

**Annals of the Oley Valley  
...IN BERKS COUNTY, PA .  
Over Two Hundred Years  
of Local History of An American Canaan  
By  
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**Chapter XIV.**

**THE YODER FAMILY**

**Record of Pioneers and Descendants**

The Yoders of Oley origin and first settlement form another American plant, transplanted from a German-Swiss canton to this western continent soil early In the 18th century, The name as first found in accounts preserved is given as Yoder, Yotter, Jotter, but it has now for a. number of generations been invariably fixed as Yoder.

The first American ancestors of this name, as far as known, were two brothers, Yost and Hans (Hance) Yoder, who, like most of the other early settlers of Oley, came to this country because or persecutions In their native country. It is claimed of a certainty, according to Morton L. Montgomery, that they arrived In Pennsylvania before 1714.

Were they a part of that large Huguenot Immigration that first entered this country through the port of New York and settled for a while in that province and then drifted, or rather pushed their way into these inviting vales of Penn's Woods about this time? It is so believed and seems very likely. We will let the expert genealogists settle it. At all events we find these two brothers in the valley of the Manatawny before 1714, according to our authority quoted.

**A GREAT HUNTER,**

Yost (Jost) Yoder (OY) was a disciple of Nimrod, for he was "a mighty hunter." As a frontiersman his chief occupation was said to have been hunting and trapping, it seems to

have been his pastime between clearing the forest and cultivating the soil. Who his wife was is not known to the writer, but there is a record of seven of his nine children. These were In the order of their birth: (1) Johannes, often called Yost (1718-1812) (OY1), (2) Jacob (OY4), (3) Samuel, (4) Mary, (5) Catharine, (6) Elizabeth (OY2), and (7) Esther. In addition to this Yost's brother, Hans Yoder (OH), left four sons to give the Yoder name and stock a good start. Their names were Hans, Samuel, Peter, and Daniel.

These two Immigrant both took up land on the Manatawny in 1714, the former where Pleasantville is now located. This village, first called "Yottersvllle," his oldest son, Johannes (John) (OY1), founded and he is buried there. His tombstone Inscription rends as follows (translated from the German):

"Here rests t  
JOHANNES YODER  
He was born 1718.  
He married Catharine Lyster  
Born 1747 and had 4 sons and 5 daughters  
He died 7 Apr 1812 and was married 66 years.  
His age was 94 years, and 14 days

His wife rests by his side and the epitaph shows she was born in 1730 and died in 1812, aged 82 years. Jacob, John's brother, enlisted in 1757, at the age of 22 years in the provincial service of Pennsylvania, where he served as a saddler for three years In Capt. John Nicholas Wetherhold's Company. During the Revolution he was a private In Capt. Peter Nagle'e Company and later in that of Capt. Charles Gobin, Sixth Battalion, Berks County Militia, in which capacity he guarded the Hessian prisoners of war, marching from their camp In Reading to Philadelphia. His wife was Marla Keim.

The third son Yost (OY1), one of the progenitors, was Samuel, who settled near Lobachsville as farmer. He had the following children: John, Jacob, Samuel and Catharine. Mary Yoder, , the fourth child of Yost, married Daniel Bertolet (son of Abraham, son of Jean Bertolet), while Catharine, the fifth child, was married to John Reppert; Elizabeth, the sixth child, was married to Matthias Rhode, and Esther, the seventh, was married to a Mr. Cunlno.

Among the interesting papers of the family is preserved the marriage certificate of Marla Yoder to Daniel Bertolet, a grandson of the pioneer Jean Bertolet. It reads 'as follows:

These present certify that Daniel Bertolet and Maria Yoder, of Oley township, in the County of Berks and Province of Pennsylvania, In North America, were joined together In the Holy Bonds of Matrimony, and pronounced man and wife according to the form

established by law, In the Church of England, this 6<sup>th</sup> day of December, in the year of our Lord, one thousand, •seven hundred and •sixty eight, by me,

**ALEXANDEIR MURRAY, Minister.**

Rev. Murray was then Episcopal rector of the St. Gabriel's Church, Douglasville, taken over from the Swedish Lutherans.

The Yoder Bible is regarded the most precious relic this branch of the family brought with them from the old country. One can imagine how it was treasured and guarded in the early days, it was printed in 1630 during the lite-time of Martin Luther and is among the earliest German Bibles published after his translation at Wartburg In 1621 and 1622. It descended as a precious heirloom through the family or Daniel and his son, David, whose daughter, Mary B. Yoder, was the last possessor.

