

# Wertman

*Lines*

Newsletter of the Wertman Family Association

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## Reserve these dates:

- **WFA Annual Reunion**
- **Friday-Sunday, 19-21 August 2005**
- **Berks County, PA**

## Wertman Family Reunion 2005

by Shirley Daniels, 2005 Reunion Chair

The Wertman Family Association Reunion Committee is excited about the annual WFA Reunion 18-21 August 2005 in Berks County, PA, where Johann Martin Wertman, one of the sons of George Philip Wertman I of Lehigh County, PA, settled in the late 1700s. We hope you will attend. The weekend promises fun and information for all!

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Comfort Inn -Bethel/Midway, exit 16 off of Interstate 78. The group rate is \$71.96 plus tax. You can make reservations **now** by phoning 717-933-8888. Ask for Audrey Brown (the manager, usually there 9 am-3 pm) and tell her you are with the Wertman Family Reunion group. (If some emergency should prevent you from attending, you may cancel with no penalty up to 24 hours in advance.)

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We invite you to enjoy all or some of the reunion weekend's scheduled events:

- **Thursday evening:** chicken dinner on your own at Kauffman's Bar-B-Que Ranch
- **Friday:** Researcher's Meeting and lunch at Trainer's Midway Diner, next to the Comfort Inn
- **Friday evening:** all-you-can-eat, traditional Pennsylvania-Dutch dinner with "seven sweets and seven sours" at historic Haag's Hotel in Shartlesville. Our after-dinner speaker is Randall Wert (see p. 6).
- **Saturday:** catered family picnic and business meeting at Salem Belleman's Church Grove in Mohrsville. Martin Wertman, sons Samuel, Daniel, and John, and grandson William are buried, with their wives in the church's old cemetery.
- **Sunday:** visit other cemeteries and Wertman farms in the area.

There are many places of interest in and near Berks County, including historical sites, museums, and shopping spots, so those spouses and children with "non-genealogical" interests can have fun, too.

Look for details in our June newsletter and online at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~wertman>

## NY Abstracts

Anita Reed has done much of the abstracting work on the web site for NY-Niagara Newspaper Abstracts - Finding Our Ancestors In The News. Check it out!

## Letters from a Soldier

by Russell C. Dannecker

Some of you will remember with fondness Richard Hull, who was one of the Association's founding members. His wife Phyllis and I are third cousins one time removed. Our common ancestors are John WERTMAN and Susannah LEVAN. One day Richard was looking over some old family records and found a faint notation in a list of the children of John and Susannah Wertman. He thought that it said John Levan Wertman died in war. With Richard's usually tenacity, he soon found that there was a John Wertman buried at the Fredericksburg, Virginia, National Cemetery.

In the fall of 2000, I had the pleasure of spending a week at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., researching Wertman family history. The focus of my work was military and pension records of Wertman soldiers. I hoped to find John's military record, but since he had died during the war, I did not expect to find a pension record. Boy was I wrong!

There were two pension files in addition to his military record. In total, the files were probably five inches thick. This is very unusual, but as I was soon to find out this was an unusual case. John's file was especially interesting because the Federal Government had been paying his pension to his supposed widow, except he was not married. This came to light when his mother claimed his pension. The letters and a photograph were in the files and exist today because the government sent a pension examiner to sort out the mess.



*Soldier John Levan Wertman's tombstone in the National Cemetery, Fredericksburg, VA*

The first claim was from Lucy C. Messenger, who married Christian Wertman on 8 May 1859. Lucy Wertman filed pension claims in 1882, 1890, and 1908, stating that Christian Wertman had enlisted as John L. Wertman.

In 1885, Susannah Wertman claimed the pension of her son, John Levan Wertman. She based her claim on the fact that when he went into the service, he was the oldest male child living at home, and he was contributing to the support of the family. Special Pension Examiner C. D. Sloan, from Philadelphia, PA, interviewed John's mother on 29 October 1889. A portion of that interview follows: "Yes, sir, my son, John L. Wertman was in the U. S. Army. I cannot read or write and I do not know further than the letters say, as to what Co. and Reg't. he was in.... James was the youngest son and he was at home and he always got the letters and read them.... My son, John. L., was never married and left no widow or child surviving his death, not to my knowledge; he never said anything to me about it."

