

A Publication of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation Committee

Tribute to Pam Shenk*(from a Nicholas Stoltzfus House friend)*

*When the inquiry to save the house arose
 She already was wanting to see this accomplished
 As opportunity to preserve neared
 She presented options that made this possible
 Even though she was not a "Stoltzfus".
 She had many Stoltzfus friends
 And more will wish they were
 When they learn of what she did to preserve a heritage.*



Pam at the fundraiser in 2000 with Governor Leader, Steve Stoltzfus, and Calvin Kurtz.

"Well Done"

*At the end of the day, what thanks is due?
 To so many that gave so much?
 Each effort blends into a pleasant hue
 To appreciate as such*

All who gave and helped the **2006 auction** are appreciated: **your part made the effort worthwhile.** In years to come

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Pam Shenk welcomed guests to the House for several hours on May 20. June 9 she suffered a stroke, then learned she had advanced pancreatic cancer. This caused a rapid fading of her life expiring 2:00 AM, August 19. Pam had overseen the agreements that led to the Preservation, she gave crucial guidance to the process, and served on the committee as secretary. *The Homestead* is her creation. Her cheerful optimism inspired us.

They are coming!

Individuals stop by, reunion groups, searching descendants: these have been coming. Like Violet and Roma, cousins, descendants of Ezra Stoltzfus and Annie Kauffman. Then there was Elias George who with his wife, Nora and relatives, found the place by asking a stranger who knew where it was! Chris and Mary had the Amos J. Stoltzfus clan gather for their reunion.

Then there were the three SSS bus tours stopping for lunch at the Stoltzfus House. Nicholas' daughter, Barbara, had married John Smucker. It appears they lived at times in the Stoltzfus House, the Hiester House, and the Stone House. So the Schmucker-Smucker –Smoker reunion included this area in their tours.

No, Chris and Mary did not serve Snapper turtle soup. On Thursday, July 20, Lois Ann Mast brought the lunch for the 38 passengers on the Elite tour bus, chartered by Masthof for a Smoker-Smucker-Schmucker oriented visit of Berks Amish-Mennonite homesteads.

The first SSS reunion was held in 1976, with a tour through Berks. C.J.Kurtz was a guide for this with a fo-

cus on the Stone House now a part of the Wyomissing Park along Parkside North. John Schmucker and wife Barbara Stoltzfus moved here after living for at least 10 years in the Hiester House. Now the garage for the prison warden's house, George Wagner graciously invited visits to this a part of the tour. Well, in 1976 the

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1972 and 2006 Floods

Visitors to the House, if they went to the back room, saw the mark of Agnes, two feet from the second story. This is noted by the point of the sign on the lath below the huge girder. Such girders were held together with rods and floated down the canal; or river. Holes in the girder show where the rods were placed.

Now with the heavy rains of late June these same people wonder about the water's height. Calculations suggest the effect would have been similar, but since Agnes engineers have the Blue Marsh dam and other improve-



ments to enable them to significantly regulate the water flow. Instead of the water reaching the house, it merely begins to approach.

Chris saw numerous snapping turtles, mouthwatering snapper soups. But then what can we expect? The Indians had early on named the Creek after these turtles. And we wonder if Nicholas' family savored these as well.

We also wonder if Nicholas was troubled by high water. Old timers in the area remember the water rising around the house, especially when the ice jams occurred in the spring. These were broken up with dyna-



mite. The Blue Marsh Dams have made these seasonal rises a thing of the past, and we can hope they will continue to keep it that way.

Possibly the forested area took care of any seasonal waters in the time of the Stoltzfus and Smucker residences in the area.



They Are Coming!

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Stone House was credited with being the family home.

The Friday tour sponsored by the SSS Reunion enjoyed box lunches prepared by the Bird-in-Hand Restaurant – a Smucker business. Chris and Mary had set out the picnic tables and chairs. The ladies were invited to use the bathrooms in their mobile home, an extra porta-john was set

up for the men. The House was open for all to see, with Chris available to answer questions.

If ever Mary Stoltzfus had the chance to make snapper-turtle soup, it was this July. But the opportunity to bring a family reunion to the House remains. If and when the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation Committee can erect a barn-like structure with utilities, the site will be even more attractive for such appoint-



ments. Call 610-373-6206 or 717-367-3906 if interested.

Well Done

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the vast sea of descendants, not to mention others who need to touch the past, will treasure what you have done.

The four auctions we have held, along with money gifts, are the key to where we are today. This year visitors (over 300) saw the fireplace in action,

the rope beds upstairs, the old-type tables, the dry sink, and ceilings and walls painted. No flaky ceiling in the main room.