Some of the descendants of this branch of the Yoders scattered eastward to New York, and westward to the Mississippi. From them sprang S. S. Yoder, of Lima, Ohio, who represented his district in the 60<sup>th</sup> United States Congress In 1887-89 (*sic- he was from the Amish Yoder Line*)

#### **NEVER TOOK ADVANTAGE OF ANY ONE.**

It is related by that careful chronicler of Oley history of the past generation, Dr. Peter G. Bertolet, that while the pioneer Yost Yoder "was measuring off his farm one day with a surveyor, he ran regular courses- straight long lines- until he came very close to a fine spring. The surveyor remarked "you will of course have me run straight out to the place of beginning which will include for you this beautiful and desirable spot in your own tract." "No" was the reply. "These you cut clear off. This spring we will leave for others. This spot is inviting and may attract before long someone who will settle here and thus become my neighbor,"- a thing he valued more than anything else. The frankness in this was but a type of the characteristics of the man. He was generous, kindly disposed, and knew how to appreciate friends, while thus isolated in the wilderness. "

In consequence of this coincidence, the Manatawny has received the name of "Crooked Dam" at that place, and even the farm, which, according to Yoder's desire, soon found a settler, has, unto this present day, retained the appellation of the "Crooked Farm" or "Grummen Platz."

It Is related by the above quoted authority that on this Yoder farm one of the last lingering Indian families -long after the white people had settled an around them- still resided on the banks of the creek, a short distance above the Yoder homestead: that they were expert basket makers and had gained a wide celebrity for this industrial art. Only their fondness for "fire-water" caused them to fall, become boisterous and sometimes threatening and a general nuisance in the neighborhood when they found it wise to move on. It was supposed that these became subsequently allied with Brandt's desperadoes, says Dr. Bertolet.

## HAND TO HAND BATTLE.

The other Yoder homestead of Hans, built where now stands Greisemer's Mills, is pointed out as the scene of a hand-to-hand battle with a drunken band of predatory Indians by this pioneer in his day, when a single-tree was his only weapon, and a cool head won him the victory. Thus for two generations, it seems the Yoders were close neighbors of, or else were often molested by the red men. This homestead of Hans, was located near Pleasantville, and he built and owned what are known as Greisemer's Mills, which were later (1847) burned, but rebuilt by a descendant and from 1850 on were operated. Daniel Yoder's paper mill stood about one-half mile northwest of Pleasantville. Here was born about 1860 the Senior Bishop of the Evangelical Church, Rev. Dr. S. C. Breyfogel, of Reading.

The eldest son of Hans Yoder, the immigrant (*note- immigrated with his father*), was also named Hans (John) OH11, who married a Miss Sarah Shingle (Shenkel), in November of 1746 and with her he had four children (sic-plus a daughter Barbara) named: (1) Daniel (1748-1820), married to Margaret Oyster, who lived and died In Oley and are buried at Pleasantville; (2) Martin, who was a lieutenant of the Fourth Company in Fifth Battalion of Berks County in the Revolutionary War; (8) Jacob (1758-1882). who was born in Reading, was a soldier during the Revolution, In 1780 moved to Western Pennsylvania and in 1782 descended down the Monongahela, Ohio and Mississippi rivers with a cargo of flour to New Orleans, in the first flat-boat (built by himself) that ever floated down the Father of Waters.

He was in this respect the fore-runner of Abraham Lincoln, who In 1831, nearly 60 years later, took a flat-boat load of pork (which craft he had constructed with his own skillful hands), down the Sangamon, Illinois and Mississippi to this southern market city. Capt. Yoder carried on a sugar trade with Cuba and Philadelphia, while Louisiana still was under the French flag, and he- came widely known in his day as an extensive tradesman. He died In Spencer County, Kentucky, and lies buried at Louisville, KY (sic-Taylorsville). Over his grave is erected a marker bearing this inscription, on an Iron tablet, cast by Hanks & Niles, of Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1834.

**JACOB YODER**

**Was born in Reading, Pennsylvania,**

**Aug. 11, 1758**

**And was a soldier in the Revolutionary Army  
In 1777 and 1778**

**He emigrated to the West In 1780, and in May  
1782, from Fort Redstone, on the**

**Monongahela River**

**In the**

**FIRST FLAT BOAT**

**That ever descended the Mississippi River**

**He landed at New Orleans, with a cargo of  
Produce.**

**He died April 7, 1832, at his farm In Spencer  
County, Kentucky, and lies here  
Interred beneath this tablet.**

**MARVELOUS CHANGES.**

What improvements have come since Capt. Yoder's day! Indians gone! Their prairies subdued and settled and converted into prosperous States. The rivers plying with steam, oil or electricity propelled boats and ocean greyhounds riding the great seas! The sparsely settled country studded with mighty cities where the teeming millions live! The neighboring States of the expansive country strung together by rail and communicative wire and the continents by cable! And now the wireless, the radio and the flying machine-ships sailing the air. Invention and commerce and world courts and leagues have brought the ends of the world together into dally fellowship and communion. Science has marvelously triumphed, but the daring, the enterprise, and the patriotism of Capt. Jacob Yoder, of Oley, was but the prognostic and preliminary fore gleams of the same stuff that has conquered wild and primitive America and the world of today.

