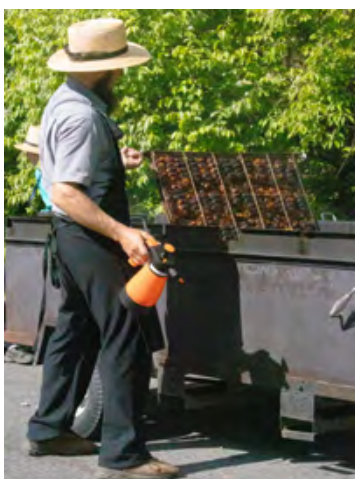


Successful 2026 Benefit Auction Draws Crowds and Celebrates Community

The first Saturday of May brought perfect weather and an even better turnout, with families enjoying butter-dipped pretzels, grilled chicken, children's activities, quilt and book sales, and more. Folks connected across generations and strengthened the fellowship that makes this annual benefit auction so meaningful—not just for fundraising, but for preserving heritage and community ties.



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and Elam Stoltzfus

Photography: Elam Stoltzfus, Jeff Stoltzfus,
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Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Preservation
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Jerry Stoltzfus

Executive Directors:

Elam and Esther Stoltzfus



SAVE THE DATES!

October 3rd

Amish Wagon Train Homecoming
and Beiler-Renno Pavilion Dedication

October 24th

Berks Amish Historical Tour

January 23rd, 2027

Ausbund Hymn Sing

April 3rd, 2027

Berks History Center & Nicholas
Stoltzfus Homestead Berks Amish Tour

May 1st, 2027

Annual Benefit Auction



Quote from Mike Allgyer, longtime volunteer
for construction projects at the Homestead, on
getting involved at the Homestead:

*"I see these Stoltzfus sales coming up and I
have Stoltzfus in my freundschaft, and I started
researching this and come to find out, it's Nicholas
Stoltzfus and I'm in the line for many generations, so
this has a big significance to me."*

*"I think this fits is very well with the county park
system, it's a historical structure and it's exciting to
see people get behind this and preserve this".*



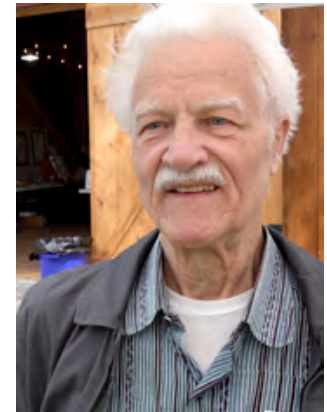
Quote from Emily Smucker-Beidler, fraktur artist and descendant:

"I visited this place on a Smucker tour when I was a child; it was all overgrown...this house holds a lot of incredible memories for me. Knowing that my seventh great grandfather (John Schmucker) lived in this house with his wife (Barbara Stoltzfus Schmucker), you know how many people can say that? That makes this real special to say this."



Quote from Ben Zook, Stoltzfus descendant:

"We love the auction and catching up with cousins here. this is part of my ancestry, it's part of me. This is so unique, and I treasure this. I'm enjoying the gathering, seeing everyone gathering together here."



Quote from Henry Boettlin, historian at Berks Heritage Center:

"It's really special to see how the house has been restored. What I see is everyone gathering together. Everyone is learning from one another here...I really like being here every year!"



Beiler–Renno Pavilion: Construction Underway, Dedication Set for October 3

By Nic Stoltzfus

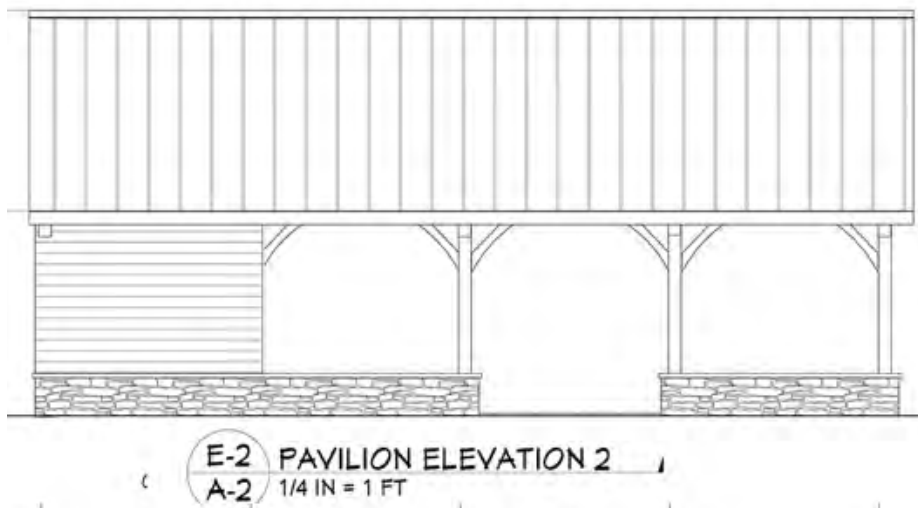
Construction on the Beiler–Renno Pavilion is officially underway. Earlier this month, the large black walnut tree—home to the swing—was removed to make space for the new structure. The foundation footprint has now been dug by Mike Allgyer and is awaiting the foundation and footer.