"Special Examiner's Note: ... The claimant produced the following letters, to wit: one dated Machnoy, June 22, 1862 and addressed to James A. Wertman; another dated Virginia, August 25, 1862, and addressed to the same; another dated Fairfax, Virginia, Sept. 2, 1862, and addressed to the same; another Camp Jones, Maryland., Sept. 30, 1862, and addressed to the same; and another dated Virginia, Nov. 28, 1862 and addressed to ... Meine Liebe Mutter (my dear mother). These letters give soldier's address as Co. E 129th Reg't."

Randall Wert has translated four letters. He wrote, "... the letters are fascinating. Mr. Wertman speaks of his fear of the bombshells and mentions seeing badly wounded rebel soldiers. He wrote with requests for money and chewing tobacco, a habit which he apparently picked up in the service. In one letter, he mentions a number of men from Lewistown, and these names match up perfectly with the company roster."

John mentions James, Philip, and Ruben in his letters. They are all his actual brothers. Philip was in the Civil War. In fact he was drafted once and enlisted another time. I cannot determine whether or not the Ruben mentioned is John's brother. A third cousin named Ruben, from the Danville Wertman Clan, fought with an Ohio unit, became sick after the battle of Shiloh due to exposure during and after the battle, was sent home with chronic diarrhea and Typhoid Fever, and died

at home of disease on 28 May 1862. This would have been before John enlisted. Ruben was heavily engaged at Shiloh and would have known about bombshells.

The translations follow, with comments from the translator. It is interesting to read this soldier's voice from the past. Notice his enthusiasm, then fear, then resolve, as time passes.

### **First Letter**

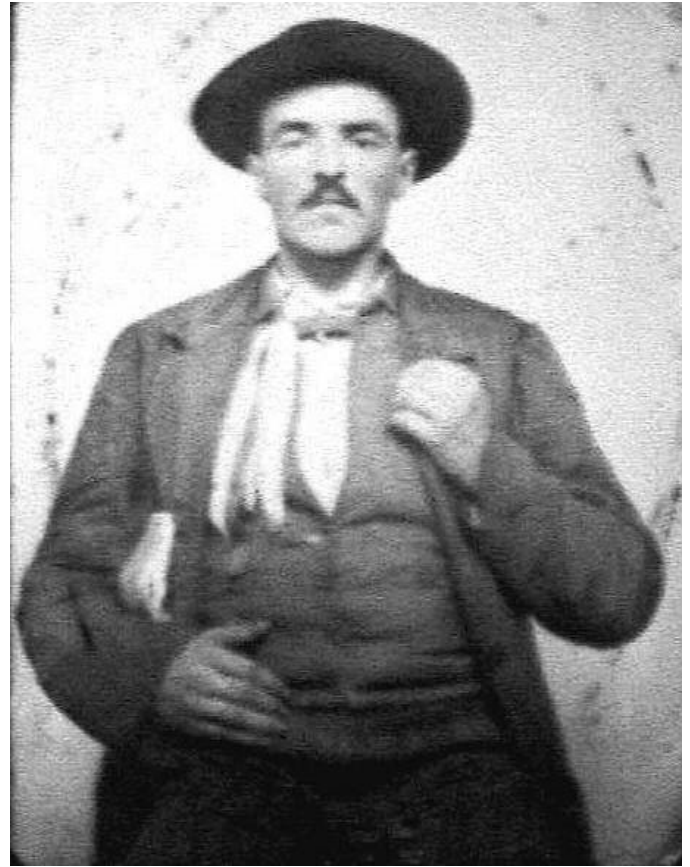
The first letter is too faint to read. Revealing its contents will require another trip to the National Archives to get a better copy (and to look for a missing page from another letter).