The last son of Hans Yoder, Jacob's father, was Samuel, who fought for America's freedom and Independence, and then lost his life near at home by falling to his death from a horse he was riding near the Oley churches.

The later generations of Yoders have come and gone, taking part in the world's work In their day, married, reared families, won successes and met failures, some staying on the native heath, others scattering more and more, lived their days and sank to rest: but volumes could be written of what good they have accomplished, what honors they have won and deserved, what part in school and church and State they have taken to uplift the race, to better

conditions, to serve their day and generation, to befriend mankind and to glorify God! Among them we find farmers, craftsmen, merchants, politicians, doctors, dentists, lawyers, and preachers. They have penetrated all parts of the county-and gone far beyond its borders-but not all have ever, in all the more than 200 years, since the two brother progenitors set foot on Oley soil, left this rich and historic valley, where their pioneer homesteads were reared.,

Thus Daniel Yoder III (Hans. 2d, Hans 1st) (OH111), orchardist, distiller of flax oil, and farmer. In 1800, built his home on the original premises, which is still preserved. With his wife, Margaret Oyster, he had nine children: (1) Hannah (1776-1823), married to Jacob Knabb; (2) Daniel (1777-1826); (8) Martin (1780- 1837) ( 4) Catharine (1788-1882), married to William Williams; (5) Maria (1786-1864), married to Phillip DeTurck: (6) John (1788, 1868): (7) Margaret (1790-), married to Solomon Peter: (8) Samuel (1793-), and (9) David (1796-1881 ).

Of these, Martin was a tanner and hotel and storekeeper at Pleasantville, where he did a flourishing business." His children were intermarried into the Yoder and Kemp families. The youngest, Martin (1819-1888), a. farmer and implement dealer, ran for Congress against Daniel S. Ermentrout and was defeated. Of his four children, one was Mary (Mrs. Joseph DeLong, of Topton), who 'became the mother of Rev, Calvin DeLong, of East Greenville and of Mrs. Rev. John Baer Stoudt of Allentown. She died on Sept. 20, 1016. Another is Henry H., who was a farmer and implement dealer associated with his father. He owned the old homestead with 236 acres of fertile land. He helped to organize the First National Bank, of Oley, of which he has been a director from the beginning. His brother, Ezra, was a teacher in his day.

#### RARE RELICS.

Among the rare relics kept in the family are zinc dishes, rare china, an old Revolutionary sword and two bugles, quilts and spreads of four generations and rare old books all preserved in old dower chests.

David Yoder was a farmer and millwright and served a term as county commissioner (1848-49). His, wife was Hannah Bitler and they had the following children: Margaret, wife of George K. Levan, of Maxatawny; Hannah, Daniel, Catharine, wife of Nathan Schaeffer, or Fleetwood, and Sarah, wife of Abraham Guldin. The grandfather clock as an heirloom and made by John Keim, descended to Mary, who prizes it highly. She has a sense of appreciation of the antique and historic and she has preserved on her premises the first log cabin or her ancestor, and other relics.

**Daniel B. was born near Catawissa, and later a resident of Oley. He was a soldier in the Civil War under Capt. James McKnight and followed farming and built a paper mill which he operated a number of years, when he sold it to the Reading Paper Company. He then retired to Pleasantville and lived in comfort and ease until his death. Most of the Oley Yoders are buried at Pleasantville.**

**One branch of the family, Jacob, son of John, settled in Bern township, and was married into the Rickenbach family. Of their children, Reuben, later owned four large farms in Center township, where he was influential and respected. He donated the land for the German Baptist Church between Centerport and Shoemakersville, of which he was a member and is buried there. His children are scattered in Lititz, Kutztown and other places. (Note: This fellow is a member of the Amish Yoder Line- Jacob was + YR17a- Jacob F b 4/13/1782 BP see YNL82)**

**Still another branch, Daniel Yoder, son of a farmer near New Jerusalem of the Oley stock, settled about 1840, on a farm near Sinking Spring and from him sprang the Yoders of that community, Wernersville, Robesonia and Womelsdorf. Of this stock is Rev. Paul D. Yoder, Reformed pastor at Codorus, York County, and the dentists and lawyers of that name at Reading. (Note: Paul D. Yoder was descended from Oley's Yost Yoder (OY433811).**

**But the woods are full of them and I have no doubt that every Yoder in Berks county, if not in the State, can trace his origin to one of the two brothers who broke ground for their first rude American cabin in Oley, hard by the banks of the Manatawny in or before the year 1714.**