In the House Jack Parmer met visitors who viewed his slides detailing the House. Chris Stoltzfus had descriptive papers for pick-up. Thanks Richard J. Patrick, photographer, and Bruce R.

Posten, reporter, for the well-timed local article on the auction.

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This newsletter is written and compiled by Paul Kurtz. Questions and concerns should be addressed to him at psku@aol.com or 717-367-3906. Layout and production by Masthof Press.

From Across the Tulpehocken



May 20, 2006, from across the Tulpehocken Creek, you would have seen: the Stoltzfus House, cars, a tent, a bus, and (in the path of the once-Union Canal) a volley ball game.

The Creek has been flowing ‘forever’. The House, given foundation prior to 1769, has been home to as many as 20 different families, most recently the Schlegels. From 1771 to 1804 it was a Stoltzfus/Smucker home.

The tent was erected Thursday evening, May 18, by the John Z Blank family. Like many Amish families, the name “Stoltzfus” threads like a quilt through the Blanks’ ancestry.

Joining the Amish on this day were Reading area residents. Some came to see the House, others to bid on quilts and other items at the auction under the tent. Lancaster County Amish from south of Route 23 arrived on two buses.

Nicholas and Anna Stoltzfus family crossed the ocean to Philadelphia in 1766. The large empty chest which then held their belongings, rested on the “living room” floor. In the same room two Bibles were displayed on an antique table: the Christian Stoltzfus (son of Nicholas) Bible, and the Daniel and Susanna Stahl Bible. Their granddaughter, Mabel Stoltzfus, had requested this Bible be donated to the House. She rallied her family to support the preservation. Her passing was only weeks before the auction.

A Martyrs’ Mirror sold at the auction was purchased to be placed in the House. The Bible, the Martyrs book, and the Ausbund provided the “theological” guidance to these early families. The early Anabaptists identified with the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus in their sufferings.

These books continue to be a faith resource to many descendants today. These two books, and an Ausbund to join them in the future, aid in appreciating motives the Stoltzfus family shared with the other 70 Amish Mennonite families settling in Berks County from 1737 to the early 1800’s.

The House is becoming a connecting hub, as if spokes to the rims enable us to travel on. A special quilt, the Roger Cooke art illustrated by Ray Nicholas Stoltzfus on a lasered plaque, the House on old shingles from the House...these become collectors’ items because they connect.

At the House about 300 persons signed the guest book. They were wel-



comed along with a “colonial cook” (Carol Kissinger), by Leonard and Anna Stoltzfus Groff, many tasting Carol’s fire-place dumplings. Also, Jack Parmers’ slide show revealed the process of preservation. Rope beds, early effects, and a dry sink graced the time-relevant wall finishes. An unfinished back room tells the history of the construction, noting the extent of hurricane Agnes.

Of course the 40 plus quilts caused the greatest stir. The prize of these with the House on it hung as other items were sold. Aaron Zook carvings, Four Seasons, brought the highest bid, while the Annals of the Conestoga came close.

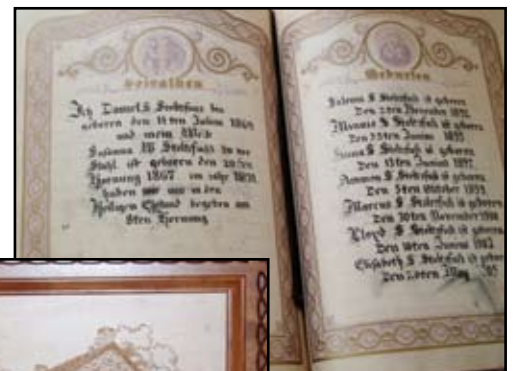
Future plans for a “Carriage House” and pavilion can encourage families to retain the connectedness. The pieces of Amish quilts remind us of and support our heritage.

This fourth benefit auction tripled the one held in 2003. That auction was the brainchild of Moses Smucker who can trace his ancestry eleven ways to Nicholas. Mose, harness maker and auctioneer, continues to chair the auction committee. Net income from the auction is key (along with very generous individual donations) to meeting costs up to now.

Each of the last two years the weatherman was able to predict a “perfect” day.

We experienced how the site provides a park-like setting for family gatherings and picnics. Thanks to the Berks County Park Service the young folk played volley ball on the green where once the Union Canal made its way.

Such an event would fail without food. Homey aroma from the chicken barbecue blended with fire-place smoke. The homemade icecream-er Stevie Beiler family from Allenwood brought his invention and their recipes.



*Pictures credit
Carl Good,
Chris Stoltzfus,
P.Kurtz*

