

"1710 Pequea Settlement Tour Resource Information Booklet", pp. 1-6

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Brief History of 1710 Pequea Settlement

In April 1710, William Penn wrote a letter to the British Ambassador in the Netherlands, stating that, "there were fifty or sixty Swissers, called Mennonites, coming for Holland in order to go for Pennsylvania."

Apparently, he was referring to the part of the group that we now know as the first to settle in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. We know their names because of a letter written from London on June 27, 1710, when six Mennonite families wrote to the Mennonite leaders in Amsterdam, thanking them for assistance to travel to America. The letter was signed by the following: Martin Kendig, Jacob Miller, Martin Oberholtzer, Martin Meili, Christian Herr and Hans Herr. These were apparently heads of households. All of the above names except for Martin Oberholtzer were issued Land Warrants in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania in 1710.

There were other Mennonites who arrived in London in 1710 on their own accord. Hans Stauffer and Peter Friedt and their families had arrived in London on January 26, 1710. Stauffer and Friedt probably left Gravesend, England, aboard the ship Maria Hope. That particular ship arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with a number of Swiss Mennonites on September 23, 1710. Part of the group went to Lancaster County and the other part went to the Skippack area (Montgomery County). The ship Maria Hope was carrying a total of ninety-four passengers, not all of who were Mennonites, although there were probably at least forty to fifty Mennonites on board. The following is a possible list of Mennonite passengers who settled near the Pequea Creek in present-day Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The age of each immigrant stated is their estimated age at time of arrival in Pennsylvania.

Original Settlers in 1710

1. Wendell Bowman, age 30, died 1735, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County, PA. He and his wife, Anna emigrated to Germantown, PA in 1707 and lived there until their arrival in Lancaster County with the Kendigs, Herrs, etc in 1710. Wendel's and Anna's possible children include:

- a) Michael Bowman, b. ca 1697, of Lancaster County, PA.
- b) Anna Bowman, b. ca 1699; died 1777, Earl Twp., Lancaster County
- c) Benjamin Bowman, b. 1701; died 1775, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County

2. Christopher Franciscus, died in 1757, Lancaster County, PA. He probably was not a Mennonite.

3. Hans Funk, age 32, died 1758/1759, in Virginia. His wife was Barbara Funk.

4. Christian Herr, age 35, died 1749/1750, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County, PA. His wife was named Anna, age 30, died 1767. Christian and Anna brought with them their four children:

- a) John Herr, age 10, died 1773, Lampeter Twp., PA.

- b) Christian Herr, age 8, died 1763
- c) Abraham Herr, age 6, died 1756
- d) Elizabeth Herr, age 2, died 1790, Martic Twp., Lancaster County, PA.

5. Hans Herr, age 33, died 1756, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County, PA. His wife was Veronica (Frances) Brackbill, age 29, died after 1756. Hans and Veronica brought with them their four children:

- a) John Herr, age 8, died 1783
- b) Veronica Herr, age 5, died May 20, 1780, Strasburg Twp., Lancaster County.
- c) Anna Herr, age 3
- d) Christian Herr, age 1

6. Martin Kendig, age 40, died 1748/1749, Conestoga Twp., Lancaster County, PA. His wife was Elizabeth Bar, age 35, died between 1729 and 1736. His child was:

- a) John Jacob Kendig, age 17, died 1775, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County.

7. Jacob Miller, age 47, Durnten, Gruningen District, Switzerland, died April 20, 1739, Lancaster Twp., Lancaster County, PA. His wife (name unknown) was pregnant with her son, Samuel, who was born in Lancaster County, PA on June 22, 1711. His two children who came with him were:

- a) Jacob Miller, age 8
- b) Martin Miller, age 1

8. Martin Meili, age 45, of Duhren, Germany, died 1748/1749, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County, PA. His second wife was Anna Rutgen. His child who came with him to Pennsylvania was:

- a) Martin Meili, age 20, died August 16, 1751, Lampeter Twp., Lancaster County

9. Martin Oberholtzer, age 44. He arrived in Pennsylvania on September 23, 1710 on the ship "Maria Hope." He is known to have settled along the Conestoga River in present Lancaster County by 1725, but could have been in Lancaster County as early as 1710. In 1725 he bought 200 acres in Manor Twp., Lancaster County, PA. He was dead by 1733 when his two sons Jacob and Martin Oberholtzer sold his land in Manor twp. No land warrants were issued in his name as part of the 1710 Lancaster County Land Warrants.

Religious Beliefs

As Anabaptists they did not believe in infant baptism. They were also opposed to the State seeking control over their freedom of conscience to worship in the way they saw fit. They believed that they as individuals had the right to interpret the Word of God as they found it in the Bible and that they had also the right to establish the relationship of the God's Word with themselves and the relationship of themselves with the Father in Heaven. They wanted no priest, pope, potentate nor political power to dominate their religious belief. They were also opposed to taking up of arms or participating in War.

