

# PANNEBAKKER FAMILIE NIEWS



Pannebakker

NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILIE ASSOCIATION

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## Origins of the Pennsylvania Pannebeckers

*The following is the second 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.*

### Family Traditions – Reliability and Limitations

Part of the evidence concerning the three founders of the family rests on traditions that were current in the 1870's and were recorded by SWP in his genealogy and other works, chiefly Pennypacker Reunion (1877) and Hendrick Pannebecker (1894). At least two suggestive bits of tradition came to SWP at second hand from known sources of 100 years earlier – that is, were told to SWP by members of the family who had heard them from their grandparents. Family traditions are easily distorted and changed as they pass from person to person, but when you hear them second-hand, the opportunities for distortion are not very great. Those grandparents had been born in 1740 and 1751. What they had to say was based on their own knowledge of the family as it existed about 1770. The point to bear in mind is that second-hand reports like these are not far removed from the original source. Second-hand is a lot better than third-hand, fourth-hand, or fifth-hand. It means there was just one intermediate between the original source and SWP.

Not all the family traditions recorded by SWP have that same kind of good credentials. Some came to him from unknown sources, through an unknown number of intermediates. Material like that is obviously less trustworthy than a second-hand report from a known source. As an example, SWP heard from several sides a tradition that the Pannebeckers acquired their name by making roof tiles *in Pennsylvania*. That is sheer nonsense of course, and SWP recognized it as such. Reports like that came from people with no concept of history, people who think of 100 or 150 years ago as incredibly ancient times. The family name did indeed come from the trade of making roof tiles, but the place where it happened was Holland and the time was at least a century before Columbus.

So, family tradition is a very mixed bag of goods, and anyone who accepts it all uncritically is likely to get a much larger portion of error than of truth. Can any of it be trusted? Well, tales your grandmother told you based on her own knowledge and experience are likely to be close to the mark. A tale she reports from *her* grandmother may still be somewhere near the mark, provided it is based on her grandmother's own experience, and provided also that your grandmother was still sharp of memory when she passed it on to you. With anything more remote than that, the ifs and maybes and opportunities for distortion pile up rapidly.

What are we to make then of the old family tradition at Flomborn, that the first Pfannebecker there had come from Holland about at the end of the Thirty Years War? That must have been about a fifth-hand tale by the time SWP heard it, some 220 or 230 years after the event. The inclination is to put some faith in it all the same, for the following reasons. First of all, it is known that the name Pannebakker is of Dutch origin, and that it existed in Holland in the 1400's and 1500's. Second, the event is dated by reference to one of the most memorable and traumatic episodes in German history. That makes it easier to remember and harder to distort than a date of ordinary kind like 1640 or 1650.

Third, the tale fits nicely in with other historical sources that show the movement of Dutch families to places near Flomborn at about the same time. Fourth, the historical records at Flomborn show only Johannes and Sibylla Pfannebecker and their children living there before 1700, and that suggests that the family had not then been in Flomborn very long. If they had been there since, let us say, 1550 or 1600, there should have been more of them in the area by 1700.

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All that amounts to saying that the legend seems trustworthy because it agrees with other historical indications. Beyond that is the consideration that legends of the founder of the family in a particular place are more often preserved than any other kind. If you are a Pfannebecker of Flomborn, then your first ancestor of that spot is the one you remember, and that you tell your children and grandchildren about. Just where he came from in Holland is forgotten – it would mean nothing to you, living in Flomborn. But you associate his arrival in Flomborn with the end of the terrible Thirty Years War, the most destructive episode in all German history until World War II. And that is not easy to forget.

Exactly the same sort of thing happened repeatedly in America. The Pennybackers of Virginia preserved the memory of Dirck. They remembered that he had come from Pennsylvania about the time of the end of the Revolution. They had in fact an exact month and year of his arrival in Virginia, and an exact prior location in Pennsylvania – both of which seem to be slightly in error in the light of other historical records. But in a general way, their tradition was correct, 100 years after the event.

It is similar with the Pennebakers of Canada. The founders there were Cornelius and his wife Nancy. After 148 years, their descendant Edith Foster was able to write in great detail about their move from Pennsylvania to Ontario, and even to name all their children in proper sequence. She must have had something more than oral tradition to go on. But whatever material she may have had, it did not go back beyond Cornelius and Nancy. She knew nothing of their parents, and nothing of their previous home except that it was somewhere in Pennsylvania. That is how it always is, in the memory of later generations.

