

PANNEBAKKER FAMILIE NIEWS



Pannebakker

NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILIE ASSOCIATION

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Origins of the Pennsylvania Pannebeckers

The following is the third in a series of articles based on the writings of Edward Upton and edited by Bruce Pennypacker. Recent discoveries may call into question some of the assumptions made in the articles.

Hendrick Pannebecker

Hendrick was the first of the Pannebeckers to come to America, something like 30 years ahead of Friedrich and 50 years ahead of Lotharius. The reason why he is discussed last is because the evidence is more diffuse in his case. There are more bits and pieces, but they are not individually as strong as the main clues we had for Friedrich.

It will help if we first get a clear picture of some general facts about Hendrick. For example, SWP often wrote that Hendrick was born on or about 21 Mar 1674. That is not based on any birth or baptism record. It comes from the record of his death, which SWP found carefully recorded in the Bible of Hendrick's son Peter. It says he, "died suddenly on the 4th of April 1754 aged eighty years and about two weeks." If you take that to mean exactly two weeks you get the birth date 21 Mar 1674. SWP sometimes wrote 19 – 23 March, estimating an uncertainty of two days either way. There is a further possibility, not mentioned by SWP, that Hendrick may have changed his birthday with the calendar reform of 1752. George Washington changed his from 11 Feb to 22 Feb, because the calendar was advanced 11 days in 1752. If Hendrick did the same, his original birthday would be about 10 March, old style.

The first actual record of Hendrick in America is in 1702, but SWP often wrote that Hendrick was here in 1699. How did he figure that out? From the age of Hendrick's first child, Martha. She was buried 18 Sep 1761, aged 61 years 3 months according to a record by the Lutheran minister Henry Muhlenberg. Martha and her family were among Muhlenberg's most prized converts to the Lutheran faith, having been won over against the strenuous opposition of Martha's father Hendrick. So Muhlenberg was well acquainted with Martha, and it may be presumed that he knew her age correctly. Assuming that he got it right, she was born in May or June 1700. That means Hendrick had to be married to his wife Eve Umstat by 1699. Eve is known to have come to Pennsylvania with her parents in 1685. Ergo, Hendrick married her in Pennsylvania no later than 1699. That is how it is known that he was here.

Hendrick's religion is a question that was much discussed by SWP, but without any definite conclusion. Most of the Pennsylvania Germans were either Reformed, Lutheran, or Mennonite. Hendrick was certainly no Lutheran, as is shown by his long and strenuous opposition to Muhlenberg. His wife Eve was from a Mennonite family, and most of their children married into other Mennonite families. Two of their grandsons became Mennonite preachers. All of that might seem to settle the question of Hendrick's religion, but it doesn't.

For one thing there is the fact, hard to explain, if Hendrick was a good Mennonite, that he was never made a trustee of the Mennonite Church at Skippack. It is hard to explain because Hendrick was in many ways the leader of the community at Skippack. He was the first of the Germantown residents to purchase land and settle at Skippack, in what had previously been the Van Bebber tract. He acted for some years as agent for Van Bebber in selling lots to other settlers moving out from Germantown. In the end he bought up all the unsold land himself. He was one of the few residents of Skippack who could write in English – a broken English, but quite intelligible. His work as a surveyor had brought him into close contact with the Penn family. All of this made him one of the leading citizens of Skippack, probably *the* leading citizen. You would have expected the Mennonites to make him a trustee as soon as their church was organized. But they didn't.

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Then there is the affair of the baptism of Hendrick's first three children in 1710. These were the very early years of the Skippack settlement, and there was apparently not yet a church of any kind. Along came a traveling minister of the Reformed Church, offering among other things to baptize children. Hendrick had three at the time, and he had them all baptized. This would be very strange behavior for a Mennonite – not just because it was a Reformed minister, but because the Mennonites didn't believe in infant baptism at all.

Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker took that baptism of 1710 to mean that Hendrick was probably of the Reformed faith originally, and that he never really left it even though he married a Mennonite girl and lived in a chiefly Mennonite community. Possibly, Pfannebeckers may have been Mennonites when they first came to Flomborn and that some degree of Mennonite influence may have rubbed off on Hendrick during his youth. It is possible that the family at Flomborn may have switched from Mennonite to Reformed during Hendrick's lifetime, in fact any time prior to 1702. If so, Hendrick may have been a half-way Mennonite when he came to Pennsylvania, making it easy for him to adjust to the ways of Eve Umstat even though he was not fully of her faith.

There are also some half-way indications about Hendrick in the matter of his native language. Consider the spelling of his name. His earliest known signatures in Pennsylvania, dating from 1706 and afterward, are all Hendrick Pannebecker. That is a curious mixture of Dutch and German. Pure Dutch would have been Hendrick Pannebakker. Pure German would have been Heinrich Pfannebecker. In later years Hendrick took to signing his name Henry Pannebecker, a mixture of German and English.

