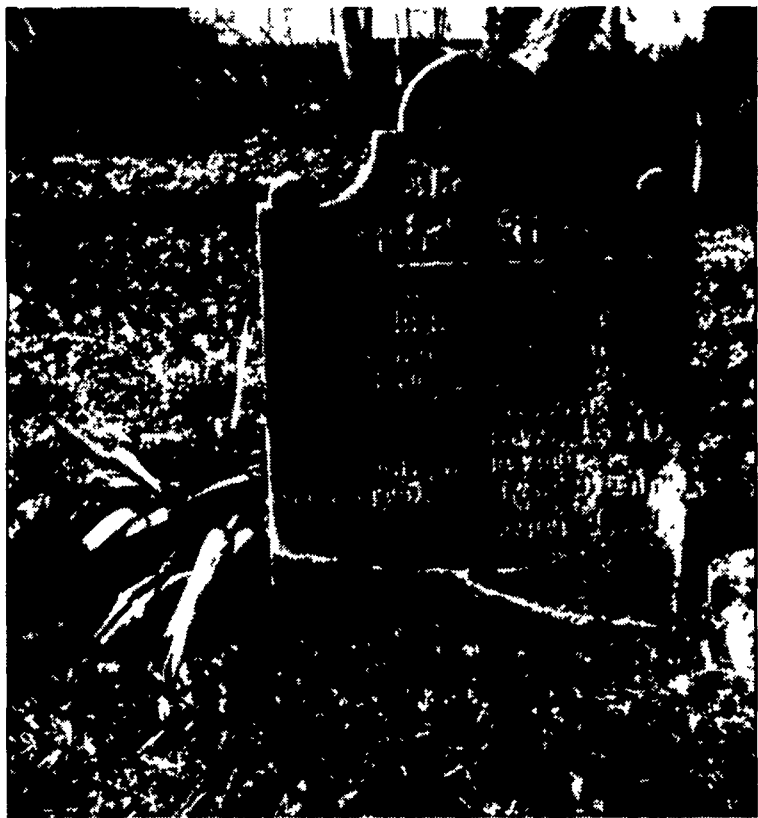




"Genealogy is addictive. It's like a huge puzzle. While you're searching to fit one piece, you uncover other pieces (facts) that take you in a whole different direction," said Saranna Miller of searching the Yoder family history. She considers herself fortunate to have several heirlooms passed down through the generations. These include the original paper on which her great-great grandmother practiced the German script alphabet and numbers dated in 1829 and her great-great grandparents marriage certificate dated 1843.



The 1880 Daniel Yoder tombstone is believed to be the oldest Yoder tombstone in America. The descendant of Hans Yoder is buried in the Pleasantville Cemetery, which is a restoration and preservation project of the Oley Yoder Heritage Association.



From left, Joe Yoder, Richard H. Yoder, Ken Yoder, and Martha Yoder listen to some of the history that Richard recounts. Richard has researched the Yoder family history for 25 years and is credited with much of the historical accounts for reunion tours.

Remembering Ancestors

National Yoder Reunion In The Planning

LOU ANN GOOD
Food And Family
Features Editor

MARIETTA (Lancaster Co.) — "When you reach a certain age, you become more appreciative of the relatives that came before us and allowed us to have the things we have today," Saranna Miller said.

In the past 10 years, Saranna has researched genealogy, especially her mother's line — the Yoders.

The fascinating story of the first Yoders to come to America and settle in Oley Valley is part of the celebration planned for the National Yoder Reunion, July 20-21.

According to Saranna, two brothers — Hans and Yost Yoder — are believed to be the first Yoders to come to America. Han's wife and two children died on the ship, leaving him with one young son when he embarked in 1709.

Hans remarried. Although details of the second marriage are skimpy, Saranna said, during that era of settlement in the new world, few women would have been available for marriage. It was not uncommon for 14-year-old girls to be given in marriage.

"Marriages were not necessarily arranged for love but by who was available at the needed time," Saranna said. "They (ancestors) made their marriages work. They had goals and roles they needed to fulfill in order to survive."

Survival was the most important goal.

