

THE CHESTER VALLEY AMISH SETTLEMENT: SOME GENERAL DETAILS

AMISH HEADS OF FAMILY ARRIVALS IN THE CHESTER VALLEY

NAME	AAMG	DATE	FROM	TO
Michael Lapp*	LP1	1767	Cumru, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Adam Rickenbach	RB2	1767	Alsace, Berks	Tredyffrin Township
Christian Fike	FK	1767	Alsace, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
John Zook	ZK14	1769	Heidelberg, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Jacob Kauffman	KFB	1769	Cocalico, Lancaster	Charlestown Township
Moritz Zug	ZK2	1771	Bern, Berks	W. Whiteland Township
Christian Zug	ZK1	1772	Heidelberg, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Christian Zook*	ZK18	1772	Heidelberg, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Jacob Kauffman	KFC	1773	Caernarvon, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
John Kanagy	KY2	1773	Bethel, Lebanon	E. Whiteland Township
George Lapp	LP2	1778	?	Charlestown Township
Ludwig Riehl	RL	1781	Cumru, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Christian Fisher	FH13	1785	W. Nantmeal, Chester	E. Whiteland Township
Peter Fisher	FH14	1785	W. Nantmeal, Chester	E. Whiteland Township
Joseph Kurtz*	KZA18	1790	Cumru, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Joseph Kanagy	KYa	1792	Bethel, Lebanon	E. Whiteland Township
Jacob Kurtz	KZA12	1793	Cumru, Berks	Tredyffrin Township
Jacob Gerber	GB15	1793	Cumru, Berks	E. Pikeland Township
John Gerber	GB1b	1797	Cumru, Berks	Tredyffrin Township
Samuel King	KG9	1797	Cumru, Berks	Easttown Township
John Miller	ML7	1802	Cumru, Berks?	E. Whiteland Township
Jacob Hertzler	HZ51	1804	Caernarvon, Berks	E. Whiteland Township
Jacob Plank	PL112	1819	Caernarvon, Berks	W. Whiteland Township

*Ordained Minister

AMISH HEADS OF FAMILY DEPARTURES FROM THE CHESTER VALLEY

NAME	AAMG	DATE	FROM	TO
John Fike	FK1	1775	E. Whiteland	Conemaugh, Somerset
Peter Fisher	FH14	1785	E. Whiteland	Leacock, Lancaster
John Kanagy	KY2	1786	E. Whiteland	Earl, Lancaster
John Lapp	LP11	1789	E. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Lancaster
Christian Fisher	FH13	1790	E. Whiteland	Salisbury, Lancaster
John Rickenbach	RB22	1790	Tredyffrin	Salisbury, Lancaster
Ludwig Riehl	RL	1792	E. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Lancaster
Jacob Kauffman	KFB4	1794	Charlestown	Armagh, Mifflin
George Lapp	LP2	1797	W. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Lancaster
Daniel Kauffman	KFC6	1799	E. Whiteland	Union, Mifflin
Michael Lapp, Jr.	LP14	1800	E. Whiteland	Maiden Creek, Berks
David Kauffman	KFB6	1800	Charlestown	Union, Mifflin
Jacob Lapp	LP12	1801	E. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Berks
Christian Kauffman	KFC1	1802	E. Whiteland	Union, Mifflin
Jacob Kauffman	KFC3	1803	E. Whiteland	Union, Mifflin
David Kauffman	KFC5	1804	E. Whiteland	Fermanagh, Juniata
Abraham Kauffman	KFC8	1806	E. Whiteland	Drumore, Lancaster
Jacob Hertzler	HZ51	1806	E. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Lancaster
Jacob Kurtz	KZA12	1807	Tredyffrin	Little Britain, Lancaster
Abraham Zook	ZK26	1808	W. Whiteland	Lampeter, Lancaster
Michael Lapp	LP1	1810	E. Whiteland	Lampeter, Lancaster
Samuel King	KG9	1811	Tredyffrin	Little Britain, Lancaster
John Zook	ZK14	1811	Tredyffrin	Manheim, Lancaster
Henry Richabaugh	RB21	1812	Tredyffrin	Fermanagh, Juniata
Jacob Riehl	RL1	1820	E. Whiteland	Bratton, Mifflin
Christian Riehl	RL4	1820	E. Whiteland	West Nantmeal, Lancaster
John Miller	ML7	1820	Tredyffrin	Honey Brook, Lancaster
John Kurtz	KZA181	1824	E. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Lancaster
Jacob Plank	PL112	1824	W. Whiteland	Caernarvon, Berks
Joseph Kurtz	KZA183	1834	E. Whiteland	Genesee, Erie, NY

