

## **Tracking More of Western Lehigh County Ancestry**

By Dr. Don Yoder, the foremost living scholar of the Pennsylvania Dutch

Read the first part of this series [here](#).



### **Zion Lehigh Church, 8269 Spring Creek Road, Alburdis, PA**

In all my Lehigh County genealogical researches I struck the jackpot with the records of the Lehigh Zion Church (Alburdis). In 1948, the year I taught at Muhlenberg College (and thus in a sense became a Lehigh Countian myself!), I researched the colonial records of the church at the Mountainville home of the ministerial son of Lehigh Zion, genial Reverend Melville B. L. Schmoyer (1879–1955).

### **Wagner Ancestry**

In these records I discovered my Wagner family background, beginning with my two emigrant ancestors, Jacob Wagner Sr. (1693–1754) and Jacob Wagner Jr. (1725–1802). I later proved their emigration from the town of Nöttingen in Baden-Durlach, between Pforzheim and Karlsruhe, as well as their emigration year as 1738, not 1742 as earlier genealogies claimed.

From Jacob Jr. I am descended three times – through his daughters Regina, wife of Daniel Maurer (1749–1832); Gertraud, wife of Jacob Beisel (1759–1827); and Elisabeth, wife of Jacob Reinert (1761–1857). Jacob Wagner Jr. was the leader of the great Mahantongo

Migration of the 1790s, which took dozens of Western Lehigh families over the mountains to the rich Mahantongo Valley area of Schuylkill and Northumberland Counties. These included the Wagners, Maurers, Beisels, Reinerts, Heplers, Howerter, Knorrs, Steins, Diehls, Haupt, Matterns, Reisses, Henningers, Shankweilers, Wetzels and many others. In fact for a Mahantongo reading the church records of the Lehigh Zion and Zionsville Churches, it's like "Old Home Week!" Of the Mahantongo Wagners, only one returned to Lehigh County. That was Uncle George Wagner (1770–1855), who married Susanna Heinly, and is buried at the Lehigh Zion Church.



### Schuffert Ancestry

In my Historical Introduction (pp. xv-lxiii) to Avie Hepler Morgan's *The Wagner Family History* (Baltimore, 1997), I made one serious error, although it was not my fault. Before they helped to found the Lehigh Zion Church, the Jacob Wagner Sr. family attended services at the Jordan Lutheran Church. In the records for the 1740s I found the baptism of Anna Maria Schuffert on April 24, 1748. She was the daughter of Johannes Schuffert and his wife Maria Clara, and the godparents were Michael and Maria Magdalena Kuchle. From other documentation I learned that these two women were twin sisters, born November 1, 1723, at Nöttingen in Baden-Durlach, children of Jacob Wagner Sr. who accompanied him to America with three other children. Unfortunately while preparing my Introduction to the Wagner book I used two "transcriptions" or "translations" of the Jordan Lutheran Church records, both done by reputable scholars (Charles R. Roberts and Franklin J. F.

Schantz), both of whom should have known better than to insert an umlaut in the surname "Schuffert, which made it into "Schüffert", pronounced "Schiffert." And alas, I went into print identifying Johannes Schuffert with the Johannes Schiffert who founded an unrelated Lehigh County family of that name. When I later checked the original church records, in the Lutheran Archives at the Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary at Mt. Airy, I found that Schuffert was there quite umlaut-less. My warning to Pennsylvania Dutch genealogists is therefore – check all translations of church records with the originals. And watch those umlauts!

Johannes and Maria Clara Schuffert hitched up their covered wagon and headed for North Carolina in the 1750s, where they founded a widespread and distinguished family which even achieved two genealogies since 1900, the second of which features my correct Schuffert-Wagner connection.

#### Stein Ancestry

The very last of my emigrant ancestors to arrive in America was Anton or Anthony Stein (ca. 1770–1843), who left France in 1793 as a refugee from the French Revolution. His grandson John Stine (1831–1910) of Mt Carmel in Northumberland County stated that Anthony was a native of Alsace-Lorraine. Anthony and his wife Sarah (I don't know whether they were married in Alsace or in Pennsylvania) appear in the Reformed records of the Weisenberg and Lowhill Churches so they are legitimate Western Lehigh Countians. But Anthony later moved across the Berks County border into Greenwich Township, and in the 1820s trekked over the Blue Mountain to Mahantongo. He was the grandfather of my father's beloved grandmother, Brigitta (DeLong) Yoder, 1822–1900. More about her later.

Alas, the family background of Sarah Stein, Anthony's wife, is thus far unknown. From the sponsorship of the Stein children's baptisms, she could have been a Werley, Seiberling, or Bachmann (Alsatian!), with odds on the Werleys, for a very special reason. This possibility was strengthened but was not proved by a bit of folklore passed down to me from Anthony's granddaughter Brigitta (DeLong) Yoder. She told the story that one of her ancestors gave fresh baked bread to a group of Indians who stopped at the farm and the chief got the smallest piece! The Werley input is found in the standard Lehigh and Carbon County History of 1884, which tells us that Sebastian Werley of Weisenberg Township settled near an Indian hunting-path with an Indian village a mile away (in Lynn Township!).

"Often when the Indians passed their home Mrs. Werley would give them a loaf of bread. This they would beat upon a log until soft, and then impale it upon a branch of willows, and tie it to their shoulders. These acts of kindness on the part of the Werleys were reciprocated by the red man." (p.451).