In the coming weeks, the Homestead will host a one-day “pavilion raising” in the spirit of a traditional barn raising.

Please mark your calendar for Saturday, October 3rd at 10:30 am for the public pavilion dedication. All are welcome to attend and celebrate this new gathering space.

The pavilion will offer picnic-table seating and open space for events, programs, and community use. Logs from the 1760 Renno cabin and stones from the early 1700s Beiler barn foundation will be incorporated into the structure, honoring the families whose stories shaped the earliest Amish settlement in America.

If you would like to support the project through volunteering or funding, opportunities remain available. Your involvement helps bring this long-planned vision to life!



Save the Date!

**Beiler-Renno Pavilion Dedication
and
Homecoming of the Amish
Wagon Train**

Date: October 3rd

Time: 10:30 AM

Location: The Nicholas Stoltzfus
Homestead

Light refreshments will be provided.

Call 484-878-2916 for more details
or check the website:
www.NicholasStoltzfus.com

Berks County Amish Historical Tour Set for October 24th, 2026



This tour uncovers the little-known story of the first Amish settlement in America, right here in Berks County, Pennsylvania. In 1736, the first Amish families began establishing a church community in the area, paving the way for about 80 families over the next 40 years. Early family names included Burkey, Sieber, Detweiler, Kauffman, Yoder, Kurtz and more.

Program

- Ben Riehl and Elam Stoltzfus will be your tour guides. Ben is the president of the NSH Preservation Committee and a local historian. Elam is the caretaker of the NSH and Berks County historian.
- The tour includes important homes and places near Wyomissing, Shillington, North Berks from Hamburg to Scharblesville and more.
- You'll travel through areas like Irish Creek, western Hamburg, and south of the Blue Mountains in northern Berks County.
- Stops include old graveyards and the locations of historical homes like the Schmucker house, Zug/Zook farm, Koenig land, Detweiler home, Yoders, Mast, Kauffman, the John Hochstetler home and many more.

Itinerary

Option 1

7:00 AM *sharp*

Bus pickup at Candle Barn parking lot Intercourse

7:20 AM *sharp*

Bus pickup at Sheetz parking lot by Shirk Road & Rt 23 New Holland

7:45 AM

Arrive at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead

Option 2

8:00 AM

Arrive at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, light breakfast, and introductions, Nicholas Stoltzfus house will be open to tour

(Note: parking is available at the end of the road at the Berks Parks and Trail parking lot)

8:45 AM

Bus departs Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead to tour Berks County Amish Homesteads.

12:00 PM

Lunch provided, location to be announced

3:00 PM

Bus returns to the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead

4:00 PM

Bus returns to Sheetz and Candle Barn after the tour

Reserve Your Ticket Today!

Cost: \$80.00 per person, includes light breakfast, lunch, and tour information document & packet. Make checks payable to Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, bring cash or credit card.

By Reservations Only: Call 484-878-2916 or email NicholasStoltzfusHomestead@gmail.com.

Legacy Maker

From Limestone and Faith to Feeding the World: The Story of C.U. Stoltzfus & Stoltzfus Spreaders

By Nic Stoltzfus

When the first Stoltzfus immigrant, Nicholas, settled in Berks County in the mid-1700s, he brought with him a tradition of faith, humility, and practical craftsmanship that would echo through the generations. Nearly two centuries later, those same values shaped the life of Christian Umble “C.U.” Stoltzfus, the Morgantown farmer-inventor whose work helped transform modern agriculture.

C.U. grew up on a Mennonite farm along the east branch of the Conestoga Creek. His parents named him after his minister grandfather, connecting him with his Amish roots. His father, John H. Stoltzfus, a school board president and lifelong National Geographic subscriber, encouraged his son’s mechanical interests and problem-solving mind.

C.U. also worked in the family’s limestone quarry, blasting rock with what he later described as the “light-and-run technique:” Light the fuse and run! In the 1930s, farmers were experimenting with spreading limestone on their fields. When converted to lime, it neutralized acidic soil, improved nutrient availability, and created healthier conditions for crops. But spreading it was dusty, inefficient, and backbreaking. C.U. believed there had to be a better way and began tinkering with solutions.

In 1945, he married Ruth Weiler on the family farm. She became his lifelong partner in both family and business. With her encouragement—and her handling of the finances—C.U. built his first lime spreader, and Stoltzfus Spreaders was born.

Around this time, the Pennsylvania Turnpike expansion cut the family farm in half. Knowing he would be limited in expanding the quarry, C.U. focused instead on growing Stoltzfus Spreaders.