### **Second Letter**

“Virginia, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1862

“My friend, James A. Wertman, I would have you know that I am still healthy and I would hope that these few lines would find you the same. And I didn't take the time to write much when I wrote the other letter. And I would further have you know how the trip was. Saturday at one thirty in the afternoon we stopped in Dermqu [Tamaqua?]. And we came to Harrisburg at nine o'clock, where we went into the [tipo? tipi?] for supper and there we ate. And then we went to the state house and lay there until Sunday noon. And then we traveled 2 miles to Camp Curtin and lay there until the next Saturday. And then we went to Washington on the railroad and we arrived there during the night. And from there we traveled the next morning 6 miles to Camp McCahl [McCall?] and lay there a few days. And then we rode south again and now we are above central Virginia. And I would further have you know that McClellan has pulled back and now wants to go to General Polk and then onward against Richmond. And then it will soon be finished. And we are almost one hundred miles from Richmond.

“And it suits me well, but I don't know when we must go on, but I don't care when we depart. I have nothing to complain about. I have enough of everything: enough to eat, enough to drink, a quart and a pint of coffee per day, enough of everything, except there are no women. And I already wrote to you in the other letter about the money, and I have been waiting a long time for an answer, whether you received it or not. I also thought I would have my picture taken in my soldier's uniform and send it home, but that won't be possible. I found out that we can't leave without a water bucket or a pass.



*John Levan Wertman*

“And I would further have you know that Joseph Geiger wrote a letter, but I can't answer him. I am out of paper, envelopes, and stamps. Now please be so good as to send me stamps. I will soon get paper and envelopes.

“And there are a lot of people [here] from Lewistown who know you. Those would be Henri Schuls [Henry Shultz], James Bohner [Boner], Denil Maher [Daniel Moyer], Luhs Maher [Lewis Moyer], and Essus Wummer [Asher Womer].

“I have to close. I know a lot more, but I am getting so tired from squatting. I don't have a chair. And now write me as quickly as you can.”

#### **Translator's notes:**

*The German text is written without periods; new thoughts are connected with und (and). I have inserted periods at logical locations but retained the “and” at the beginning of each new sentence.*

*The German writing reflects the writer's Pennsylvania German background, as it contains many phonetic spellings of Pennsylvania German dialect words and the use of English loan words.*

*It is touching to read Wertman's hope in August 1862 that the war would soon be finished.*

The Lewistown names mentioned by Wertman can all be found on the company roster at <http://www.pacivilwar.com/cwpa129e.html>. The Lewistown in question is about halfway between Pottsville and South Tamaqua in Schuylkill County.

### **Third Letter**

“...the other day another [?] been attacked. And I would further have you know that I received your letter on September 1<sup>st</sup>. And write to me as quickly as you can. And I would further have you know that I lost my money pouch with 4 dollars.

“That’s all from me. John L. Wertman

“One more wish from Alexander Miller

“He is with me, and you are supposed to speak with [his parents?]. He wonders why they don’t write to him. He has already written 5 letters home and has not yet received an answer.

[Right side:] “Farfax [Fairfax] [obliterated] State of Virginia

“September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1862

“I take my pen in hand to write a few lines to you, my dearest brother, James A. Wertman

“I would have you know that I am still healthy and I hope that this letter might find you the same. And I would further have you know that we were within five miles of the battlefield. We just guarded [army ammunition?] wagons and then we went back into our camp on the next morning. And I can tell you that I saw something and I can tell you that I soon got scared. There we heard the bombshells whistling. There I thought of brother Ruben, how he once said that he hadn’t been afraid until he heard the bombshells. There we could hear them. And I would further have you know that you should write to me and tell me whether Sam is still at Kistlars [Kistlers] and let me know about Daniel Peter. And I send my best respects to all of you. And I had my picture taken in Tamaqua and gave it to Joseph Geiger, and if you still don’t have it, then he shall [let] you have it. And I would further have you know that I saw 690 rebels that our soldiers had captured. And as they came to us, we had our flag over them. But you should have seen the faces there, and how they complained. One of them said, “Boys, don’t walk under that flag, because I am going to tear it down.” Those were the rebels who spoke that way. And then one from our regiment asked them, “Who has the gotten the best of it now?” Then the rebels said, “Well, we have so far.” And at the place where we guarded the wag-

ons, we wanted to lie in the woods and then we heard the bombshells whistling. There, where we wanted to lie out in the woods, there...” [letter ends abruptly here]