Persecutions in Europe

The persecution of the Mennonites in Europe was intense and nearly continuous from the 16th century to the 18th century. Especially hard persecutions occurred around the year 1640, 1671 and 1710/1711. These persecution periods were performed by the followers of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin in Switzerland. The canton governments of Switzerland set up a kind of "Anabaptist Chamber", whose objective it was to rid themselves of the unwanted and offending Mennonites. These persecution periods were accomplished by passing edicts and decrees that prevented the employment of Mennonites in the trades, and often confiscated their land and homes against their own will. Furthermore, these Mennonites were often expelled from their native Swiss homeland. If they later returned to Switzerland and were caught again they were penalized once more by being placed in prison and were often expelled for a second and sometimes third time.

1717 Immigration to Pennsylvania

After considering different areas of Europe for settlement, the Mennonite leaders decided in February 1717 that Pennsylvania would be the new gathering place for the Mennonites. Some started leaving in March of that year to journey to London. By May, some had received certificates, which allowed them to receive help from the Dutch brethren when they arrived in Holland.

It was reported that on August 24, 1717, three ships carrying 363 Mennonite passengers arrived in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The names of the ships and passengers aboard the ships are not known at this time. However, tax lists obtained for various counties in Pennsylvania for subsequent years following this mass immigration contain names of Mennonites who likely came on these three ships during the year 1717.

Between 1711 and 1717, Martin Kendig and Hans Herr (the land agent) worked hard to purchase surrounding lands for other family members and Mennonite friends who came over in 1717. Martin Kendig was delegated to return to Europe around 1715 to convince others to immigrate to Pennsylvania to take up lands. It is estimated that by the year 1732 nearly one-fifth of Mennonites living in the German Palatinate emigrated to America.

Introductory Statement from Martin H. Brackbill's Research Pertaining to the Early Pennsylvania Land Records of 1710 Pequea Settlement

"In the spring of 1710, the area we know as Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and adjacent neighborhoods, was a forest thickly covered with deciduous trees, mostly oaks, walnuts and chestnuts. There was a trail through it known as the Conestoga road which started in the southeast at the crossing over the Octorara Creek, moved northwest to an opening in a range of hills then westward in a more or less westerly line that crossed the Pequea Creek about halfway to the river and then to a crossing over the Conestoga River, the largest stream in the area, a few miles above its mouth with the road finally ending at the Indian village of the same name.

Conestoga, the home of a remnant of the Susquehannocks, a once important Indian nation that had occupied this region for centuries, were a part of the Iroquois Indian tribe whose war parties came through here on occasion on their way south to fight the Southern Indians, principally the fierce Cherokees. They also came here to hunt various wild animals in this land territory.

There were other Indians in the area too. There was a village of the Shawnees, founded a few decades earlier near the mouth of the Pequea Creek and upstream on the Susquehanna, at Paxtang (now Harrisburg, PA) there was a village of the Delawares, although there were more permanent homes to the east at the Tulpenocken and Mantawny on the Schuylkill and its tributaries.

In addition to the Indians, there were a handful of mixed breeds who traded with the Indians and lived in crude small cabins near to the Indian villages. By name, some of these traders were Peter Brazaillon, Martin Chartier, and Jacques Letort, all Frenchmen, and William Sherrill, Moses Combe and a few others whose names have been forgotten. There was also Hans Steelman, whose base was in Maryland on the east side of the Susquehanna River. He moved back and forth over the nebulous line between the lands claimed by William Penn and those of the Calverts in Maryland and this discrepancy caused trouble in both colonies.

It was into this region that Jacob Taylor came in late in 1710 to lay out 10,000 acres for the newly arrived half dozen Swiss Mennonite families that included John Herr (known then as Hans Heer). With him was his wife and three children. At least three more were born in the woods in the coming decade. There was also his brother, Christian Herr, who was a preacher or elder of sorts, Martin Meily, Martin Kendig, Jacob Miller, John Funk, Hans Graeff, Wendell Bauman, and perhaps Martin Oberholzer and their families. They were there with the surveyor to look over the land where they planned to live but did not stay, for winter was approaching and all had families to care for, including small children and possibly some babies.

Undoubtedly they spent the winter with friends and fellow Mennonites in Germantown and the adjacent Van Bebber township near Philadelphia. At least three of their number had already been in Pennsylvania for a number of years, Hans Graff, Martin Meily and Wendell Bauman and their families. The rest had reached Pennsylvania in August aboard the small ship Maria Hope, Captain John Annis, Master, whose frequent voyages to England and America were made for the William Penn family and their close adherents. They had been aided in making the journey by Mennonites in Holland where they had gone from the Palatinate, probably in the area of the Kraichgau, east of the Rhine and southeast of Heidelberg. They came to the new world without too much of this world's goods, although it is probable they brought with them on the ship from England things such as kitchen ware and small tools.