*Top Left: Christian U. and Ruth (Weiler) Stoltzfus with children Neal, Lorna, and Sidney.
Right: The Pennsylvania Turnpike*

The early years were hands-on innovation. “We didn’t have any working drawings,” he recalled. “We just built them and they worked.” He broke transmission after transmission, bought out junkyards for parts, and taught himself to fabricate augers when none on the market would do. He sold spreaders the old-fashioned way: by taking them into a farmer’s field and letting the results speak for themselves.

His designs solved real problems. Dust was such a challenge that he patented a canvas-covered spreader. When farmers struggled with wet, stockpiled lime, he invented the Wet Lime Spreader, a breakthrough that paid for itself within a year. His truck-mounted boom spreader, patented in the mid-1960s, reduced dust and improved accuracy long before GPS-guided precision agriculture.

C.U. and Ruth raised three children: Neal, Lorna, and Sidney. Neal reflected that his father had an even-keeled disposition inherited from John H. Stoltzfus. C.U. encouraged curiosity, taking his children to the Reading Public Library—a tradition he shared with his father and cousin, historian Dr. Grant Stoltzfus.

By the 1970s and ’80s, C.U.’s innovations were reshaping the industry. His machines were so durable he joked he had nearly built himself out of business; some ran for 20 or 30 years with almost no maintenance.

Through it all, the family’s Amish and Mennonite heritage remained a quiet compass. Ruth, who lived to 103, embodied service, community, and faith. She helped write *As Long as Wood Grows and Water Flows* and supported the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead.

C.U. passed away in 2000 at age 88. Reflecting on his life’s work, he said, “It makes you feel good to have made a contribution to agriculture. You’re helping to feed the world.” Today, the company he founded (now Stoltz Mfg., LLC) continues to build spreaders used across the United States and around the world. More than 5,500 units are in operation, each carrying forward C.U.’s original vision: equipment built to solve problems, serve farmers, and steward the land.




STOLTZFUS www.StoltzfusSpreaders.com

The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Preservation Committee (NSHPC) is excited to share a new opportunity for businesses founded by descendants of the Amish immigrant families who settled in Berks County in the 1700s. This initiative helps us continue telling our shared story, honoring the faith and hard work of our ancestors, and passing these values on to the next generation.

The Legacy Makers Program supports the launch of the Berks County Amish Heritage Series, beginning with the expanded second edition of ***German Lutherans to Pennsylvania Amish: The Stoltzfus Family Story***. The first edition is nearly sold out, and we are seeking nine more Legacy Makers so we can print the next edition and establish the foundation for future volumes.

Each Legacy Maker receives a two-page feature in the book (700–1,200 words plus photos), a featurette in the Homestead newsletter, acknowledgment on the Homestead website and Facebook page, and recognition as one of the founding Legacy Makers for Volume 1.

If your Stoltzfus-founded business would like to be considered as one of the remaining Legacy Makers, we would be glad to hear from you.

Big Boy 4014 on the Old Rickenbach Land

By Elam Stoltzfus



A whistle shrieked, 1.2 million pounds of metal powered by steam rumbled the ground beneath my feet. The steam engine with its tender was longer than a Boeing 737 jet plane. Thundering past me was the world's largest steam engine, Big Boy #4014. The locomotive—touring the country for the nation's 250th anniversary and appearing in Philadelphia for the July 4th celebration—is built to pull five miles of freight across the flats of the American West. This steam-powered behemoth is a sight to behold!

I watched the train cross Berks County just west of Cross Keys Road. As the train passed, I thought about my ancestors. The train was crossing land once cleared and worked by my ancestors. Only a short distance away sits the quiet Rickenbach Cemetery, still watching over the valley.

In a time before steel rails and steam, this place looked different to the Rickenbach family who settled in Berks County in the 1700s.

This land was once heavy timber and limestone soil. Johan Rickenbach (1727–1787), my ninth great-grandfather, and his son Jacob (1757–1831) settled on the north side of Cross Keys Road. Their homestead carried an original deed signed by Thomas and Richard Penn. With axes, plows, and steady hands, they carved a life out of the wilderness.

In 1782, Jacob married Barbara Hertzler, granddaughter of Bishop Jacob Hertzler—the first Amish bishop in America. Their days were shaped by work, faith, and the seasons. Food came from the garden and livestock, their clothes were spun from wool and flax, and light came from tallow candles. Nothing was easy, and nothing was guaranteed.

Over time, the rough log cabin gave way to a stone house (pictured above). The 1817 datestone marked “J. B. Rickenbach” still stands, a sign of the family's persistence and the valley's slow growth.

When Big Boy 4014 roared past, it carried the weight of an industrial age the early Rickenbachs could not have imagined. Yet the tracks exist because families like theirs cleared the land, built farms, and laid the groundwork for what came after.

