

# The Homestead

A Publication of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Committee

## Chairman's Message

Good afternoon,

I am home from market today and it is snowing while giving me a new spirit to write this message.

I am grateful to Elam and Esther Stoltzfus for making the Stoltzfus House "Homestead" look like a home again, similar to what it may have looked like 200 years ago.

It is no longer a sterile property, but it is coming alive waiting to be rediscovered. One way for you to get involved is by planning to come the Annual Benefit Auction on May 1st, 2021. We need more people to capture all the great bargains. We need more young people to create an excitement with their families who appreciate our heritage. In other words, block out the date May 1, 2021 NOW.

Sincerely and May God Bless You

Moses Smucker, Chairman  
Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Preservation Committee

## Homestead 2020

The Homestead has hosted a continuous caretaker in residence since September of 2018. Nic Stoltzfus arrived in 2018 and maintained the property, giving numerous tours and managing events; all while writing and publishing the book, "*German Lutherans to Pennsylvania Amish*".

July 2020 brought a change as Nic moved out and caretaker duties passed on to his parents, Elam and Esther Stoltzfus, who relocated from north Florida to become long term volunteer caretakers. They sold their home and left the land of lemon trees and cotton fields in exchange for a an opportunity to manage, preserve, and continue sharing the rich legacy of the 1700's Nicholas Stoltzfus family migration and other Anabaptist settlers who came to Berks County Pennsylvania in search of spiritual freedom and economic opportunity.

Elam and Esther have focused on physical improvements to the property during this time of COVID.

One of the first items on the agenda was FLOWERS. Esther loves flowers and had extensive gardens in Florida. The word soon got around and we were blessed by the generosity of people who shared seeds, bulbs, plants, and/or money to help us buy shrubs. Soon flowers were blooming and visitors mentioned the beautiful black eyed Susans, pentas, and salvias. Bird feeders were added and native plants and flowers needed to attract birds and butterflies were planted.

We will be designing a garden beside the old house to honor Nicholas's wife and it will be called *Anna's Garden*.

Other improvements included reshaping the ditch along the driveway into a gentle slope, installation of a new security light and lights around the barn, installed a new gas line, removal of an old power pole. A new sign was placed at the entry and the portable potty was moved out of eyesight.

The upstairs barn area has been cleaned for events and has been rented out several times during the past few months. The small guest apartment was used as a stopover site for a furloughed missionary family. The barn was also used by the Reading Choral Society for individual recording sessions for Handel's Messiah.

The grounds have been visited dozens of times by local amateur and professional photographers looking for a beautiful backdrop for individual and family pictures.

Along with planned tours, dozens of spontaneous tours of the Homestead have been given with most being from the Stoltzfus family lineage. The close proximity to the Berks County Park system with the trail to Gring's Mill and use of Tulpehocken Creek for kayaking and fishing has offered a new and broader audience to the Homestead.

We held our Fall board meeting to discuss plans for 2021.

At this time, we are planning for the **Annual Benefit Auction** to be held May 1st, 2021. Bring your appetite for good home baked breakfast and lunch, and consider donating items and buying items, all for a great cause. All proceeds will benefit the Homestead mission of educating and sharing the history of our family. This is also a great time to meet family and old friends, because, first and foremost, this is a reunion.

And at any time, please know that we would love to have you stop by for a tour or a visit. The coffee pot is ready and we would be honored for a visit from any of you.



## From the Land of Lemons and Sunshine to the Birthplace of American Anabaptist History

---

I huddle in the 40 degree temperature in November pondering the yet unknown winter ahead. I'm already cold and winter hasn't even arrived! In my home state of Florida, I would be in flip flops and short sleeves, getting my garden ready for winter vegetables and flowers.

How –you may ask---did a born and raised woman from the deep south end up in Pennsylvania in the sixth decade of her life?? This is opposite from the norm; people usually move south as they age instead of north! What was I thinking? How did we get here? What precipitated a life changing transition that uprooted us geographically, culturally, and professionally? This is my story.....

We are all born with a purpose and we are born into a culture that is bigger than us as individuals. Elam was born into an old order Amish family in Morgantown PA. His grandfather Elam Zook led a group of individuals to start the New Order Amish church and when Elam was a teenager, his family moved to the Finger Lakes region in New York. As Elam entered adult hood, he was not that interested in maintaining close ties to his background. He joined a Mennonite Gospel Band called Gospel Echoes and after that, moved to Alabama to work for We Care.