The stories are obviously not a perfect match, but there may be some relationship inherent in the striking fact that both the Werleys and Steins told tales involving giving gifts of bread to the neighboring Indians. Who knows? Possibly folklore, oral traditions related as tales by our forbears, can occasionally help us to solve genealogical problems.

#### Werley Ancestry

And speaking of the Werleys, our knowledge of this Lehigh County clan has been spot-lighted by a recent genealogical breakthrough. A descendant has come forward with the original double Taufschein for Sebastian Werley and his wife, Rosina Barbara Dürr (Derr), prepared in 1753 by their Lutheran pastor prior to their emigration. From this document we learn that the Werleys were not French Huguenots, as erroneously claimed in the 1884 county history, but their origins have been traced to the village of Uengershausen in Unterfranken (Lower Franconia), now part of Northern Bavaria. In preparing this rare double Taufschein the parish minister included prayers for the young couple on their journey and in the New World.

The parish of Uengershausen, which is a Protestant enclave very near the great Catholic Episcopal center of Würzburg, also produced another important Lehigh County family – the Hollenbachs, of whom the late Raymond Hollenbach of Royersford is the best known representative. His usually accurate transcriptions of Pennsylvania Dutch church registers are now available at several Eastern Pennsylvania historical societies. I should mention that the Hollenbachs came to Pennsylvania with Sebastian Werlein (now Werley), on the English Ship Neptune, which arrived at Philadelphia September 24, 1753. And on the ship lists, two signatures before Sebastian Werlein's, appears the signature of Bartel Raumberger, who came from a Catholic village very near Uengershausen. He was the ancestor of the copious clan of Romberger and Rumberger of Lancaster, Dauphin, Lebanon, Centre, Huntingdon, and Jefferson Counties. They founded the city of Dubois in Jefferson County in

Northwestern Pennsylvania, formerly Rumburgertown, and besides this honor, produced among their direct descendants, a president of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

And now a short essay on illegitimacy and genealogy. According to Brigitta's Taufschein, which I have, she was the daughter of Daniel DeLong and Lidia Stein.

The parents were unmarried and sometime after the birth Lidia married, not Daniel but Benjamin Hering (1805–1837), whose mother was a DeLong. (More complications to work on!) The Hering's had a daughter (who married Reuben Yoder) and several sons whom my father remembered as quaint and interesting great uncles when he was a bog. The Herings, accompanying Anthony and Sarah Stein, moved to Mohantongo. The family was so close knit that Brigitta thought she was a Hering! Upon confirmation, her mother informed her, "No, you are a DeLong," and gave her the details.

The young girl was so taken with her DeLong name and heritage that she gave the name DeLong as middle name to all four of her Yoder sons, the oldest of whom was my grandfather, Nathan DeLong Yoder (1841-1914).

#### Yoder Ancestry

But there's more to the story, if I may be frank, and genealogists should be frank. Church records sometimes unwittingly reveal family secrets too. Grandmother Brigitta was born in August, 1822, in Greenwich Township, Berks County. Exactly nine months previously to her birth, the records of the New Bethel Zion Church, now Mt. Zion Lutheran Church at Grimsville north of Kutztown, reveal the fact that at the baptism of a child of Henry and Elizabeth Fritz, the godparents were Daniel DeLong and Lidia Stein! The young courting couple, Daniel and Lidia, must have stayed all night at the Fritz farmhouse, where they undoubtedly engaged in the universal courting custom of bundling. But they went too far, as many courting couples did, but I'm glad it happened that way, for that act of love produced a blessed ancestress of mine, Brigitta DeLong Yoder, whose memory and the story of her good deeds throughout life are still told in my family.

Her husband, William Yoder (1812–1854), farmer, schoolmaster, cabinet-maker, fraktur artist and poet, died at the early age of 42, and she remained a widow the rest of her life,

raising and nurturing her children. And somehow she was able to send her oldest son, my grandfather across the Susquehanna to the Freeburg Academy in Snyder County, where he perfected his English, his public speaking, his copperplate handwriting, and he also learned surveying, all of which he could use as the community leader he became, with two terms as Justice of the Peace (1875–1885), his long-time secretaryship of the Friedens Union Church in Hegins Valley, and many other community services.



Dr. Don Yoder, speaking at the 2011  
Lynn-Heidelberg Historical Society dinner banquet.

So far so good! In relating my Lehigh County ancestry to you all, I have been frank. This frank account of my lineage, its shady as well as its sunny side, should encourage genealogists, when they write their family history, to be equally frank, and not to omit the family secrets, the illegitimacies, etc., but include every single item as evidence of the truth. Fictionalized genealogy, hiding the often embarrassing links in one lineage, does not tell the truth of the matter – and truth is, after all, what life is about. *Super omnium veritas!*

#### About the Author

Dr. Don Yoder is Professor Emeritus of the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught for forty years and directed fifty-three doctoral dissertations, in Folklife Studies, Religious History, American History, and American Civilization. For lack of time and space, the sketches of his Lehigh County ancestry here, do not, include the equally important Lehigh County families of Huber of Macungie and Allentown; Reiss of Upper Milford; and Maurer and Schankweiler of Macungie, to say nothing of his Yoders, Weidners, and Eysters, Berks Countians with branches in Lehigh.

