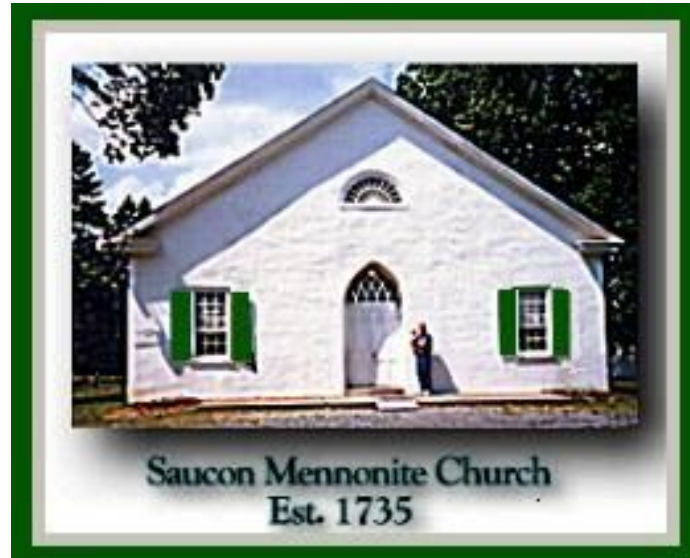


YODER LINEAGE

Other Than Amish

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by Karolyn Rae Roberts

***SAUCON AND SWAMP CHURCHES OF COOPERSBURG AREA IN MILFORD TOWNSHIP, BUCKS CO., PA**

Saucon Mennonite Church: In 1735, the early German Mennonite settlers, who came from Europe seeking religious freedom, built their first log meetinghouse here in the present-day town of Coopersburg. It had a swinging partition in the center dividing the room used for services and the one used for church school. The name Saucon came from the Indian word sawkink or sakink meaning the "mouth of the creek." It supposedly was the name of the large Indian village located at the north end of today's Saucon Creek which flows next to the church property. It is believed that at one time some of the Indians

worshiped at Saucon. They would leave their bows and arrows outside while in church. There may be some unmarked Indian graves in the cemetery. Earliest date of deed to the grounds was during the reign of King George II of England and was part of a land grant of William Penn. (*Source: The History of Saucon Mennonite Meetinghouse & Church*) The building now standing was constructed after the 1847 division. During the American Revolution, all the men of this congregation were arrested and imprisoned at Easton because they refused to fight. Cemetery names include Yoder, Geissinger, Bachman, Newcomer, Kauffman, and Landis. Take 309 north from Souderton to Fairmount Street in Coopersburg. Turn left on Fairmount to Main St. Turn right on Main Street and follow Main Street to the meetinghouse. (E.D.)

Swamp Mennonite Church: At the time of the Mennonite 1847 split that resulted in the Eastern District leaving the Francona Conference, the Swamp congregation was formed. The more traditional Franconia Conference Mennonites of Milford Township found themselves without a meetinghouse. Without a house of worship or ministers, the "Old" Mennonites struggled along for a few weeks in the summer of 1847, until building the Swamp church between the other two Swamp meetinghouses. At Quakertown, take 663 west for one half mile to Old Bethlehem Road. Turn right onto Old Bethlehem Road for two miles. Turn left on Rosedale Road off Old Bethlehem Road. The Swamp congregation is one mile on the left. (F.C.)

East Swamp Mennonite Church: East Swamp Road, Quakertown, PA (E.D.)

West Swamp Mennonite Church: In 1847, John H. Oberholtzer began offering Bible classes here at West Swamp. The congregation's history goes back to at least 1727 when the church was formed. The first meetinghouse was built in ca 1735 on land donated by William Allen. In 1795, the old Swamp building was erected on the site of the present church. At Quakertown, take 663 west to Allentown Road, turn right to meetinghouse. (E.D.) (*F.C.) Franconia Conference; (E.D.) Eastern District (Information taken from: An Index and Description of The Mennonites' of Southeastern Pennsylvania 1683-1983)*

****Yoder Swiss Heritage**

The Yoders are Swiss. To Switzerland, that little republic in the very heart of Europe, which has contributed so much of liberty and faith to the world, we owe our origin as a family.

