

## **The 18th Century Colonial Sechler Homestead**

Its Historical Significance in the Affairs and Activities of Lynn Township

By: Richard K. Miller



### **Sechler Homestead**

Built about 1750

To date, no one has yet been able to stop the element of time. As each generation of mankind travels along life's pathway, time is always in control and unyielding. Therefore, it is not unusual for us as individuals, not always to remember historical events that occurred generations and centuries ago. The recollection of past significant events has a tendency to erode and fade into the shadows of the succeeding years of time, and eventually those events in question, if only temporarily, are forgotten. As someone once said: "Significant historical events of years past are gradually relegated to the dustbin of history." How true those words are. The historical events and activities of Lynn Township's 18th century colonial Sechler homestead are no exceptions to this fact of life. Therefore, we feel it would be worthwhile for us, the members of the Lynn/Heidelberg Historical Society and others, to recall and provide a retrospective review of some significant historical events that involved the Sechler homestead and many of its occupants, taking into account the indelible imprint they left upon the social and economic affairs of Lynn Township for 163 years (1757-1920).

The exact date of the construction of the Sechler homestead is not known. However, the structure, consisting of three rooms on the ground floor and a loft for additional sleeping quarters, was erected during the high tide of the German immigrations, probably sometime between 1740 and 1750. Its exact location was on a tract of farmland along present day Sechler Road, seven tenth of a mile from its juncture with the New Tripoli-Lynnville highway. The dwelling nestled in the shadow of Schochary Ridge's northern slope, where it

provided shelter and lodging for many Germans and Pennsylvania Germans farm families throughout the years. The dwelling was finally abandoned for family use in 1919.

Regrettably, the homestead was not destined to be preserved for posterity. As a result of human neglect and the ever eroding forces of nature, it gradually fell into disrepair in the early decades of the 20th century and finally met its demise in 1976(?).



Sechler Homestead  
interior

Although the Sechler dwelling is no longer an existing reality, it still serves as one of Lynn Township's historically significant icons, a reminder of the harsh, treacherous and frequently brutal frontier life that our pioneer forefathers had to endure as they struggled to tame the wilderness and to provide shelter and food for their families and livestock. In addition to battling the unforgiving environment, they also had to deal with the marauding Indians, especially in 1756 and 1757. Entire families were in danger of being murdered and their homes and possessions being destroyed. The Sechler homestead and its occupants were not to be spared from those deadly incursions. It was on July 9, 1757 that the plundering savages struck the homestead, its occupants and several visiting farm helpers. Hardly had they gathered for their noonday meal when they were subjected to the full wrath and destructive fury of the invaders. The raid lasted but only a few moments. Yet in that time ten human beings were massacred and scalped. Within a few hours after the tragic event, a Lieutenant Jacob Wetterholt, a recent German immigrant and a security officer stationed at nearby Fort Everett, was summoned to the site to prepare a written report of the deadly incident for his superior officer. His report provides us with a fairly accurate account of the

results of the attack. Unfortunately, the lieutenant's English writing skills were not yet too well perfected. Therefore, we have taken the liberty to make some orthographical and grammatical modifications of the original report for the sake of clarity and legibility. The transcription, therefore, reads as follows:

"Honored Sir:

This is to acquaint you of a murder that happened this day at the home of Adam Clauss in said township of Lynn, where three or four neighbors were cutting said man's corn. As they were eating their dinner, they were attacked by savage Indians, and 5 of the whites took to their heels, 2 men, 2 women, and a girl. They escaped unharmed. Killed and scalped were Martin Yeager and his wife and her three children. Abraham Sechler's wife was scalped, yet still alive and seriously wounded in the side and thigh. One of Sechler's children was also killed, as was one child of Adam Clauss. Also one child of Philip Anthony was killed."

Curiously, we note that in the very first line of the lieutenant's report that the massacre took place "at the home of Adam Clauss." His insertion of this quoted phrase creates a somewhat murky account of the homestead's ownership at the time of the massacre. Furthermore, it is also of interest to note that 2 members of the Abraham Sechler family were among the victims of the assault. Could Lt. Wetterholt have erred in his report? It is possible that the property could have been owned by the Sechler family at the time of the massacre and Adam Clauss was merely a tenant. The first legal document that conveys ownership to a Sechler clan member was recorded in Northampton County, April 2, 1772. At that time, Christian Christ and wife, who had been granted a warrant and patent of the property by Richard and Thomas Penn 7 years after the massacre (1764), conveyed ownership to a Federick Sechler, who owned the property until 1785.



Sechler Homestead as it appeared in 1948. Owner at the time was Charles Sittler.

As a result of the event that occurred on that day in 1757, the Sechler homestead and its victims have forever left their indelibly heartbreaking, painful mark upon the history of Lynn Township. On that fateful day, their destiny was quickly determined. To all the future generations of Lynn Township citizens, the Sechler homestead and its victims were to serve as an icon and a remembrance of the suffering and the loss of life our forefathers had to endure as they labored to carve out a livelihood on the township's rugged frontier. Yet, in spite of its infamous and tainted reputation during the colonization years of America, the homestead and its occupants were destined to become more than just a symbol of tragedy. Time was in control and recollections of the Indian attacks gradually began to erode and fade into the shadows of the succeeding decades. Brighter days were in store for the Sechler homestead and its future occupants. We plan to discuss them in a future issue of the Lynn/Heidelberg Historical Society's quarterly bulletin.

As we conclude, we wish to extend our sincere gratitude to our lifetime friend, Carl Snyder, for his counsel and his assistance in providing historical and legal documents as well as the photographs that appear in this essay.