### **Translator’s notes:**

*Alexander Miller appears on the Company E roster.*

*This letter was probably written at Fairfax Seminary, based on the regiment’s history provided online at: <http://www.pacivilwar.com/cwpa129hist.html>. This online history also describes the guarding of the ammunition train and the bombardment in the woods recounted by Wertman.*

*It is a shame the letter is cut off. Maybe there are more pages that I didn’t receive?*

### **Fourth Letter**

“Camp Jones, in the State of Maryland

“September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1862

“I take my pen in hand to write a few lines to you, my dear brother, James A. Wertman.

“I would have you know that I am still healthy. And I would further have you know that I had already traveled and was so tired that I laid myself down in the corner of a fence, and there I fell asleep and lay until the next morning. And then I got up, brewed myself coffee, and started off after the regiment. And then I asked around everywhere, and in the evening I reached the others. And at that time they were ready on the field, and then we had to be ready for three days. And during the time when we stood there, our [artillery] pieces fought across the river, so that the rebels shot bombshells across to us. But it didn’t do anything to us. But the whole time I was wishing that we could answer them with our rifles. I would have liked to go after them. I hope I can shoot one yet. But now we are no longer in any danger. They have retreated to Bull’s Run. And a rebel brought the Union flag to us, and he said they wanted to stand one more battle, and if they couldn’t win it, they would have to give up. And I would further have you know that I have seen more than I had ever seen before. I have seen rebels with their legs and arms shot off. Some curse, and the others curse. One of them said it had been hard fighting against us; the bombshells were always flying, so that one couldn’t see. They just call us the Yankees. But I believe that I am made like a soldier. In any event, it suits me quite well. And I would have you know that I received your letter on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September.

“That’s all from me. “John L. Wertman

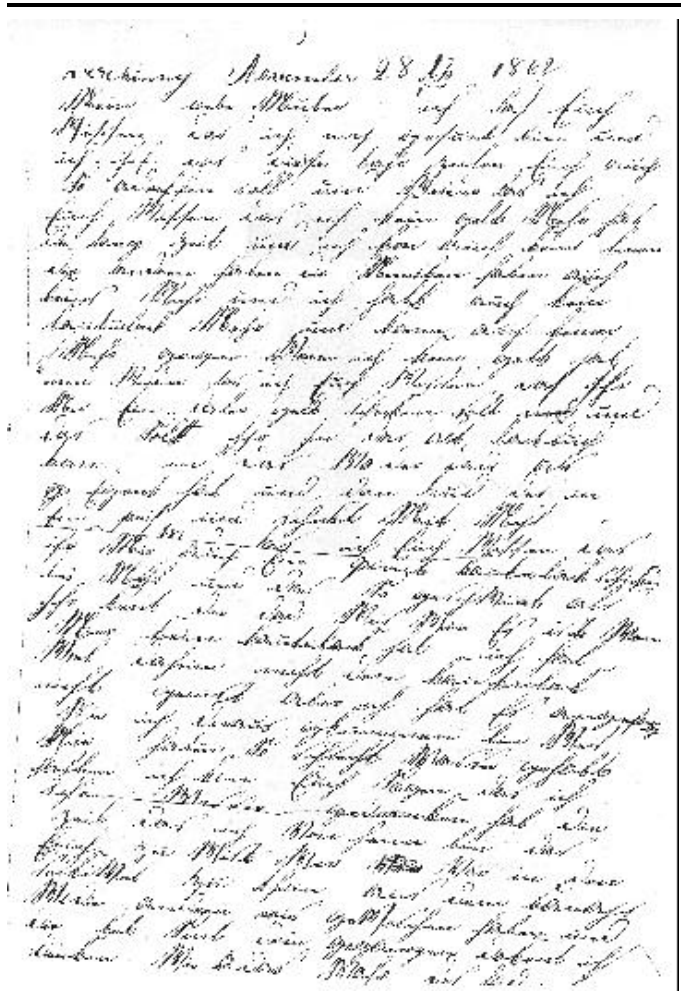
“I take my pen in hand to write a few lines to you, my dear sister Susana L. Wertman