Swiss Encyclopedia: The family of Joder is a very ancient family of the village of Steffisburg on the edge of the Oberland in Canton Berne, Switzerland. The twentieth-century authority on Swiss family names traces them also to the village of Muri, a rich farming area nearer to the Swiss capital city of Berne. A little volume on the history of the Emmenthal-where Swiss cheese comes from as well as many of our Pennsylvania Mennonite families-lists the Joders among the early residents. So we are not only Swiss, we are basically a Bernese family. The name "Joder" derives from the saint's name "Theodore." Saint Theodore was one of the missionary saints who in the early middle ages came up into the Swiss Alps bringing the message of Christ. The medieval Swiss loved their St. Theodore, and in their prayers to him, abbreviated his name into "St. Joder." St. Joder's picture is always portrayed standing on a little devil, to symbolize his triumph over evil. The Joder family name came from "St. Joder."

As a family name in Canton Berne, the name Joder begins to appear in records in the 14th Century. There are early references to our family in the Bernese Archives at Berne, also in the parish registers of Steffisburg and Muri. At Steffisburg, the Joders begins to appear around the year 1529, at Muri slightly later.

When the Reformation broke out in Switzerland, Canton Berne became reformed, but a minority of mountain folk in the Oberland and elsewhere reverted to the simple gospel of the Anabaptist missionaries. These devoted ministers of Christ, who spread out from Zurich as a center, taught a faith which attempted to restore the ordinances and spirit of the New Testament Church. Because they stressed the baptism of adults-who in the first generation had already been baptized as infants into the Catholic faith-they were called by their enemies "Anabaptists" or "Re Baptizers." In German this became Wiedertäufer (Rebaptizers) or simply Taufer (Baptists).

These simple Christians of the Oberland stressed the holiness of life based upon Christ's direct commands in the Sermon on the Mount. Because Christ told his disciples to love their enemies, they refused to fight and kill in time of war. Because he told them to "swear not at all," they refused to take oaths in court or to participate in the world's governments. But their greatest contribution to the western world was not their pacifism nor their nonconformity with the "world." It was their emphasis on religious freedom. For they were the first Christian group in modern times to insist that faith is something individual and personal, and the state cannot force the conscience of its subjects into any one pattern of faith. In fact, to the Anabaptists as to the majority of American Protestants, the Church is a voluntary association of men seeking God, and it has no connection with the civil government at all. To the Anabaptists and to their direct and indirect descendents, the Baptists, the Quakers, the Protestant liberals and mystics in general, we owe our modern concepts of religious liberty, upon which our American theory of church-state relations is based.

When the Anabaptist faith had spread down the Rhine Valley and reached the Netherlands, it was shaped further by a Catholic priest named Menno Simons, whose name was eventually given to the majority of the continental Anabaptists and their descendants in America, whom we generally call "Mennonites."

While some of the Swiss Joders remained in the Reformed Church, and helped to bring this faith to Pennsylvania, others rejected both Catholicism and the Swiss Reformed interpretation of religion and became Anabaptists. Among those first imprisoned for defying the Reformed state and spreading Anabaptist doctrines is the name of Heini Joder, who was imprisoned at Basel in the year 1531, six years after the Anabaptist movement had begun in Zurich. In the Bernese records, we read of other Joders who became Anabaptists in the 17th Century. Sometimes the new faith came into the Joder families through marriage. There is a record in the Bernese Archives of one Jacob Joder, who about the middle of the 17th Century, had a mother-in-law who was under surveillance by the state authorities because she was a "hartnaeckig Tauferin"-a "stubborn, hard shelled Anabaptist."