The whistle cries more faintly, and the rumble of the engine fades away. But the stone house and the small cemetery remain, steady as ever. They remind us who first called this place home.

Family Records Found After Thirty Years

By Elam Stoltzfus



*Susie Stoltzfus
and Scott Sechler*

On November 2nd 2024, the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead conducted its annual Berks County Amish History Tour through northern Berks County. This tour showcases the many immigrant families who moved to the area in the early 1700s to begin a new chapter of life—seeking freedom of worship, the opportunity to own land, the ability to invest in local commerce, and the blessing of gathering together for Gemeinde (church community) with like-minded Freundschaft (family and friends).

Among the attendees was Mervin King, a Lancaster resident and curious historian with a deep desire to learn more about his ancestors. After the tour, Mervin mentioned that he wanted to bring his good friend, Scott Sechler, along on the next excursion so this local Berks County resident could also learn about their shared Amish heritage.

On March 28, 2026, the Berks History Center and the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead conducted a joint tour. True to his word, Mervin returned alongside Scott. Scott proved to be an excellent student of early local history. Having grown up in Berks County, he shared his own local stories with us while we shared our history with him, making it a truly enriching experience. When the tour concluded and we returned to the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, Scott explored the historic house, taking special notice of the collection of family records exhibited on the walls.

A few weeks later, Scott was looking to purchase antiques at a sale in New Jersey. On the auction bill, he spotted three Amish family records rendered in detailed needlework. Recalling the collection he had just seen at the Homestead, he decided to purchase the three records and bring them back to Pennsylvania.

On May 4th, during the annual Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Benefit Auction, Scott called Mervin King. He mentioned that he had the three records in his truck and asked if Mervin would come out to the parking lot to take a look. Mervin then asked me to join him, though none of us knew what these records looked like or which families they belonged to.

When Scott pulled the records from his truck, we were absolutely stunned. Before us were three beautifully preserved, needle-stitched family registers belonging to the John & Mary King, Henry & Katie Lapp, and David & Katie Glick families.

Scott generously stated that he wanted Merv to have the records and decide what to do with them. We ultimately decided to carry them upstairs into the historic house, propping them safely against the wall for the day. While we were setting them down, a young man noticed the commotion and watched us arrange the documents. Suddenly, his eyes widened—he recognized the King record as his own family's history.

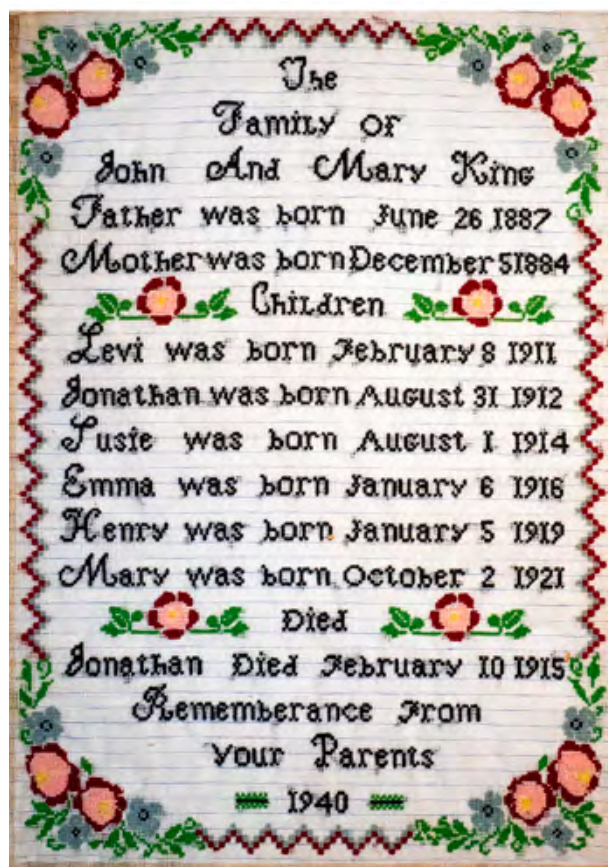
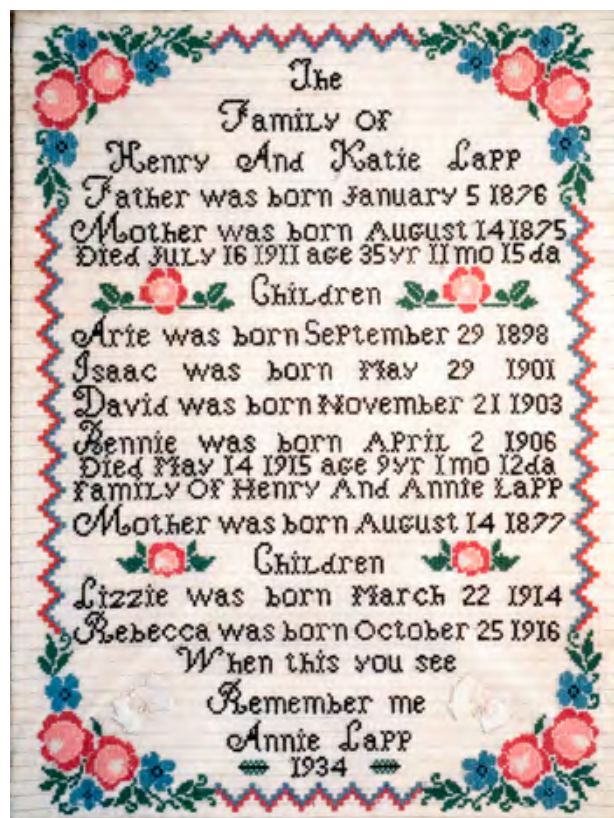
"I need to go get my mom," he said urgently. He ran out to the auction tent to find her.