In 1710, William Penn was in England trying to sell his province to the Queen. He was troubled with debts and had spent some time in a debtors' prison. His agent, James Logan, had gone to England late in 1709 while a new Lieutenant Governor, Charles Gookin, a retired army officer had taken over the running of affairs in the province. Penn and his closest friends in addition to fighting debtors in England were opposed in the province by a group of Quakers, whose representatives controlled the assembly and thus the purse strings.

It was in this period that the Swiss arrived almost entirely unnoticed. Logan had stopped keeping a record of the property commissioners' transactions when he went to England and no one else took up the burden. It was the tenth day of the eighth month (October 10), 1710 when the warrant for ten thousand acres was issued to the Swiss who arrived in the Maria Hope and Jacob Taylor, to whom the warrant was directed, laid it out in two large tracts of 6,000 acres and 4000 acres later that same month. However, it was not until the following April that Taylor divided the first 6,000 acres into ten smaller tracts of various acreages.

As noted the remainder of the ten thousand acres was also surveyed October 25, 1710, but none of it was returned until two years later. In both cases, the surveyor in laying out the land, included within the boundaries of each tract additional land to cover what was called a six per cent allowance for roads so that tracts of 500 acres, for instance, had within it 530 acres. Later surveys in a number of cases showed that even this was wrong; there was more land than originally called for in almost every case.

The original warrant granted by Edward Shippen, Griffith Owen and Thomas Story to these Swissers appeared to have very liberal terms, indicating that it was done on the explicit instructions of William Penn. How those instructions reached the Land Commissioners in October of 1710 is not clear, but presumably they came with the settlers in the hands of a messenger, who presumably was Hans Rudolph Bundely, whose name led all the others in the original warrant. Years later Bondeli, a Swiss gunsmith who had lived in Pennsylvania at least since 1710 and who was a friend and confederate of Franz Ludwig Michel, another Swiss active in an abortive attempt to found a Swiss colony back in Virginia and also the discoverer of what proved to be a fabled silver mine, was given 500 acres of prime land at a much reduced rate because he had been instrumental in bringing the Swiss to Pennsylvania in the first place.

The instructions Shippen and his fellow commissioners gave Taylor were simple, viz. lay out ten thousand acres on the northwesterly side of a hill about twenty miles easterly from Conestogo and near the head of Perquin Creek. The monetary terms for the land were fixed at 500 pounds for the ten thousand acres, which would be at the rate of five pounds per hundred acres, a very favorable price. In addition, the money did not have to be paid down immediately except for the first 100 pounds. The second 100 pounds plus 48 pounds interest was to be paid in two years and six months from the time of surveys (or April, 1713). The third payment of 118 pounds (the sixteen pounds being interest at six per cent on a 300 pound balance) [the following year] and 100 twelve pounds a year later still and finally, 100 and six pounds to complete the payment, this coming due in 1716. Taylor also was required to subdivide the ten thousand acres, which he did, and make a return, which he did also.

The return, entitled Warrant of Rudolph Bundeli and Company, lists the subdivided tracts, including road allowances as follows:

1855 acres returned to Martin Kundig (includes 3 tracts of land)
265 acres returned to Martin Milan
530 acres returned to Christian Heere
530 acres returned to John Heere
530 acres returned to Wyndel Bowman

530 acres returned to Stof. Franciscus
1060 acres returned to Jacob Miller
530 acres returned to John Funk

The total surveyed in this return was 5850 acres, of which 330 acres was for roads. An additional 530 acres was surveyed to Bondeli adjoining this land, but it was returned separately and treated separately, so that it was not included in the land for which 500 pounds was the price. It thus appears, since the second part of the survey was only for 4,000 acres plus a road allowance of 240 acres, that the Swissers did not get all of their land.

Of course in making payment, each man paid for his proportional share, so that no one paid any more than he should have.

In the list of persons for whom part of the 5,850 acres was returned are the names of two men not on the warrant, Martin Milan and Stophell or Christopher Franciscus. Milan or Meli was one of the persons who reached Pennsylvania on the Maria Hope with Hans and Christian Herr."

Sources:

Martin H. Brackbill, "John (Hans Jr.) Herr (Died 1756) At Pequea", an unpublished essay found in the Herr Family folder at LMHS.

Richard Warren Davis, "Swiss and German Mennonite Immigrants From the Palatinate, 1704-1717", Mennonite Family History, January, 1994 issue, pages 9-16.