Other specimens of writing from Hendrick's own hand are sometimes in German, as in the Bible of his son John, and very often in English as in legal documents. His English contained, in the opinion of SWP, both German and Dutch elements. The following specimen speaks for itself:

Mi frind Edward Shippen

My Keind Respeck to Juw too let Ju understand tha I haffa Spoken with

The totters of Abraham op then graff an by ther Words ar Willing too Singe Jur deets as ther broders haffe don as for d'veiding the trak belonging too hamfry Morris is not don because my instrument Was out of order I det Send hat too Wellem Strets an hey send het hom too mey bey me Son bout I Kam too trelet het wold not doo an I haffe Send het bak too him again as Son as I haffe att my hand again I shal fulfill the Sam....

Now mor att this presents as mey Keind Respeck to Ju an Jur broder

From Jur frind

Henry Pannebecker

Anno Dominij 1742 the 13. day of february

The Rev. Henry Melchoir Muhlenberg, who had a bitter religious feud with Hendrick in Hendrick's last years, wrote a lengthy account of the same in which he described Hendrick as "niederdeutsch". That was the common term for a person who spoke a Low German or Netherlandish dialect. Muhlenberg certainly must have known. Was Hendrick then a man of Low German or Dutch origin? The evidence of the language is partly but not entirely in favor of it. There is no specimen of his writing in pure Dutch, and he never spelled his name Pannebakker in Dutch style.

There was in the 1870's a tradition among his descendants that Hendrick had been a Hollander by birth. That tradition was in the end rejected by SWP, for good reasons. It may have arisen because of Hendrick's speech, or because he used for a while the Dutch name Hendrick. SWP thought that all this might be attributed to the fact that the Pfannebeckers at Flomborn really had been Dutch in the generation before Hendrick, or at most two generations before.

There may well be some truth in that explanation by SWP, but there is an alternative alongside it. Hendrick was obviously a man of cosmopolitan tastes in regard to language. He lived all his life in communities that spoke primarily German, both High and Low varieties. Yet he learned English, and he learned it tolerably well. His English probably sounded more natural to the ear than it looks to the eye. In his later years he always signed his name Henry, English style.

But before that, almost from day one in Pennsylvania, he had formed a close attachment to Eve Umstat. Her family, like most of the other early families of Germantown, was from Krefeld on the lower Rhine near the Dutch border. Their speech would be more of the Low German than the High German variety. Hendrick, who obviously had an open mind in the matter of language, may have been strongly influenced by his wife and her relatives. Remember that Hendrick had no relatives of his own in America until nearly 1730. Eve's family was all he had.

When his children started getting married in the 1720's and 1730's, the influence of Dutch speech in Hendrick's life could only have increased. His first child married a Vanderslice, and three more married Keyzers – Dutch families all the way. Three more married Tysons and Kusters, which were former Krefeld families like the Umstats. Picture in your mind and kind of a family gathering, and you will see everyone there speaking Dutch or something close to it, except poor old Hendrick. But let's not shed tears for him too quickly. He probably learned Dutch very early in his married life and could spout it right along with the rest of them and the best of them.

Message from the President

Where is that global warming we are all to endure and suffer measurably for? When I got up this morning, it was 34 degrees. One location stated an all time record low for the day was set. I did also note that snow is forecast for somewhere up here and I really don't want to know where. Leaves are turning to the great yellows and reds as we type,

Had a little event 3 weeks ago. To make a long story shorter, I had a minor short lived stroke. Affected my ability to speak. After a wild ambulance ride and many tests and annoyances, was released with only a prescription for Plavix. There are no symptoms or residual effects remaining, Moral of the story. If you have any strange indications that something is wrong, don't fool around, CALL 911 and let the medics do what they do so well, Might just keep you around a lot longer.

Really don't have much to write about beyond extending our sincere thanks for your continuing support and retaining your membership. Also please remember we would love to get input from you for the newsletters. Also be reminded that we would do our best to answer queries about your Penny ancestors. If you hit a brick wall, how about challenging us to help you out?

Pannebakker Familie Association Web Site

The web site has been changed a bit! Still the same contents, however to access the newsletter section you will need to enter a user name and password. If you would like a user name and password, you must contact Bruce Pennypacker at, throwcoach@gmail.com and the necessary information will be sent to you. Below is the URL for the web site:

<http://www.pannebakkerfamilyassociation.com>

Newsletter

If you receive the newsletter by regular mail and would like to receive it electronically, just send us your email address.

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Pannebakker Familie Association



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."