It seems logical to tentatively accept family traditions if they are no more remote than second-hand from the original source or if they concern the founder of the family in the place that they come from – provided always that they are consistent with known historical facts. Even then the chance of distortion is always present, and a good many tales in some families have been made up out of the whole cloth. It is best to credit a family tradition when there is some kind of independent evidence pointing in the same direction.

## The Tradition of Friedrich and Weiant

“The traditions among the descendants of Friedrich here are that he came with his little son to America bringing with him a certificate from a Reformed Church in the Palatinate.”

“The naturalization of Weyand establishes conclusively that he was born abroad, and the tradition among his descendants is that he came here when a little boy with his father, who had a certificate showing that he was a member in good standing of a Reformed Church in the Palatinate.”

Both those accounts were written by Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker about 1877, the first in his hand-written genealogy and the second in Pennypacker Reunion. SWP did not identify his source, but since this is a tradition about the founders of the family at New Goshenhoppen, the source is likely to be a latter-day Pannebecker living in the same place in the 1870's. A highly likely candidate is Weiant's great-grandson George W. Pannebecker who was still living right in the middle of Upper Hanover Township, i.e. New Goshenhoppen. George was born in 1813 and was therefore probably between 60 and 65 when SWP interviewed him.

This tradition has everything going for it on the side of credibility. It is a legend of the founder, no more than 140 to 150 years old when SWP heard it. That is no greater lapse of time than in the Edith Foster case. In fact, the lapse was only about 80 years since the death of Weiant, who knew perfectly well where he had come from. George could not have got the story directly from Weiant, but he could easily have got it from Weiant's son Henry who lived until 1833.

Weiant Pannebecker (1715 – 1795) of Goshenhoppen

Henry Pannebecker (1749 – 1833) of New Goshenhoppen

George W. Pannebecker (1813 – 1877+) of New Goshenhoppen↓

Samuel W. Pennypacker (1843 – 1916) the historian

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If that is how the story was transmitted, as seems likely, then SWP was getting it third-hand. That is not as good as second-hand, but this tale gets an extra plus because it is about the founder of the family in the same location. Furthermore, it is likely that the church certificate would be preserved through Weiant's lifetime, in which case Henry had undoubtedly seen it often.

In fact the whole legend, except for the "little boy" part, is just about what you would expect Henry to remember in his later years from having seen the certificate in his youth. Such certificates from the church in the old country were common among the Quakers, so it is easy to believe that the Germans may have had them too. The certificate would no doubt have a date on it and the name of the village in Germany where it was issued, but Henry doesn't remember those details. Or it may be George who forgets them, because they certainly mean nothing to him. They would have meant a good deal to SWP if they had been transmitted that far, but they weren't. This story seems to nicely illustrate both the kind of thing that gets remembered and the kind that gets forgotten in typical tales of the founder.

What about that phrase, "a little boy"? Can we count on it to be right? If so, how little does it mean? If it means anything at all, it had to originate with Weiant himself and not with his son Henry. That makes it third-hand coming to SWP, which might not be so bad except that "a boy" is so easily changed to "a little boy" in the retelling.

It's likely on other grounds that Friedrich and Weiant came to Pennsylvania about 1729, the same year as the Weiant family. A large part of the early settlers of New Goshenhoppen came between 1727 and 1732. If Friedrich and Weiant came during that period then Weiant was about 11 to 16 years old – a boy, but not what we would normally call a little boy. The inclination here is to not change the guess just because the family tradition said "little" by the time SWP heard it. There are too many people who automatically change "boy" to "little boy" in retelling a story.

The inclination is much stronger to believe the tradition when it says, "a Reformed Church in the Palatinate." All that would be on the certificate and it might be expected to stick in Henry's mind because those words all meant something to him. The Reformed Church was his church, and the Palatinate was a well-known province in Germany. It was in fact the province from which most of the Pennsylvania Germans had come.

There is some reason to believe that a Pannebecker of the Palatinate in the early 1700's has to be a member of the Pfannebecker family of Flomborn. About 1877 SWP had a letter from his main correspondent in Germany, Johannes Pfannebecker of Worms, stating that he did not know of the existence of the name anywhere in Germany except for himself and his own relations in and around Flomborn. The force of this negative evidence stems from the fact that its author was a prominent man in the German government, at both the provincial and national levels. We know that there was in fact a branch of the Pfannebecker family in Pomerania, northeast of Berlin that Johannes evidently did not know about. But he might well be expected, as a man of 69 years with a long career in government, to have learned of the existence of any other Pfannebecker family in his own province of the Palatinate. This is obviously not a conclusive argument about what Pfannebecker families there might have been in the early 1700's. But it is an indication, and not without some strength to it.