Hans is said to have been a very industrious man who transformed the wilderness never before seen by white men into a productive farm. On it, Hans built a flax seed oil mill, grist mill, tannery, forge, cider press, and sawmill.

Hans' brother Yost is said to have enjoyed trapping and hunting. He spent weeks in the Blue Mountains to obtain hides and skins to trade and barter in Philadelphia, a two-days walk from the Yoder homestead.

Both brothers maintained congenial relationships with the Lenni-Lenape Indians, who still populated the area where they settled. The compatibility between the native tribes and the pioneers is credit to William Penn, who insisted on paying the Indians for the land, unlike settlers in other areas of the new world.

Although the original log cabins are no longer in existence, later houses and buildings are still standing.

Hans and Yost were said to have come from a successful family in Switzerland. The brothers were fleeing religious persecution, like many of the other immigrants from Steffisburg, Switzerland. Today, most of the thousands of Yoders continue to live within a 50-mile radius of the original homestead. But some Yoders migrated to Mifflin County, other states, and Canada.

"Regardless of where Yoders live today, research shows that we are all related to the original Oley settlement," Saranna said.

During the reunion, hundreds are expected to return to the homestead for the National Yoder Reunion.

Saranna said that two main branches of Yoders are referred to as the Amish Yoders and the reformed Yoders. Both branches are believed to have been related

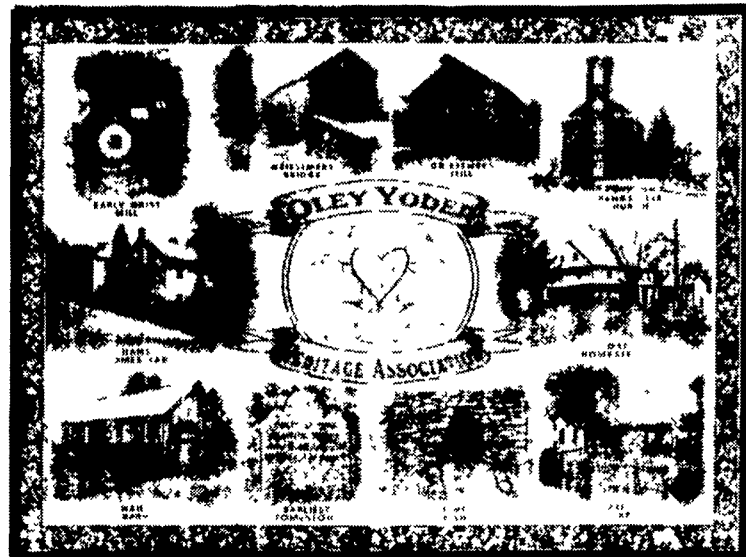
and have originated from the same area of Switzerland. But the Amish Yoders arrived later than the Hans and Yost. The reunion is for both branches of Yoders.

The reunion will recount fascinating history about the two branches. Reservations must be made for the events that include an Amish tour scheduled for Friday, July 20, and the Oley Valley Bus Tour and Revolutionary Military encampment, Saturday, July 21. Representing both the German regiment and Germans serving under the county militia system will be re-enactors from the Tulpehocken Associators, Inc., a nonprofit, educational volunteer organization dedicated to

the authentic portrayal of the life of the 18th century soldier and his family.

"We don't have diaries, so we don't know exactly how Hans and Yost lived, but we have uncovered court records, papers, and have second-hand verbal accounts of history," Susanna said of her heritage. "They came seeking freedom, independence, and a better way of life. They were industrious and productive. Most early Yoders were farmers and the love of the land was important to them."

For more information about the reunion, write to Oley Yoder Heritage Association, 415 State St., Pottstown, PA 19454 or e-mail pry884@aol.com



Yoder blanket throws are being sold as a fundraiser for the Yoder research. Pictured are places with significant interest to the Yoder family. The throw sells for \$65 plus \$5 if shipped.



George Yoder examines a cider press thought to be identical to one that had existed on the Hans Yoder Homestead. Research uncovered a sizable orchard and records that show that Johnny Appleseed spent several summers at the Yoder homestead.