

I Sang for George Leader

Dear Paul,

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed your youth group singing four-part harmony at the Colonnades in Hershey last week. They are a wholesome looking group and the music was a delight.

Although I never expected it, being remembered for doing something good is a real delight. The Amish and Mennonite people have always been held in high regard by the Leader family.

My grandmother Leader came from Mennonite stock out of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia. I like to think that I may embody some of her good traits. My father and mother both loved her very much. Unfortunately, she died before I was born, but they always remembered her and praised her.

The Stoltzfus project is making good progress, and that is fine. I hope that it will be an inspiration to the "plain people" for many generations to come.

God bless, George

If your youth group wants to meet and sing for Governor Leader, call Paul Kurtz at 717-808-7785. George Leader is 92, goes to his office every day. The Ravens and the Hummingbirds have had this opportunity, he really appreciates this, as do other residents at the Hershey Country Meadows.

"It would seem that, at long last, the vexatious Amish school attendance problem has been solved" a February 8, 1956 editorial in the Intel Journal stated. A news item two days later quoted Arthur Mylin, county school superintendent, calling the set-up as "ridiculous, the whole office is opposed to it." The assistant superintendent, Reeder Eshleman, called it a political move: "...a result of Gov Leader's stubbornness". (Pennsylvania School History, p 512. Here are recorded names of fathers having been committed to prison). *Continued on page 2*

Thank You,
Penn State Berks

I am thoroughly "warmed" (not by the 90+ degrees yesterday! May 28), rather by the warm family feeling the Amish families brought to the Nicholas Stoltzfus House and the Penn State ball field. Being Pentecost Day, a spirit of family pervaded the activities. A new guidance now exists through "rumspringer", a time youth are deciding to join the Amish for themselves.

In the past youth were expected to experience something of the world, which became overwhelming in recent years, so a nurturing attitude accompanies rumspringer today. "We want to give them something to do so they do not get into mischief", as one parent stated.

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If you would like more information or are interested in donating, please contact Paul Kurtz by email at psku04@ptd.net, by phone at 717-808-7785, or by visiting nicholasstoltzfus.org.

Now is the Time

Michael Leader is ready to follow through with final negotiations to turn over the property to the Nicholas Stoltzfus House Preservation Committee. First the barn must be completed and the trailer removed. He will provide materials for construction of a pavilion between the Country Meadows and the NSH. He will have the area graded for this. We should see this occur as soon as possible. See progress May 11, 2013: Come for the Benefit Auction!



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I Sang for George Leader, cont.

Do you want to meet the man who in spite of resistance was able to secure the vocational school that fit the Amish? He understood the strength of the Amish family that has been the training grounds for many generations. He knew public high school would dilute this.

Singing for him, which he genuinely appreciates, is a great way for Amish youth to express appreciation having been through this program. Then, too, you can tell him, "Thanks, for making the Nicholas Stoltzfus House available to us".

The House had been boarded up, overgrown, with a demolition permit when his family purchased the property on December 15, 2000. They guaranteed its preservation by the Pequea Bruderschaft Library and other descendants.

A committee was formed with Aaron Petersheim as chairman and Pam Shenk of The TriCounty Heritage Society as secretary. Later Mose Smucker became Chairman, Sherry King secretary, and Vivian Beiler treasurer. The committee is now registered as a separate 501-3-c non-profit corporation. The intent is to have all committee members approved by the Pequea Bruderschaft Library.



More and more groups are coming to spend the day, or to camp, visit the House, and enjoy the Berks Parks nearby, even to play volley ball and softball. This is a great place for parents to come with their teenage sons and daughters.

Gov. Leader and wife, Mary Jane frequently attended the Stoltzfus House Benefit auction. Mary Jane passed away on March 15, 2011. George Leader now resides in The Colonnade at Hershey Country Meadows.

The picture below shows the Governor in the lower left, with Mary Jane looking towards the quilt.

The next annual benefit auction is on May 11, 2013.



Thank You, Penn State, cont.

From 9:00 to 4:30, with a break for lunch, the light and the dark Wren (the name of the group) teams played each other. The fathers stood by eager to play themselves! The girls cheered as they also were aligned with one side or the other. Little children found shade for play or rest knowing they were very closely watched. I spoke with a father who mentioned he was responsible to clean up and set all in order on the field at the end of the games.

After noon I had the privilege to say some things about the Stoltzfus House as the young folk gathered in a circle ready to sing. Taking the recent newsletter I suggested they sign a note of thanks to Penn State. I wish you could have seen the eagerness with which they penned their names. So many expressions of thanks came to me!

I wish you could have heard the excellent singing of the Savior and the bright hope for the future. They told me the music teacher was one of their own youth! Well, I had recently acquired the Pennsylvania School History which tells of the Amish view on education. As with all of Amish skill, it is developed in the family and the community. This teacher had no professional training in music, yet the singing was classic.