We met during those years and ended up getting married and made a life in Florida. Elam went to college, majoring in media communication and started making nature documentaries about Florida. I was a nurse and worked mostly in ER settings. We had two children and built a house and yard that we loved. We added dogs, cats, a horse, miniature goats, and chickens with names and personalities. We were in our forever home. One of the things we enjoyed as a family was taking trips. In 2008 we took a trip to celebrate our son Nic's graduation from high school. He chose West Point and New York City. Somehow along the way, Elam had heard about the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead and he thought it would be cool to swing by for Nic to visit the house his ancestor had lived in. Paul Kurtz was our tour guide.

In 2016 Elam went on a week long cattle drive –which was a reenactment of the old days of running cattle in Florida. He made a film about it which served as a catalyst to rekindle his love for horses and help him reconnect with his past. Elam had stayed in touch with Paul and to those of you who know Paul, you know that when he gets an idea, he pursues it with the passion of a bee looking for pollen. Paul had decided to recruit Elam to help tell the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead story.

Through a series of events orchestrated by Paul, Elam and Nic became involved in telling the story of the homestead. This involved a trip to Germany to research Nicholas Stoltzfus and find out how he became Anabaptist and emigrate to America. This led to our son Nicholas moving to the newly constructed barn at the homestead and writing the book, "German Lutherans to Pennsylvania Amish: the Stoltzfus Story". And yet, that had nothing to do with us in Florida..... or did it?

In 2018, as Nic was writing the book, north Florida was devastated by a category 5 hurricane called Michael. Our local economy was in tatters; literally and figuratively. Our beloved property that was filled with massive decades-old live oak, pines, magnolias was leveled. Trees we had planted for retirement income were twisted stumps. Our house was intact but Elam's office and our horse barn were destroyed. Friends and family came to provide support in those dark days and we slowly started the clean up and rebuild; for the next 18 months, Elam worked from "can to can't", as they say in the south to make the property presentable. Work for Elam became harder to come by as art and education took a back seat in this struggling economy.

During this time Elam was approached by committee members and our son Nic about us moving up to become caretakers of the homestead after the book was finished. Nic is a bachelor and being caretaker was infringing on the social life he was seeking. Elam and I had many discussions about what a move like this would mean for us. Could I really do this? Could I give up my dream home and yard for an apartment only half as big? What about my beloved animals? And the year round sunshine and beautiful lemon trees that blessed us with the best lemons every year?

We prayed and God came knocking on my door. I saw my mother --Naomi Yoder's --face just as clear even though she has been gone for 10 years. She consented to leave her home state of Delaware to live in Florida in the early 50's because her husband Monroe had a dream. She left comfort and family for a poor patch of sandy soil because she believed God had called her to do this. I knew my Mama would be encouraging me to support my husband. And I knew if God was calling, the path would become clear with each step of obedience I took.



We made the momentous decision to sell our home and property and relocate permanently to Pennsylvania. We got our home ready for the market and found a wonderful home where all of our animals would go together to live. We sold and donated and gave things away and packed up the things we thought we would need to make a new life. When our house sold, we said good bye to beloved family and friends and left our lemon trees-- that were loaded with green lemons—behind for the new owners to enjoy. We decided we were bringing the sunshine with us and even on these cold and grey Pennsylvania days, we can create our own warmth and lightness. When God orders our paths, the burden is not heavy and cold bleak weather doesn't need to dictate our attitude.

We are settled in at the homestead. We are planning for the future using our past history to guide us. These days of COVID have altered our current plans a bit, but we know this season will not last.

We envision the Homestead to be a place of remembrance and a place to learn about the faith and history that guided our forefathers but we want it to also be a place of peace and sanctuary and beauty.

Please come and enjoy the history of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead. Watch our gardens grow and consider a barn rental for your family or corporate event.

We are grateful for all of your fine support and encouragement. As they say in the south, "Come and sit a spell..." We are here to welcome you.