“You wrote to me, and I was happy that you indeed thought about me often. And you wrote to me for my likeness, but I can’t do anything about that, because I don’t have any money. First I drew the \$ 50.00 and I sent that home. Well, I had six dollars from home, and I spent two dollars of it and lost four dollars with the pocketbook. And in the meantime, I haven’t received any more. But I would gladly have sent this, but I can’t. But I am sorry that I can’t send this. I would further have you know that I saw your Peter. He was with us.”

**Translator’s notes:**

*I can find references to a Camp Jones in Virginia, but not in Maryland. Based on the unit history, the camp was probably not far from Antietam.*

*John refers to James as his brother here, but as his “friend” in an earlier letter. This is in keeping with the Pennsylvania German use of the word Freundschaft, which literally means friendship, but is used by PA Germans to refer to their extended family.*



The English word “fence” was adopted into the Pennsylvania German dialect (in various phonetic spellings) very quickly after immigration to America.

In the sentence “Some curse, and the others curse,” Wertman was either joking or meant to use a different word in one of the clauses and repeated “curse” (fluchen) by mistake.

Wertman uses the borrowed English word leinen for “lines” in opening his letter to his brother, but then uses the authentic German word Zeilen in opening his letter to his sister. What we have here is a snapshot of Pennsylvania German in the midst of the process of Anglicization.

It’s interesting to see the interest in having one’s “likeness” taken in those early days of photography.

**Fifth Letter**

“Virginia, November 28<sup>th</sup>, 1862

“My dear Mother, I would have you know that I am still healthy, and I hope that these few lines shall find you the same. And I would further have you know that I have had no money for a long time, nor can I borrow any. The others – most of them – also have no money. And I also have no chewing tobacco, nor can I get any more if I don’t have any money. And I would further have you know that you should send me a dollar, and you should put it the old pocketbook, the one that always belonged to Daddy, and then put that into a letter and send it with the mail [words concealed behind fold in page] I would further have you know that you should also send me a pound of chewing tobacco with the mail, and do this as quickly as you can. Daddy knows how it is when one doesn’t have chewing tobacco. I suppose I didn’t use chewing tobacco at home, but I started it when I came out [into the service], because we have had such bad water. I can tell you that during this time away from home I have drunk water that you would find too filthy to put into the pigs’ bucket. [It came] from the canal that the others had washed out of, and in which the boats had traveled. That should give you some idea of how it was. That [cut off]

“And I would further have you know that you should send me that as quickly as you can. You can also put the chewing tobacco and the pocket book with the money into a bundle. And I’ll tell you the least troublesome way to do it. Go to Schmit’s and buy the tobacco there, and tell Schmit that I said he should make it right.

“That’s all from me. John L. Wertman”



build a bridge across Bull Run, where they remained as guard.

On the 30th the remaining companies, after having been held for four days in constant readiness to march, proceeded as guard to an ammunition train to Centreville, passing on the way the corps of Fitz John Porter, in light marching order, bound for the front. The cannonading had been heavy throughout the day. Towards evening it rapidly came nearer, and at 5 p.m., after having safely delivered the train, the command was, for the first time, under fire, the rebel artillery throwing shells into the woods near Centreville, where it was resting.

Proceeding on its return to Fairfax Seminary, it was brigaded on the 3rd of September with the Ninety-first, One Hundred and Thirty-fourth, and One Hundred and Twenty-sixth Pennsylvania regiments, commanded by General E. B. Tyler. Brigade, battalion, and company drills were studiously practiced, and on the 7th its camp was changed to a point near Fort Richardson.