When his mother, Susie Stoltzfus, arrived upstairs, she looked at the needlework and began to tell us an incredible story. Thirty years ago, her grandmother held an estate sale where this exact King family record was put up for auction. Susie, a young girl at the time, had saved up \$200 of her own money specifically to buy the heirloom. As the bidding proceeded, she was unfortunately outbid by an outside collector—someone interested only in the antique art, not the family genealogy.

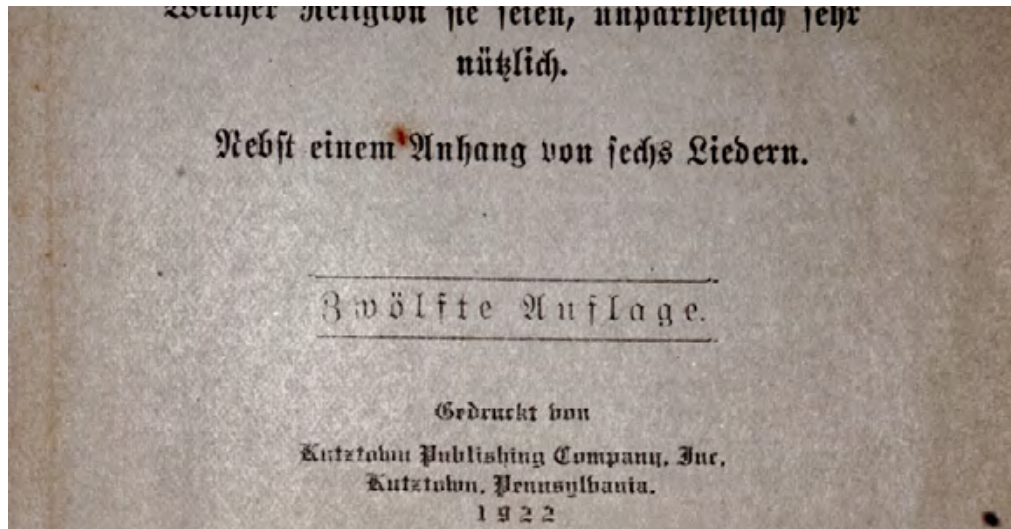
From that moment on, the record was lost to the family. As the years went by, Susie often wondered what had happened to her grandmother's record. She scoured auction bills and sale listings for decades, but to no avail. Eventually, she assumed she would never see it again.

To see that very record returned to the hands of the family after thirty years, kept safe, and set to be featured in the genealogy exhibit at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead was overwhelming. As Susie looked at the piece, she remarked, "This is one of the best days of my life."

A very special thank you to Mervin King and Scott Sechler for tracking down, securing, and contributing these treasured pieces of folk art and invaluable genealogical history back to the community where they belong.



Printing the *Ausbund* Part 5: Origins



By Elam Stoltzfus

"What I find most distinctive about the Ausbund songs is their realism. They are not happy clappy songs that reiterate the Christian life as a series of ecstatic triumphs. The Christian life in the Ausbund is life lived with great attentiveness to the reality of the world around us and what it means to be a faithful person in that world."

- Gerald Mast, PhD, Professor at Bluffton University

Have you ever been in a business situation where everything felt like a constant struggle? Maybe the difficulty originated from misunderstanding between people, uncommunicated expectations, or miscalculation of how much time a project would take.

For the Amish Book Committee, all three of these things played a role in the challenges behind the 1922 Ausbund hymnbook printing.

~ ~ ~

The Amish Book Committee printed their first book nearly ten years before—the Unparteyisches GesangBuch—and began printing other German books, as well. They also sold copies of the 1913 Elkhart, Indiana, printing of the Ausbund. Plain people from outside Pennsylvania began ordering German books from the Committee; according to treasurer Jacob Lapp's ledger, there were Gingerichs, Herschbergers, Wengerds, and Troyers from Ohio, Indiana, and other Western states placing orders for books.