So tenacious were the Anabaptist Joders of their faith that when the persecutions of dissenters increased in the 17th Century, we find families of Joders moving down the Rhine to the hospitable, sunny land northwest of Heidelberg known as the Rhine Palatinate. Some found their way also into Alsace. In such areas, they were given land to farm on the large estates of the local nobility and with that they were happy for a while. Two of these estates were the Brandschweilerhof near Neustadt and the Vogelstorkerhof in a pleasant green valley near Annweiler, a tremendous stone farmhouse with its gambrel roofs and its gracious double stairway was built by and for the Joders of the 18th Century, both in the Palatinate. There some of the Joders stayed, while our forefathers came on to Pennsylvania.

When William Penn opened the gates to his province in the New World to the continental emigrants, some of the Joders of the Palatinate and Alsace, Reformed and Amish, decided to come to America, or to the "Island of Pennsylvania," as some of them naively called it in their letters. There they could own land instead of renting it. There they could have, so they were promised and they trusted Penn's promises, complete freedom of conscience. This was their "Promised Land," flowing, they hoped, with the milk and honey that offered a new life for themselves and their children and their children's children. So they set sail. (*Origin of the Pennsylvania Yoders, Don Yoder, Ph.D.*)

*****Tombstones-Saucon Cemetery** {Row 1 on east side of church is the family of Abraham & Maria Yoder, the area north of the church was the members of Jacob (YB12) & Casper's (YB11) families. NW side of the church about seven and eight rows over are descendents of Casper's (YB11) family.

· · **Row 1 (East Side of Saucon Church, reading from left to right {YB13~Abraham Bachman Yoder & Maria Schells Sell with their children & grandchildren})**

YB135~Abraham Sell Yoder YB135

[Maria (Schells Sell) Yoder YB13; Abraham Bachman Yoder YB13]

[Jacob Sell Yoder YB139, Elisabeth (L. Meyer) Yoder YB139]

Abraham Meyer Yoder YB1321

Samuel Meyer Yodder YB1322

Maria Yoder [b2/28/1824-d10/25/1828]?

Anna Yodder [no info] *This could be the first Anna Yoder, stone was older than the rest and very simple (last stone)*

North Side of Saucon Church

YB116~Barbara Yoder 9/29/1780-d9/23/1852 (Stayed Single)

YB11~Fronica (Sell) Yoder (*Joder*)

YB12~Jacob Bachman Yoder

Susanna? Yoder d12/10/1820 or 29? (*Stone laying down & broke in half*)

{I am supposing that YB11 Casper Yoder, Jr. & YB12 Eva M (Landis) Yoder are also buried in this spot. Few stones were there, and some laying down.

Guessing through time their stones have disappeared}

West Side of Saucon Church (Approx. 7 rows NW of building, in a row)

Elizabeth (*Geissing*) Yoder (1st wife of Jacob M. Yoder) YB1134; Barbara

(*Newcomer*) Yoder (2nd wife of Jacob M. Yoder) YB1134; Jacob M. Yoder YB1134

{Descendants of YB11}

(Center of Row 8 in front of above tombstones) John Yoder YB1131[flag by tombstone]; Catherine (*Moyer*) Yoder YB1131; Johanes M. Yoder YB11312;

{Descendants of YB11}

S - Burial in Saucon Church Cemetery, Coopersburg, PA; N - Nold Men. Cemetery, Fairfield Twp., Columbiana Co., OH; E - An Elkhart Co. Resident at some time.

· · *Credits: Charlotte Hess, Randy Roberts, Tammy Roberts, Karolyn Roberts, Jerry Roberts, Keith Key, Goshen Mennonite Library, Saucon Church Pastor & History Book, Mennonite Information Center of Lancaster, PA, Bucks Co., PA Library, Russell Yothers Yoder, and Raye **Kanzenbach**.*

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Additions, corrections, questions: Contact karolynroberts@comcast.net

For more information on Yoder Lineage see: [Yoder Newsletter Online](#)