On the morning of the 14th, the brigade started on the march through Maryland, arrived at the Monocacy on the 16th, where it was halted, and on the 17th resumed the march to the sound of heavy cannonading, arriving early on the following morning on the field at Antietam. But the enemy had by this time retired, and the command went into camp, where for six weeks, with the exception of an expedition up to Shenandoah Valley with the division, the regiment remained engaged in drill and unimportant picket duty.

On the 30th of October the army commenced crossing into Virginia and moving down the valley, continuing the movement, with a slight interruption at Warrenton, until it arrived opposite Fredericksburg, and Burnside's bloody, but fruitless campaign was inaugurated. Shortly after noon of the 13th of December, the division crossed the Rappahannock, and proceeding through the town to a position in full view of the field, awaited the order to enter the fight. It was not long delayed, and again advancing by a main road, the brigade halted in low, open ground, where the men were ordered to lie down.

Tempted by the easy range and unprotected situation of the brigade, the enemy opened a destructive fire from his batteries, by which Lieutenant Jacob Parvin, Jr., was mortally, and a number of privates severely wounded. Moving to the left of the road, the division was shortly after formed in

line of battle on the crest of the hill, the brigade in two lines, the One Hundred and Twenty-ninth on the left front. In the hopeless and fruitless charge which followed, made under a ceaseless fire of musketry and artillery from the impregnable position which the enemy held, officers and men did everything that true soldiers could do, traversing in good order the lines of the dead and wounded left in previous charges, and pressing forward in the gathering darkness until they attained position in advance of every previous charge, and from which it was impossible to go farther. In the brief space that it was in motion, the regiment lost one hundred and forty-two in killed and wounded. The caps of some were subsequently found close up to the famous stone-wall, and an officer and seven privates of company D were taken prisoners. Captains George J. Lawrence, and Jonathan K. Taylor, were mortally wounded. Captain Taylor was shot through the lungs early in the charge, but refused to leave the field, and retired with his command. Captains William Wren, Jr., Herbert Thomas, E. Godfrey Rehner, and Levi C. Leib, and Lieutenant A. A. Lukenbach, were wounded. Lieutenant Joseph Oliver was wounded and fell into the enemy's hands. The loss in killed was sixteen.

General Tyler in his official report of the battle says: "Colonel O'Brien, One Hundred and Thirty-fourth, led the right front; Colonel Frick, One Hundred and Twenty-ninth, the left; Colonel Elder, One Hundred and Twenty-sixth, held the right rear, and Colonel Gregory, Ninety-first, the left rear. These officers discharged their respective duties creditably and satisfactorily, their voices being frequently heard above the din of battle, urging on their men against the terrible shower of shot and shell, and the terrific musketry, as we approached the stone wall. Of their conduct I cannot speak too highly. Lieutenant Colonel Rowe, Lieutenant Colonel Armstrong, Major Anthony, and Major Thompson, are entitled to great credit, for their efforts and officer-like conduct during the engagement.

Lieutenant Colonel Armstrong had a horse shot under him. Adjutant Green exhibited great coolness in the discharge of his duty. It may not be improper for me to say that Captain Thomas, Acting Inspector General on the staff of the division commander, having his horse shot, thus prevented from serving him, joined his company in the One Hundred and Twenty-ninth, and was severely wounded while leading his men in the charge."

After dark the regiment was again marched upon the field for guard duty, but was withdrawn towards midnight. On the 14th and 15th, it remained in the town, losing one man by the shot of a sharp-shooter, and on the morning of the 16th, after having spent the night in throwing up a breast-work on the right of the town, re-crossed the river and retired again to camp. The knapsacks which had been thrown aside before going into battle, had been carefully guarded, but were not recovered. During the cold rainy days preceding the 23rd of December, when extra clothing and blankets were furnished to supply the place of those lost, the men suffered greatly from exposure, one dying, and many being thrown into hospitals. [While not specifically mentioned, could this one dead be John L. Wertman? RCD]