The Ausbund was one of the most frequently ordered books, and the inventory from the Elkhart printing was nearly sold out; as the Amish Book Committee was now in charge of printing the Ausbund, they needed to find a new printing company, preferably nearby Lancaster County.

The Committee chose Kutztown Publishing Company of Kutztown, Pennsylvania, to print 2000 copies of the Ausbund. Kutztown Publishing had to make new typesetting for the complicated arrangement for the Ausbund for \$1600.00 similar to the 1913 Elkhart printing. According to the records the major cost of printing was setting up the type for the book for a total of \$2450.00 and another \$1000.00 for the electrotypes after the book was in type.

Frustratingly enough for the Amish Book Committee, the Kutztown printers were also negotiating with one L.A. Miller in Arthur, Illinois, to print 4000 copies of the Ausbund.

In a September 21, 1921, letter between Committee spokesperson Stephen (Steffie) F. Stoltzfus and Kutztown Publishing Company manager Chas Esser, Esser tells Stoltzfus that "Mr. Miller knows nothing about our intentions to plating the book," and he tells Stoltzfus that either the Committee could sell copies of the Ausbund to Miller or the publishing company could sell directly to Miller.

As we do not have Stephen F. Stoltzfus' reply to Chas Esser's letter, it is hard to know what he thought of this arrangement, but I wouldn't be surprised that he and others on the Committee were unhappy to hear that Kutztown Publishing Company was negotiating with another party to print the Ausbund.

The following month, on October 17, Kutztown Publishers sent a letter to Stephen F. Stoltzfus with an update of cost; apparently Stoltzfus drove a hard bargain and asked Esser a better price. Esser closes the letter with the comment, "We will be very glad to get started on this book for you and suggest you urge Mr. Miller." This means that Kutztown was still negotiating with Miller, as well.

The Amish Book Committee agreed to print the Ausbund with Kutztown Publishing Company. In a January 20, 1922, letter from Kutztown to Stoltzfus, they shared that the first hundred pages of the proof had been shipped to Lancaster. As they did not have the capability to bind the book, Kutztown recommended another company to finish the binding in nearby Reading, Pennsylvania.

Apparently Stoltzfus did not answer the January letter. In a letter sent the following month on February 3, Kutztown wrote, "We have not received an answer to our letter several weeks ago. We have another 100 pages ready for you and can send this to you and then start printing again. We ask that you make arrangements to pay out \$500.00 on the account by February 28th when this bill is due. This will help us out very much."

In addition, it appears that the Committee was struggling with paying their bills. In a letter to Stoltzfus three weeks later, Kutztown wrote, "We are writing to you to remind you of our request or rather our suggestion that you pay us \$500.00 on the account of the hymn book." ...We will allow a discount of \$5.00 on your bill. We would have more proofs in your hands, but our operator injured his leg and is laid off. We expect printing next week." In the last paragraph of the letter, it reads, "I am sure that if you go to a few of your friends that you can easily raise the money. If it is not possible to raise \$500.00 try and surely send us at least \$350.00."

Another five months went by before Stoltzfus heard back from Kutztown. In an early summer letter, they wrote that the 2000 hymnbooks were almost done being printed and would then be shipped to Reading for binding. Kutztown wrote of an error in the proofs they had sent to Stoltzfus and included, "We will correct this when you return the proofs." The letter ends with, "We hope you can make arrangements to pay our printing bill promptly after we have all the work complete. We think it will be simplest for you to bill Mr. Miller at Arthur [Illinois] and you pay us the entire bill." Apparently, a deal had been reached between all three parties where Miller withdrew his request from Kutztown to print the Ausbund and would instead work with the Committee directly.

The Kutztown Publishing Company, Inc.
THE KUTZTOWN PATRIOT
Printing of Books, Magazines, Factory Forms, Etc.
Kutztown, Pennsylvania
July, 21, 1922
Stephen Stoltzfus Bird-In-Hand RD#1 Lancaster County Pa.

Your Order No. _____ Shipped via. _____

To 2,000 German Hymn Books at one half of contract price
of \$1,850.00 \$925.00

Post of Ausbund 92.50
Stephen Stoltzfus Esq. 1.00
Forest Lapp Linn 5.00
Freight 16.51
C. L. Friesner Linn 3.00
96.63
Lancaster + Mails 11.02
977.65

THE KUTZTOWN PUBLISHING CO.
PAID
7/8/22
E. P.

On July 21st, Kutztown delivered the 2000 Ausbund to Stephen F. Stoltzfus in Bird-In-Hand, Pennsylvania, with payment due of half the contract price. Later that month, Kutztown sent a letter to Stoltzfus asking for final payment and also explaining why some of the sheets have ink blots: "We always ran the full number of sheets and left the spoiled ones in."