Canoeing & Kayaking on the Creek

Canoeing and kayaking are allowed on the creek and persons should follow PA Boating rules. Life jackets should be on board and be worn. Most people use kayaks, canoes or inflatable rafts. No motors – it's too shallow anyway and most boaters would know that. We do not have any boat ramps along the creek. People have to carry their craft to the water from parking lots. And can start at Blue Marsh Stilling Basin – paddle down to island at Gring's Mill – carry boat around falls and then get back in to continue downstream to Berks Leisure Area and Stonecliffe. They need to get out as well at Bushongs Dam below Stonecliffe. I know you cannot go over the dam.

Cathy L. Wegener, CPRP, Superintendent of Interpretive Services, Berks County Parks

First a Dream

First, a dream, an idea, an aim... Early on, Caleb Stoltzfus, the son of Merle and Diane Stoltzfus, drew a sketch of what the barn may look like.

Next a plan: Jack Parmer manufactured paints in Akron, Pennsylvania. His interest in fraktur led him to Abner Beiler. Abner introduced him to the Stoltzfus House about 1990, and when we began the preservation in 2000 he was there with his camera documenting the House character. He studied the plan drawn up by Merle Stoltzfus and John Richard Esh, then created a model.



It had been decided by the Committee in 2005 to have a barn that would meet 3 needs: (1) To house a Heritage Room and preserve the House as it is; (2) To have an apartment for caretakers so the mobile home can be removed; and (3) To contain rest rooms that accommodate visitors and events.



May 10, 2008 we had a ground breaking using a scoop pulled by a horse team to signify our commitment to the barn, and to raise funds. Dave Esh, builder, needed \$120,000 to erect the structure. On July 27, 2011 we had a barn raising which gave us the intact structure. It is impossible to value the extent of volunteer time and material, but so far \$136,395.99 has been expended.

What will this mean when completed?

1. It will be a place where Amish youth can come for a day out and parents can feel it is worthwhile. Here they can appreciate their Amish heritage that first came to Berks County. Here they can sing in the barn, a treat with the timber sounds.

2. Supervised groups can camp overnight, take the trails, play volley ball and softball.

3. Families can hold reunions

4. Tours can include the Stoltzfus House as a stop.

5. Stoltzfus descendants can enter the door Nicholas and his family would have used.

6. All can appreciate the impact of faith in Jesus Christ as expressed through the generations.



Photo credit: Richard Patrick

While much of this occurs already, it will be much better when the Heritage room is equipped, rest-rooms are functional, and caretakers are present. Now, without completion of the barn we assure the Borough of no liability when we enter the barn, persons are at their own risk.

With support of the Borough of Wyomissing, the Berks County Parks and Heritage Center, and the Penn State University, these cooperative relationships provide a unique opportunity to press ahead. Thanks to all who have made progress possible, we are nearing completion of the stone work. Next will be the apartment and the rest rooms, as funds and donations allow.

Looking to the Future

Fourth Amish Benefit sing: Tuesday, September 25, 6:00. Come and join us at the yet to be completed barn.

Future events may include routine visits, reunions, singings, and Youth and Family gatherings, and of course the annual benefit auction.

Berks Amish Heritage tours in planning:

(Guide: Paul Kurtz, Lemar Mast, Sam Stoltzfus, or Ben Riehl)

- October 12, 2012 Berks visit of Amish Homesteads

- April 26, 2013 Reading area Amish heritage, to Shartlesville, Womelsdorf, Myerstown

- May 27, 2013 Roadside America, Hochstetler, Hertzler, Reading area, Gruber Wagon Museum

- July 26, 2013 Hamburg and Blue Mtn area, Hertzler, Yoder, Cabellas, Crystal Cave

- Sept 2, 2013 Shartlesville, Irish Creek Valley

See nicholasstoltzfus.org for upcoming events, or call the number below. The Heritage tours will depend on interest. Reserve now for the October 2012 and 2013 events, contact:

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Our Anabaptist Forefathers

- as Amos Zook is concerned that we know -

Living in Switzerland, now they learned to run the printing press which gave them the Bible, among other things they learned that infant baptism was wrong! Now there was fire in the Zurich Hills, everybody reading the Bible. They increased very fast in numbers, which the state church wouldn't tolerate. They were arrested, their farms were taken, the money used to build their big church houses (cathedrals).

They were severely persecuted, some burned at the stake, some otherwise killed, driven out of the country. They were not allowed to own land. Some managed to be hired by wealthy landowners. (this was after the thirty years war, help was scarce.)

At one time there were 50 some Anabaptists imprisoned at Passau castle including several young girls. They wrote hymns, some are in our Ausbund and are still sung by us today.

They were relentlessly pursued, they fled for their lives. One mother walked 20 miles through snow with a very young child.

Now they heard of freedom in America. After sailing the ocean they disembarked in Philadelphia, followed the Schuylkill River to Berks County which seemed like a safe haven. At one time there were 80 or 90 Amish families living there. After they left there was still this one house, the Nicholas Stoltzfus House that in 1997 was overgrown, with a demolition permit, then the Leader family bought the property in 2000. Governor Leader was very instrumental in solving our school problem, even being called stubborn by a head school guy.

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