----- Esther Yoder Stoltzfus







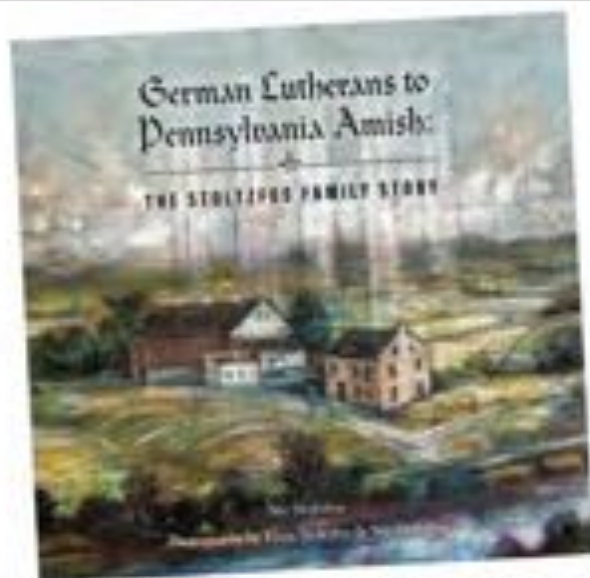
Author Nic Stoltzfus releases a new book.

Born and raised in Florida, a thousand miles away from his Amish roots in Pennsylvania, author Nic Stoltzfus felt little connection to his heritage and hard-to-pronounce last name. But through a series of unexpected events, he finds his way home. Stoltzfus shares with readers about how he learned to embrace his Amish roots, his adventures in Germany uncovering new genealogy information about his ancestors, and the story of his first year as caretaker of the historic Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead in Pennsylvania. Told with warmth and humor, *"In the Footsteps of My Stoltzfus Family"* is a memoir with themes that we can all relate to: the importance of family and understanding one's heritage.

Published by Masthof Press & Bookstore



Nic Stoltzfus is an author and screenwriter who lives in Reading, Pennsylvania. A 10th-generation descendant of his namesake, immigrant Nicholas Stoltzfus, he served as caretaker of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead from 2018 to 2020. Although he misses Cajun boiled peanuts from the South, he's found that Pennsylvania also has some good comfort food to offer—a new favorite being deep-fried scrapple with ketchup and maple syrup.



Richly illustrated, this book surrounds the core Stoltzfus family story with easy-to-read historical context. Stoltzfus' primary source research shines through in this story told with an arresting mix of human interest and careful documentation.

— Jean Kilheffer Hess, Executive Director, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society

This book is a must for Stoltzfus descendants, but it is also for anyone interested in the dynamic religious and political environment from which so many Pennsylvania German immigrants came in the 1700s. I highly recommend it!

— Steven M. Nolt, Senior Scholar, Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College

The Stoltzfus family story is told here with an informed awareness of the larger river of history that shapes the destiny of the family: from the Lutheran Reformation to the Thirty Years' War to the American Revolution... Because the book tells this story of searching and finding—alongside the historical knowledge found—it offers readers an inspiring touchstone for reclaiming their own family legacies with attentiveness and care.

— Gerald J. Mast, Professor of Communication, Bluffton University

The Scribbler has attended a hymn sing in the Stoltzfus Homestead and toured the grounds. This is one of central Pennsylvania's most impressive preserves. The house and the family that spread out from there deserve and have received an equally impressive presentation on paper by Masthof Press in Morgantown... few [genealogy books] are as charming as this book. Scores of photos taken in Germany and Berks County by Nic Stoltzfus's father, Elam, add to the book's interest and beauty.

— Jack Brubaker, Historical Columnist, LNP / LancasterOnline



## What Berks County Means to Me

-- by Paul Kurtz

I am 90 years old. Eighty years ago I walked the half mile towards Morgantown and mowed Grandma Stoltzfuses yard with her push mower. I was not to take any money but she insisted and slipped a dime in my hand.

When it grew dark she lit the lamp on her desk, read the open German Bible. The Bible, the Martyrs' Mirror, Ausbund, and a prayer book were in every early Berks County Amish home. Spending evenings with her while Pop and Mom went to meeting I saw all this.

Elam died when Mom was a 10 month old. Katie Beiler took Lena and Elsie and moved back with her parents where then Mom grew up. Daddy Beiler lived till 1925. Pop and Mom, married January 18, 1923, moved onto a farm towards Elverson. Pop's interest in early Berks Amish was lit by the need for him to be present after Daddy Beiler died. He was needed to visit with menfolk as Katie and her sister Aunt Emma were alone in the house. There Pop heard stories of the early days.