Clearly the business relationship between Kutztown Publishing Company and the Amish Book Committee was an unsatisfactory one, as this was the only Ausbund printing that the Committee did with Kutztown. In the Winter newsletter we will look at the next printing arrangement for the Ausbund, that successfully ran for twenty-two editions.

Resources cited:

History of the Amish Book Committee

Stephen F. Stoltzfus Journal

Jacob Lapp, Treasurer's Ledger

Aaron Petersheim, advisor



Interested in Learning More About the European Roots of the Ausbund?

March 8th to 18th, 2027, Elam will be traveling to Passau, Germany to present an Ausbund lecture about the history of the Anabaptists, printings & distribution of the Ausbund in America.

Elam is extending an invitation to six people to travel along.

A tour will include an extensive tour of Oberhaus Castle (where the 53 Ausbunds songs were written), the town of Passau, visit locations of the 1528 Anabaptists in Passau, a memorial stone and area of the execution of Leanhard Kaiser, old museums and travel to the origins of the 1535 Anabaptists in Moravia (now Czech Republic) and other places of interest.



The Lost Branch Reappears: Illuminating the Fohrer Family Mystery

By Nic Stoltzfus

When I was doing research on the Stoltzfus family, we have abundant records of Nicholas and Anna Elisabeth (Bachmann) Stoltzfus' two children Christian and Barbara (who married John Schmucker) who had large families who mainly remained Amish and moved to Lancaster County. Only in December of 2024 did Elam, Rose Beiler, and I crack the mystery of what happened to their youngest daughter Magdalena. In John Schmucker's 1803 will (which can be viewed at Berks County Orphan's Court), she is listed as "Magdalene Stulsfus" receiving a bond from her brother Christian. By 1803, she would have been mid-forties and likely never married.

The fourth child who reached adulthood in Pennsylvania, Anna Catherine Stoltzfus, we know married an Oley Amish farmer named Christian Fohrer. This marriage was recorded in her brother Christian's Bible (which can be viewed at the Pequea Bruderschaft Library in Lancaster County).

Additional research from historian J. Virgil Miller's *Both Sides of the Ocean* places Fohrer's immigration in 1750 aboard the ship *Brotherhood*, which carried several Amish families from Rotterdam to Philadelphia. Like the Stoltzfuses, Christian first lived in Lancaster County before moving to Berks, around the same time as the Stoltzfuses. And records from Amish alms funds in the late 1770s confirm the Fohrers were still part of the Berks County Amish community.

But beyond that, we don't have much further information about what happened to the couple or their descendants—until now.

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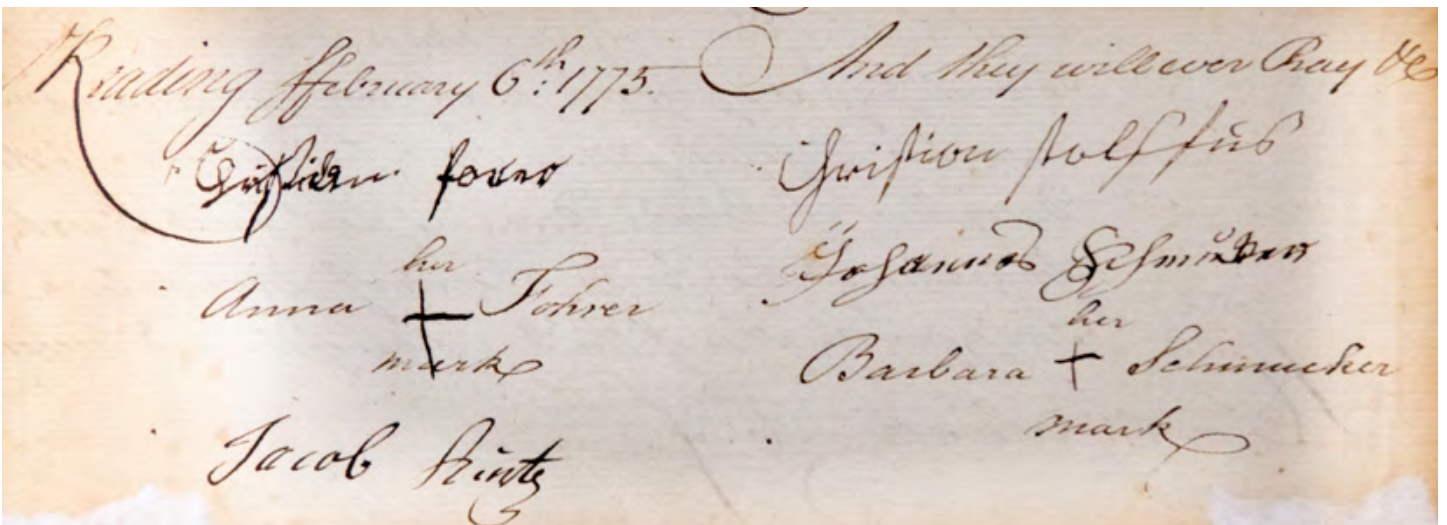
This summer, a new lead emerged when Sara Nelson shared a carefully documented genealogical trail that may finally reconnect the Fohrer line to its Stoltzfus roots.

