moved to Mainz, Germany. By the early 1450s, he printed his first major book: the Bible. This was the first time the Bible was printed anywhere in the world. The Bible's first print run was less than 200 copies, the language was Latin, and the words were stamped mostly paper pages, but also some vellum (animal skin). Today, there are less than 50 copies of the Gutenberg Bible in existence.

Erasmus of Rotterdam—a Dutch philosopher, Catholic theologian, and contemporary of Gutenberg—reflected on the changes that the printing press brought. He wrote, "I wish that event the weakest person might read the Gospels.... I wish that they were translated into all languages, so as to be read and understood... But the first step to their being read is to make them intelligible to the reader. I long for the day when the husbandman shall sing portions of them to himself as he follows the plow, when the weaver shall hum them to the time on his shuttle..."

Erasmus' hope was that the Bible would be available in the common language for all to read for themselves. But there were powerful forces at work against his dream.

In 1501, Pope Alexander VI had decreed that anyone printing material without the church's approval would be excommunicated. For hundreds of years, the Roman Catholic Church held all the keys for educational knowledge. The church wrote the books, kept the libraries, and taught the schools. The Roman Catholic Church did not want this new technology to slip out of their iron-tight grip.

But the flow of information could not be held back. The Reformation—including printed material by Martin Luther and other reformers—busted open the Roman Catholic Church's stranglehold on the written word. The Reformation—soon followed by the Catholic Church's Counter-Reformation—brought education and spiritual enlightenment to the farmers, weavers, and other common people of Europe.

Luther's prolific writings of sermons, tracts, songs, and other material were printed and distributed across Europe. Eventually, Luther translated the Bible into the German language. With literature and information being printed in the common language for the Germans, people learned how to read.



On October 1517, Martin Luther nails his 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.



The printing press was the key to this cascading of events—without it, the Reformation would not have become a highly articulate movement, a movement of words. We are the inheritors of this tradition of the written word available for the common people.

As part of the 1525 Radical Reformation, early Anabaptist leaders wrote sermons, articles, and information that went to print. We know about Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, Felix Manz, Menno Simons, and many other leaders because of their writings or other people who wrote about them.

Much of Menno Simmons' influence is because of his collection of writings. Several of his important documents include The Spiritual Resurrection, The New Birth and Foundation of the Christian Doctrine.

But in the early days of the Reformation, owning certain books printed by Anabaptists was risky—even to the point of death. In 1551, an Anabaptist was printing Menno Simons' literature; when the authorities discovered the underground printing operation, they uncovered ten tons of books. In 1544 printer Jan Claesz—an Anabaptist baptized by Simons—was beheaded for having in his ownership 600 copies of Menno's books.

That brings us full circle back to the Ausbund and the printings of this forbidden book in the early Anabaptist movement. This book has its roots in the very founding of Anabaptism: the fifth and sixth hymn in the Ausbund were written by Anabaptist leaders George Blaurock and Felix Manz, respectively.

I'll end this column with the second verse of George Blaurock's hymn. He wrote these words before he was burned at the stake in Tyrol in 1529, a martyr for his faith.

Merciful are You, O Lord, and good,  
Graciously You may be found.  
Whoever does Your will here on earth  
You acknowledge as your children.

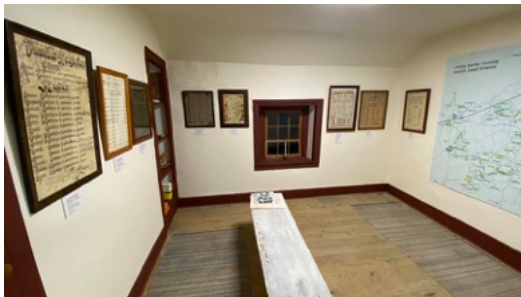
Gnädig bist du, o Herr, und gut,  
Gütlich läst dich finden.  
Wer hie auf Erd dien Willen thut,  
Erkennst vor deine Kinden.

We are able to read his words today—nearly 500 years later—because they were preserved in print in the Ausbund hymnbook. These words are part of our spiritual legacy and our rich Anabaptist heritage.

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The family records exhibit is in place, which includes 15 original records and three replicas. This exhibit includes privately owned family records of Nicholas Stoltzfus descendants and other Berks County Amish families dating back to the 1800s. These family heirlooms -- which have never been viewed by the general public -- have been painstakingly preserved over multiple generations. The records are comprehensive in scope and include essential dates and genealogy information, and they are also intricate works of art that include fine needlework and classic fraktur designs.

The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead will be open to the public every Friday and Saturday from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, from **now till December 13th, 2025**. All other visits may be made by appointment by calling 484-878-2916 or email [NicholasStoltzfusHomestead@gmail.com](mailto:NicholasStoltzfusHomestead@gmail.com)



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The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead has scheduled a Berks County Amish Historical Tour on **October 18, 2025**. If you are interested, let us know soon because we expect the tour to fill up fast.





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

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The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Preservation Committee board consists of the following:  
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Joseph Miller, Board member  
Jacob Esh, Board member  
Elam Fisher, Board member  
S. Nicholas Stoltzfus, Secretary  
Debra Allgyer, Treasurer  
Elam & Esther Stoltzfus, Executive Directors

## Annual Benefit Auction Saturday May 3rd, 2025

Accepting donations of items to be sold at the 2025 auction or bring your item to the auction.

Call Elam at 484-878-2916



Like and share the FaceBook page, which is a place to tell stories, share images, videos, and stay informed with updates.

<https://www.facebook.com/NicholasStoltzfusHomestead>

Web site - [www.NicholasStoltzfus.com](http://www.NicholasStoltzfus.com)



The 2025 & 2026 calendar at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead has openings and is accepting bookings for family reunions, company outings, or youth group events. Schedule early to reserve your desired date.

Call Elam or Esther Stoltzfus at 484-878-2916 to reserve.

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