Pop descended from each of the four Kurtz "brothers" he heard them mention. He also descended from Immigrant Bishop Jacob Mast. Pop's grandparents John Mast married to Rebecca Stoltzfus instilled a perception of Amish Heritage in their family. Rebecca was the daughter of Tennessee John, her mother was Catherine Hooley. Daughter Mary, Rebecca's sister married David Beiler, son of the David Beiler who wrote of the early days.

These visiting men were connected to John and Rebecca. Four of their daughters married Stoltzfuses. So it was like all were wrapped in this culture for which a foundation "was laid which was Jesus Christ" (1st Corinthians 3:11). That was the vision of Anabaptist Menno Simons whereby the name "Mennonite" derived, and Amish grew out of that. Here Pop was imbibing the culture, wanting to understand the faith. The faith found in the four books on the tables of Amish homes.

By 1950 Pop was chairing the annual Mast Reunion. At one of these he proposed a tour of the early Berks County Amish homesteads. The first annual tour was led by C.Z. Mast, Grant Stoltzfus, and C.J. Kurtz. More than Mast, Stoltzfus and Kurtz were on the crowded bus tour (followed by over 10 cars) on June 27, 1959:

### Program at Roadside America

- One verse We're Marching to Zion led by Jacob K Mast
- I made a few introductory remarks
- History of Marker – Neil Hochstetler
- Scripture, few remarks – Ira D.Landis
- Talks by Grant Stoltzfus and Harry Hertzler
- Mr. Mooney, Jr was given a few minutes to tell what they would like to do with the property
- C.Z. Mast, Aaron Beiler, and Loyal Hostetler gave a few brief remarks
- A few brief announcements and we proceeded on our way

At the Koenig Cemetery our last stop some business was taken up Mooney's Proposition of repairing the bake oven was turned over to Neil Hochstetler, Loyal Hostetler, and another whose name I failed to get for them to take it to their people.

D.M. Kurtz was named to look into what would be done with the Adam Kurtz Cemetery wall. Ira Kurtz led us in a closing prayer.

Tour well received every place we stopped.

In 1997 I joined Lemar Mast of Masthof in leading the tours. That year when we stopped at the Nicholas Stoltzfus House it was grown up. Pud Sam Stoltzfus pushed his way through the bush to open the door. Windows boarded shut, the interior was decimated. Back on the bus the Bruderschaft people decried the condition, demanded it be saved. Brother Calvin and I set about and found David Rick the agent for Tulpehocken, Inc., the development group for the Tulpehocken Farms, owner of the area, that had purchased the homestead acquired by Nicholas Stoltzfus and his son Christian in 1771.

I spent twenty years aiding the preservation for the Bruderschaft Amish. The Stoltzfus story is told by Nic Stoltzfus who sat in the newly built barn and wrote (did he write!). Now his parents Elam and Esther (Yoder) live in the barn apartment. "There is a new spirit in the Stoltzfus House". An Amish person recently said, "It's about time".

In 2017 Berks County Heritage Society held a guided tour of nine historic houses, Stoltzfus included. I was interviewed for this, and the House was the cover of the booklet. After I previewed several of the homes listed: Why would there be interest? We were last on the tour. Folks would be tired, who would want to see this old house – no one of importance lived here! Surprise, it was of prime interest!

What a place it is becoming! Not only from among the living (nearly a million) Stoltzfus descendants, but it is a way for descendants of the 70 early Berks Amish immigrants to capture their history. And the locals amaze me with theirs. A real hub!

The tours go on, and the Stoltzfus House is now central to them.





## 2021 Stoltzfus Homestead Calendar Fund Raising effort

Collection of 12 images of the Homestead by Elam and Nic Stoltzfus

Support the ongoing efforts to maintain the Stoltzfus Homestead.



Instructions: Please fill out the form below and enclose your check, written out to "The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead." Mail it to this address:

The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, 1700 Tulpehocken Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610.

Orders will be processed weekly for the 2021 calendars.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Ph# \_\_\_\_\_

Your Donation Amount:  \$12.00 per calendar  \$10.00 per calendar for 5 or more calendars



## Winter Book Fundraiser for The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead

2020 has been a difficult year for all of us. Here at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, we had to cancel our 2020 Annual Benefit Auction. This was a real loss for us, as this is our biggest fundraiser for the year. The auction provides us with the funds to stay open and further our vision of sharing our Amish history & faith heritage in Berks County and beyond. Since we couldn't have our benefit auction, we decided to be creative and do a book fundraiser by mail for the Homestead.

