

THE

# HOMESTEAD

Spring 2009

[www.NicholasStoltzfus.com](http://www.NicholasStoltzfus.com)

A Publication of the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation Committee



## Auction: May 9, 2009

This year's auction will be Saturday, May 9. Bring an item to donate, and buy to support the preservation. Drop your donation off at the East side of the tent (along the Tulpehocken Road). *Bring and Buy!*

Begin with breakfast at 8:00, hear the Sanger Chor (Pennsylvania Dutch), see the house, learn the Stoltzfus story, spinning, cooking in the fireplace, and also the magician Jay Stoltzfus, if available! Inspect



the items for sale.

Auction begins at 9:30, Quilts at 11:30.

Merle Stoltzfus will be on hand for anyone who wishes to be informed about the Barn.

And, will there be a volley ball game again this year?

## Stoltzfus Heritage Evening

The evening will be held on Monday, March 16, 2009, at 6:30pm at the Stoltzfus Farm Restaurant in Intercourse, for a beef roast dinner. Reservations by payment only (\$25 per plate).

The program will include:

- Slide show by Zach Stoltzfus: "The European Side of Nicholas"
- Zach will also collect stories of

the early Stoltzfus Family to help him with the book he is writing. Write what you have heard about the early Stoltzfus or Smucker families for him.

• Report on the Barn Project by Merle Stoltzfus and preview of the May 9 auction by Mose Smucker.

Seating will be limited. Please make checks payable to NSHPC and

designate "heritage event". The Restaurant is donating the dinner to benefit the ongoing NSH program. Mail checks (before March 10) to: Nicholas Stoltzfus House, 1700 Tulpehocken Rd, Wyomissing, PA 19610.

For more information call Paul Kurtz at 717-367-3906.

# No Ordinary Variance for No Ordinary Barn

Merle Stoltzfus

“IT IS ORDERED that the application is GRANTED to allow construction of a barn of the kind, at the location and in the manner described in the testimony, ...”. This is the key sentence in the Order received from the Zoning Hearing Board of the Borough of Wyomissing on December 16, 2008. Only those who have previously asked for a variance from a local governing body can really appreciate the miracle of the scope of this decision. This was no ordinary variance as it requested relief from fifteen (15) Sec-



tions of the Wyomissing Zoning Ordinance. In my lifetime, I've never known of a single application requesting relief from even 5 sections of an ordinance.

The Order opens the way for the Nicholas Stoltzfus Committee to apply for a building permit to build the barn. But beyond the permit, these variances grant the opportunity for the Committee to improve the property in a historically correct way. The property can be constructed to appear to have been built 250 years ago.

A very crooked path was made straight for us as we met before the Zoning Officer, Borough Manager, Plan-

ning Commission, Borough Council and finally, the Zoning Hearing Board. We found favor with the entirety of the elected and appointed officials. Both the Planning Commission and Borough Council gave written support for our variance. We don't mistake the source of this favor as many were committed to praying. And as we take additional steps, may we never take for granted the goodness of God as we continue toward improving this property in honor to our parents and remembering the lives and faith of our forefathers. May the primary preservation become a tangible teaching tool for our children's children "to remember the example of lives lived in with a humble attitude of obedience, forgiveness and willingness to share and help other in need; all to the glory and honor of our Lord Jesus Christ" (NSH Mission Statement).

*Barn project goal - \$300,000*

*Barn project progress - approx. \$90,000 in cash & gifts in kind*

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## The World of Nicholas Stoltzfus

Zach's book also seeks to present a broad narrative, prompted by Nicholas's personal experiences, that deals with the religious climate of Europe that had necessitated Nicholas's leaving of there, as well as the community that Nicholas helped to create in the New World.

Some of the key questions that will be asked and examined by the book are:

◆ How are the Amish different from other various people groups

that fled to America for religious freedom?

◆ What is the history of the Anabaptist movement in Europe, and how did this give rise to the Amish?

◆ What did these people hope to find in the New World?

◆ How did this differ from others who came to these shores?

◆ How is the original intent of the Amish lifestyle still alive today?

◆ How has it resisted efforts at change?

Nicholas's life, and the life of his ancestors, must be considered within this sweep of events. For if the book focused solely on

Nicholas himself and the little that is known of his life and that of his property in Berks, the book would be short, disparate and uninteresting. If, however, Nicholas's life were to be considered in light of the larger framework of the history of the Amish in the New World in general, his life would become more interesting and accessible. Thus the story of the idea and practice of being Amish through the ages could be tied together with the Stoltzfus story, as in many ways they are one and the same.

Not to be neglected would be the Governor Leader story, as well

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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. Photos by Carl Good.

# *Berks Heritage Tour, Friday May 8*

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Interest in locating the Amish homesteads of Berks County increased in the 1950's. Since frequent bus tours visited many of the sites, such as the Hochstetler House where the massacre took place, the Jacob Hertzler house (where visitor's book is kept), and the Miller in Shillington: also pointing out many of the original homes. The Stoltzfus House is a favorite place on the tour.

In recent years Masthof has hosted the bus tour, and is willing to do so again this year, if there is sufficient interest. Call 610-286-0258 to make reservations before March 10, 2009.

The tour is scheduled so that anyone from a distance can take in both the tour and the auction the next day.



*Above: Hertzler House  
Right: Hochstetler Plaque*

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as some of the history of the property, as the property itself acts as a silent witness to the unfolding of events. This is my new starting point. While previously I had wished to focus solely on Nicholas and his life, I wrote 25 pages of material before finding that this was not enough to go on. His life, in and of itself, does not contain enough information to write a book.

The lives of hundreds and thousands of Stoltzfus' and Amish together as a community do warrant enough to be worth writing about.

## *Family, Friends, Brothers (All these):*

Thank you for the privilege of working with you this year toward the goal of honoring our parents and remembering our faith through the NSH Barn project.

This has been an interesting journey to travel with you and we've not yet arrived. I want to thank you for the significant effort you have made to cast the vision for this barn. I thought we would be there by now but God has decided to lengthen the journey. So we will wait for him because He always knows best.

Merle Stoltzfus  
December 1, 2008



## *Make it a day!*

Thanks to Cathy Wegener for these pictures of the Berks Heritage Center, across the Tulpehocken from the Stoltzfus House. They show what is available for those who may wish to make it a day in the area.

The *Red Bridge*, the longest single span wood bridge in Pa, located 1 ½ miles north on Tulpehocken Road. The Heritage office is across the bridge, as well as the museums.

In the early 1800's the *Union Canal* was begun, which flowed along the Road just across from the House. The Canal Museum is also across the Red Bridge.

The *Gruber Wagon Works* museum, located across the Red Bridge.

This *footbridge* is about 1000 feet north of the Stoltzfus House. The Union Canal crossed the Tulpehocken and the mule bridge was about at this bridge. This led to the canal that passed the House. Trails across the foot bridge go to the museums. The trails are a favorite of many people.

*Call (610)373-6206 or  
(717)367-3906 for information  
or appointments.*

*The Nicholas Stoltzfus House  
Preservation Committee  
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Wyomissing, PA 19610*

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