### **129th Regiment, Company E**

Recruited in Schuylkill County

**Roster Source: Bates, Samuel P. (Samuel Penniman), 1827-1902.:** *History of Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5; prepared in compliance with acts of the legislature, by Samuel P. Bates.*

#### **Captain**

E. Godfrey Rehrer

#### **First Lieutenant**

William S. Allebach

#### **Second Lieutenant**

Robert L. Leyburn

#### **First Sergeant**

Jacob H. Martz

#### **Sergeant**

Elijah F. Bodey  
William Shoemaker  
William N. Brown  
Lewis S. Boner  
John T. Bond

#### **Corporal**

Jacob Roberts, Jr.  
Jeremiah Messersmith  
A. R. Whetstone  
Leonard Bowers  
Pierce Bausman  
George F. Becker  
W. H. Holderman  
George Nutz  
Charles H. Sneath

#### **Musicians**

Albert Moyer

#### **Privates**

Allen, William  
Allen, Thomas  
Becker, Henry  
Becker, Nathan  
Becker, James  
Billman, Solomon  
Bishop, Jacob S.  
Bear, John  
Blum, Christian N.  
Bond, George  
Boner, James  
Booth, William  
Brown, Jacob  
Bailey, Clarence E.  
Dintinger, John  
Dreher, Webster D.  
Donaldson, S. T.  
Davis, William W.  
Dunnogen, Joseph  
Eynon, John  
Faust, Samuel  
Grover, Earnest  
Golloger, Edward  
Hendricks, Charles J.  
Hartung, Daniel  
Hartung, Gideon  
Hine, Amos  
Hill, Jones  
Hoppes, Elias  
Horn, John  
Houser, Joseph  
Houser, Frank W.  
Huntzinger, Samuel  
Johnson, William  
Kaufman, Emanuel  
Kleckner, Joshua  
Kleckner, Henry  
Kocher, Gideon  
Krause, Adam  
Longacre, Joel S.  
Lotze, William  
Lutz, Harrison S.  
Miller, Alexander  
Moyer, Lewis  
Moyer, Daniel  
Moyer, Daniel H.  
M'Mahon, Michael  
Neyer, Moses  
Oswald, James  
Reeser, William H.  
Reinhart, Willo'by  
Reichelderfer, D.