The Winter Book Fundraiser Ends February 28th, 2021. We will ship all books after February 28th, 2021. All donations must be made by this date. The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit, and your donations are tax-deductible. We need your support: The future of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead depends on YOU!

	<p><b>German Lutherans to Pennsylvania Amish: The Stoltzfus Family Story</b></p> <p>Coffee table book that tells the story of six generations of the Stoltzfus family spanning over 200 years (1624-1832). Includes history of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead. Written by Nic Stoltzfus (Masthof, 2019).</p>		<p><b>In the Footsteps of My Stoltzfus Family: A Genealogy Memoir</b></p> <p>A memoir about reconnecting with Amish heritage, research trip to Germany, and first year as caretaker of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead. Written by Nic Stoltzfus (Masthof, 2020).</p>
	<p><b>The Great Florida Cattle Drive: Unbroken Circles</b></p> <p>Coffee table book about a modern-day cattle drive and the history of cowboys in Florida! Written by Nic Stoltzfus (self-published, 2017).</p>		<p><b>Plow, Pulpit, People: We Called Him Pop</b></p> <p>The life story of Christian J. Kurtz, founder of the Amish in Berks tours and Mennonite minister in Morgantown, as told by his son Paul. Written by Paul Kurtz (Masthof, 2019).</p>
	<p><b>On the Record with Carol: A Compilation of Selected Articles</b></p> <p>Selected newspaper stories from Morgantown and the Tri-County area; features several articles about the Homestead. Written by Carol Quaintance (Masthof, 2020).</p>		<p><b>The History of the Buffalo Valley/Union County, PA, Amish, 1836-1894, And Immigrant Christian Stoltzfus</b></p> <p>The history of the disbanded Amish community in central PA; includes a history of Nicholas' son Christian. Written by Ben Riehl (Grace Press, 2019).</p>
	<p><b>Reflections on Old Order German Sects in Berks County: Past, Present and Future</b></p> <p>A collection of essays collected by the history department at Penn State Berks; includes essays by Zachary Stoltzfus and "Pud" Sam Stoltzfus. Edited by Owen Reitenauer, Randall Fegley and Zachary Stoltzfus (Masthof, 2019).</p>		<p><b>2021 Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead Calendar</b></p> <p>We will send you a complimentary 11x17 calendar when you make a donation! Includes twelve stunning photos of the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead by current caretaker Elam Stoltzfus.</p>

Instructions: Please fill out the form below and enclose your check, written out to "The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead," and mail it to this address: The Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead, 1700 Tulpehocken Road, Wyomissing, PA 19610.

When the fundraiser has ended on February 28th, 2021, we will send out the books and calendars.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Ph# \_\_\_\_\_

Your Donation Amount:  \$25.00 (Choose One Book)  \$50.00 (Choose Two Books)  
 \$100.00 (Choose Three Books)  \$250.00 (All Seven Books and a Calendar!)

Please check the box for the Books you would like us to mail you:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> German Lutherans to Pennsylvania Amish | <input type="checkbox"/> In the Footsteps of My Stoltzfus Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Great Florida Cattle Drive         | <input type="checkbox"/> Plow, Pulpit, People                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On the Record with Carol               | <input type="checkbox"/> The History of the Buffalo Valley Amish |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reflections on Old Order German Sects  |  |

\*Every order includes FREE Shipping and a complimentary calendar!

The Nicholas Stoltzfus House  
Preservation Committee  
1700 Tulpehocken Road  
Wyomissing, PA 19610

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Reading, PA  
PI# 415

Send a copy to a friend.



In memory of Chris P. Stoltzfus  
3/18/1928 - 10/20/2020

We lost one of our ardent heroes and supporters in October. Chris was known for his interest and writings about historical events. He was associated with the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead since the beginning of the restoration.



Like and share the FaceBook page. A place to tell stories, share images, videos, and stay informed with updates.  
<https://www.facebook.com/NicholasStoltzfusHomestead>

## 2021 Spring Benefit Auction

May 1st, 2021 at the Nicholas Stoltzfus Homestead. Come join us to honor 250 years since Nicholas Stoltzfus purchased the property in 1771 along the Tulpehocken Creek. There will be special events planned for this historical occasion.

For more information contact 484-878-2916