Nelson's journey began decades ago with a childhood story: her grandmother claimed Native American ancestry through a Lenni Lenape ancestor named Proudfoot. The tale inspired her early genealogical research, long before online databases and DNA testing were available.

But when Nelson eventually tested her grandmother's DNA, the results told a different story—no Native American ancestry, but strong Germanic roots. That revelation pushed her deeper into the records, where she encountered a surprising suggestion: Proudfoot might be a translation of **Stoltzfus**, a name meaning "proud foot" in German.

Searching her grandmother's DNA matches for Stoltzfus descendants, Nelson found dozens—155 at last count. All pointed back to Nicholas and Anna Elisabeth (Bachmann) Stoltzfus.

Yet the connection didn't appear through Christian or Barbara. Instead, it led Nelson to a lesser-known daughter: **Anna Catherine (Stoltzfus) Fohrer**.



The signatures and marks are all from documents concerning the settling of Nicholas Stoltzfus' estate after he died in 1774. Starting at top left and going clockwise: Christian Fohrer, Christian Stoltzfus, John Schmucker, Barbara Schmucker, Jacob Kurtz, Anna Fohrer

Untangling the Fohrer Name

The Fohrer surname proved difficult to track. Spellings varied widely—Fohrer, Furrer, Forrer, Furry—common among 18th-century German immigrants. Nelson’s breakthrough came from a marriage record at Schwarzwald Church in 1794: Catherine Forre married Christian Barlet (likely Barlet), a man already known in her grandmother’s lineage.

This marriage aligned with the timeline of Anna Catherine’s daughter, Catherine Fohrer, born in 1774. Combined with DNA evidence, Nelson’s findings formed a compelling case for a direct line from Nicholas and Anna Elizabeth Stoltzfus through their daughter Anna Catherine.

Her documented lineage is as follows:

Nicholas Stoltzfus & Anna Elisabeth Bachmann

Anna Catherine Stoltzfus & John Christian Fohrer

Catherine Fohrer & Christian Barlet

Christianna Barlet & Valuntine Felton Hinkle

Jacob Edward Hinkle & Sarah Davenport

Mary Alice Hinkle & Charles Albert Snyder

Martha Elizabeth Snyder & Hobart Vernon Eroh

Alice Augusta Eroh, William Henry Faust, Sr.

William Henry Faust, Jr. (Sara Nelson’s father)

For the Stoltzfus Homestead community, the Fohrer line has long been a missing piece of the family story. Nelson’s research offers one of the clearest leads yet—supported by DNA, historical documents, and traditional genealogy. Nelson’s careful approach—balancing oral history with verifiable records—provides a model for responsible genealogical research.

Further Reading

For readers interested in exploring the Fohrer connection more deeply, the following sources provide additional context:

J. Virgil Miller, *Both Sides of the Ocean* – Immigration records, Amish settlement patterns, and Fohrer family references.

Joseph F. Beiler, *The Diary (October 1979)* – Notes on Amish alms funds in Berks County.

Schwarzwald Church Records (Berks County, PA) – Marriage entries including Catherine Forre and Christian Barlet.

Stoltzfus Family Bible – Mentions of Anna Catherine Stoltzfus and Christian Fohrer.



From September 29 through October 3, 2026, a group of Amish families will retrace their ancestors’ 18th-century migration route from Philadelphia to Berks County in a one-week, immersive horse-and-wagon journey. Organized by the Lancaster Amish community & Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, the caravan will travel 12–24 miles per day from Penn’s Landing in Philadelphia, featuring traditional wagons and riders to honor the pioneering journey of our ancestors from the city to the countryside.

This living history event commemorates the 1733 settlement of the first Amish community in the United States within upper Berks County, highlighting the faith and courage of early settlers seeking religious freedom. The initiative aims to connect the public with the region’s heritage, contributing to the broader America250 celebrations while celebrating Berks County’s rich Amish cultural roots.

Join us in a homecoming event at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead on Oct 3, 10:30am, come see the horses, wagoner & rider teams, and celebrate this historical event.

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

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Reading, PA
PI# 415

Share a copy with a friend!



The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead is accepting bookings for family reunions, company outings, or youth group events. Call Elam or Esther Stoltzfus at 484-878-2916 to reserve.

Annual Benefit Auction
& Gathering
Saturday, May 1st, 2027
All Are Welcome!

THE Nicholas Stoltzfus H O M E S T E A D

The mission of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead is to share our Amish history and faith heritage in Berks County and Beyond.

To learn more about the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, please visit
www.NicholasStoltzfus.com



Or visit our Facebook at facebook.com/NicholasStoltzfusHomestead