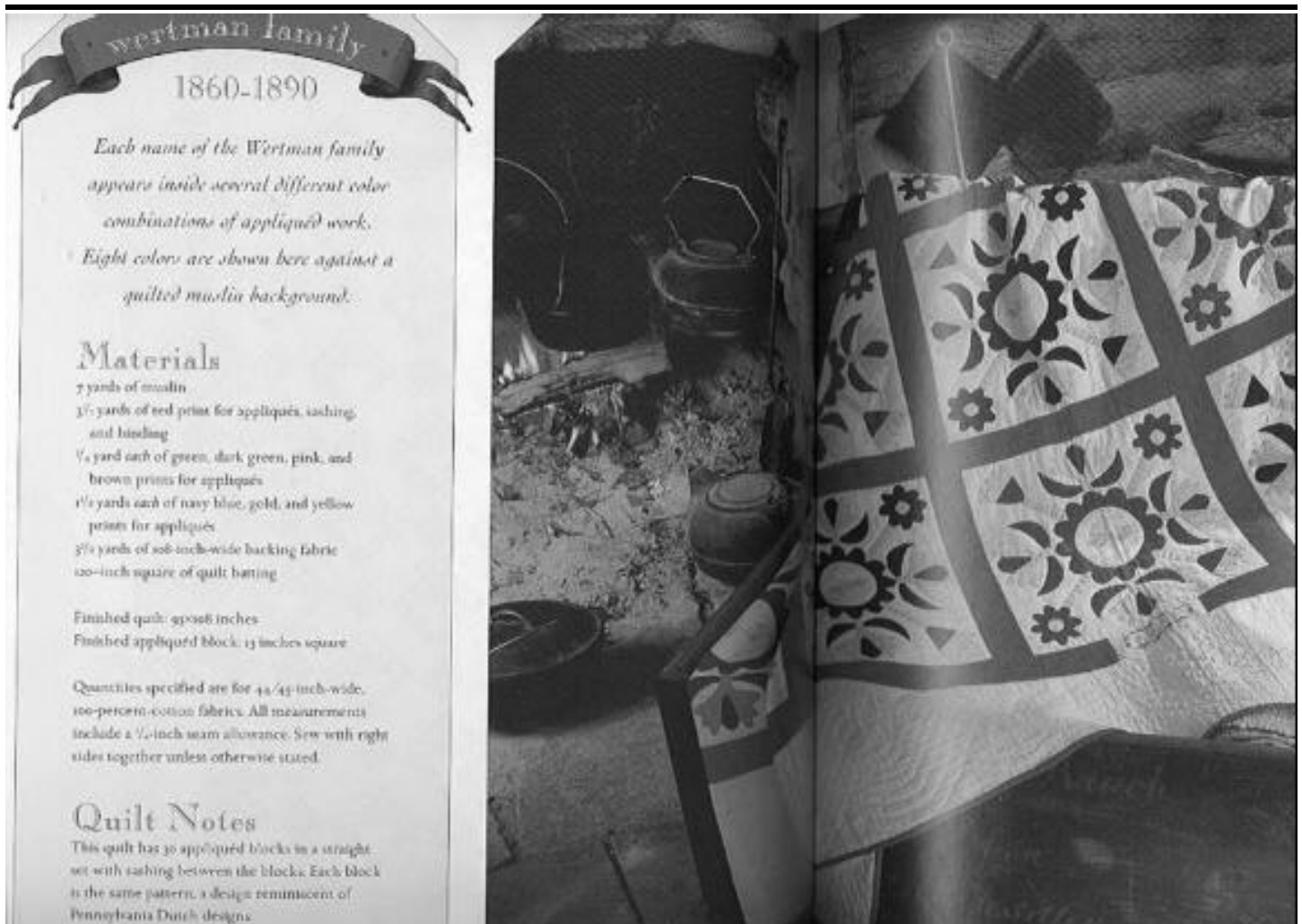
Rill, David  
Robinson, W. H. N.  
Raegert, August  
Reppert, William  
Sassaman, Elias  
Shultz, Henry  
Shultz, William  
Sheafer, John  
Shoener, Daniel  
Shoener, Francis H.  
Snyder, Elias  
Spect, Conrad  
Speece, John L.  
Singly, Isaac  
Trout, Franklin  
Walker, George W.  
Weythet, Franklin  
Willford, John D.  
Wertman, John L.  
Wagner, Jacob  
Womer, Asher  
Zehner, Stephen  
Zeigler, George W.  
Zimmerman, David

## Wertman Family Quilt

by Russell C. Dannecker

It never ceases to amaze me how information on the family comes to us. In December, my wife Jan received her copy of the Better Homes & Gardens book, "Quilting Pieces of the Past, 175 Years of Inspirational Quilting," published by Meredith Books. To her surprise and our great delight she noticed on page 76, the Wertman Family Quilt (see illustration below). I have written to Meredith Books and to the Lincoln International Quilt Study Center at the University of Nebraska to ask if they can put me in touch with the owner of the quilt.

The "Wertman Family, 1860-1890" quilt has 30 appliqued blocks, each containing a Wertman family name. While it is difficult to see from the photograph in the book, some of the names appear readable. If a list of all the names and inscriptions were available, the Wertman Family Association might be able to identify these individuals. The Pennsylvania-Dutch design uses eight colors of fabric on a muslin background.



## **2005 Officers** **Wertman Family Association**

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- 2005 Reunion, Fri.-Sun., 19-21 August, Berks County, PA; Shirley Daniels (chair) *rdaniels2@compuserve.com*

### **2005 Dues**

Wertman Family Association dues of \$20 per family were due 1 July. Copies of this newsletter will be mailed to individuals who have requested a printed version and whose dues are current. You may mail your check (payable to the Wertman Family Association) to the Treasurer, Shirley Wertman, at 6343 Memorial Rd., Allentown, PA 18106.

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