The Chester Valley is a thirty-mile belt in Northcentral Chester County running from the Schuylkill River, westward into neighboring Lancaster County. The Amish settlement was located in the region better known as the Great Valley. It encompassed East Whiteland Township, but also included parts of the contiguous townships of West Whiteland, Charlestown, Tredyffrin, Willistown, and East Goshen. At the time of the Amish migration, it was a rural setting of well-cultivated farms with stately stone houses and barns. Today it is a Philadelphia suburb with a landscape dominated by prestigious housing developments, shopping malls, industrial parks, and corporation centers intertwined by a network of bustling streets and highways. Today the area is still known as the Main Line because of its Philadelphia connection with the main branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad and U.S. Route 30, the renowned Lincoln Highway. Today a few reminders of the early Amish occupation remain, such as the Union Cemetery on Flat Road, Lapp Road and the Kurtz House in the Great Valley Corporation Center, and the (Moritz) Zook House in the Exton Square Mall.

CHALLENGES OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

For the Amish, one of the motivating factors for coming to America was to escape the consequences of European wars. Unfortunately, now for the second time, the Amish were faced with challenges brought on by military conflicts in their new home. Their deeply-held nonresistant stance was put to the test with the passage of the *Act of Allegiance and Renunciation* which imposed double-taxation and denial of certain civil rights on those who did not cooperate. They also had to respond to the *Militia Act of 1777* which created a system of conscription which placed men between the age of eighteen and fifty-three in the militia which included serving some time with the standing army and attending training musters. Records show they paid the increased tax and fines for refusing military duty.

The American Revolution brought challenges for the Chester Valley Amish that were more severe than those in other locations. In September 1777 after the Battle of the Brandywine the two armies occupied and maneuvered on the property of Amish farmers. On September 16, 1777, troops were stationed on the farm of John Zook in battle formation. The day before, the family had been told to leave or stay in their basement. The worst did not occur since the occasion resulted in the *Battle of the Clouds*, so named due to the fog and heavy rain which prevented military action, thus providing an opportunity for Washington's army to retreat. Amish farmers suffered considerable losses due to the foraging armies on both sides. This included fence rails which were used for fuel and fortifications, as well as grain and livestock. (Jacob Kauffman lost seven horses and seven sheep and Preacher Christian Zook three "fat cattle.") Also, their trade in the Philadelphia market was gone since the city was occupied by the British and the roads were guarded to prevent access.

A REVISED MEETINGHOUSE STORY

Upon this site stood the first Amish meetinghouse in America. The original structure was built circa 1795 as a place of worship and school for German speaking persons in the area. So reads the first two sentences on a historical marker across the road from an old cemetery along Flat Road in East Whiteland Township. These claims were first made by Amish Mennonite historian Christian Zook Mast in an article printed in the September 25, 1907 issue of Gospel Witness, a Mennonite publication, and his 1911 *Brief History of Bishop Jacob Mast and Other Mast Pioneers*. These assertions were perpetuated by later historians and are still cited today; especially by those who call attention to the liberal tendencies of the Chester Valley Amish.

Recently legal documents have been found that repudiate this long-accepted 1795 date and the assumption it was an Amish meetinghouse. A Chester County deed (MC-331) dated December 28, 1816 recorded a transaction in which John and Mary Coffman (*sic*) granted a tract to "Jacob Zook of West Whiteland Township, John Garber and Abraham Whisler of East Whiteland, trustees of the Aminist, Minist, and German Baptist Societies (*sic*) for the purpose of occupying the same as a house of worship and a school for the use of the said societies." Another deed (E4-117) in a boundary description in 1829, verified the "three-society" designation. A copy of the May 22, 1821 *Articles of Incorporation for the East Whiteland Association for the Care of the Union Meetinghouse and Schoolhouse* found in the Chester County Historical Library in West Chester stated that authority was in the hands of "the three societies of professing Christians who hold in trust the Union Meetinghouse and schoolhouse." The official name reveals, from the very beginning, it was a union project involving three religious groups and the 1816 date of the land purchase was more than two decades later than what had been claimed. This puts it at a time when the number who still practiced the traditional Amish customs was greatly diminished.

A newspaper clipping in a file at the Chester County Historical Library advertised the March 28, 1827 "sale of an East Whiteland Township property along Morehall Road bordering lands of Jacob Kauffman, deceased, "upon which is a good stone house heretofore used as a Meetinghouse and schoolhouse." In researching the life of Jacob Kauffman, one of the settlement leaders, a deed (R3-259) recorded February 18, 1820, was found which described the sale of a property described as the "school and meetinghouse lot." A further investigation revealed an earlier June 5, 1811 (F3-381) agreement in which Jacob Kauffman leased to the Ominist (*sic*) society a lot on which was located a "building intended for use as a German school." It seems that not only was the Flat Road structure not the first Amish meetinghouse in America, it seems it was not even the first one in the Chester Valley settlement.