## Placing Friedrich in the Family

When we combine the evidence of this tradition just mentioned with the previous evidence of a close link to the family of Lotharius, there is little room to doubt the Friedrich was in fact a member of the Pfannebecker family of Flomborn. Samuel Whitaker Pennypacker reached that same conclusion without even knowing of the strong link to Lotharius. Neither did he know, or he did not mention, that the most common names for boys of that generation of the Flomborn family – omitting Johann, which nearly all the boys had as part of their name – were Friedrich, Heinrich and George. All that would no doubt have been regarded by SWP as just more icing on a cake that was already well iced without it.

SWP wrote on at least three occasions that he thought the Friedrich who came to Pennsylvania was the brother of Lotharius. One hates to dwell on the mistakes of the man who was the family's greatest historian, but this is one of them. SWP's mistakes are very few, and his reputation can stand to have them corrected. He would have been the first one to correct this one himself, if he had only had a Helmut Schmahl working for him.

Helmut Schmahl is a present-day genealogist of Ober-Floersheim who has supplied us with extensive data on the Pfannebeckers from the early church records of Ober-Floersheim and Flomborn. It is through him that we learned

the name Sibylla, the wife of Johannes Pfannebecker. And it also through him that we have learned the birth date of J. Friedrich, the brother of Lotharius: 30 May 1704.

That birth date makes it impossible for that Friedrich to be the father of Weiant who was born about the end of 1715, or possibly 1717, depending on how you read the burial record of Weiant in Pennsylvania. Weiant died about 20 Mar 1795, and they wrote in the burial record that he was 79 years 2 months 2 days old, and had been born in December 1717. There is an inconsistency of 2 years in all that, and you can debate endlessly over how to resolve it. But for the present purpose it doesn't really matter. J. Friedrich could no more have had a son in 1717 than he could in 1715.

Perhaps the true birth date of Weiant was December 1715 or January 1716. Weiant was so far as we know, the only child of Friedrich, but there could easily enough have been others who either died young or for some other reason left no record in America. It seems safe to assume in any case that Friedrich was at least 20 years old when his son Weiant was born, and was probably somewhat older than that. This means that Friedrich was born no later than the end of 1695, and is rather more likely to have been born in 1690 or earlier.

A Friedrich with a birth date like that, and belonging to the Flomborn family, has to be either a son of Johannes and Sibylla or else the son of some brother of Johannes who is unknown and whose children and grandchildren are unknown in the church records. All those unknowns add up to a pretty unlikely chance, and a theory like that also puts a strain on the close link between Peter and William. It would make Peter and William third cousins, which is getting pretty remote for the kind of relationship they evidently had.

Thus, we are led – by an inexorable chain of logic as SWP would say – to place Friedrich as a son of Johannes and Sibylla, born most likely between 1678 and 1690 since the other sons were born between 1671 and 1677. The logic is of course not entirely inexorable. You can wriggle around it if you try hard enough, but you will be going against strong probabilities all the way. The only concession to the uncertainties in the case is to mark Friedrich as a highly probable son of Johannes and Sibylla.

## **Bruce Sandlier Obituary**

Age 64 – August 11, 2011

He was born in Camden, NJ and was preceded in death by his parents LeRoy & Eleanor Showalter Sandlier and his sister Dale Lang.

He is survived by his wife Marge Galus Sandlier; sisters Dianna (Frank) Kreutzer, Barbara Banes both of New Jersey; sisters-in-law Arlene (Kirk) Copenharve, Leah (Logan) Fontenelle of Omaha, Veronica (Bruce) Bultmann, Donna (Orval) Foster; step-sons Jeffrey (Karla) Wiegrefe of Fargo, ND; Nathan Wiegrefe of Omaha; step-grandchildren Nathaniel, Matthew, Azariah, Elizabeth, Isaiah, Maria, Josiah, and Zebadiah Wiegrefe.

Celebration of Life services to be held at a later date. Memorials to Hanscom Park United Methodist Church or the Nebraska Humane Society.

## **Newsletter Update**

To offset the rising costs of producing a USPS newsletter, we are sending the newsletter to everyone with an email address. If you receive the newsletter by regular mail and would like to receive it electronically, just send us your email address. If this causes a hardship for anyone, please let us know. Remember, the newsletters are available on our web site.

## Message from the President

Greetings All.

Well, we made it to summer. Strange year for sure. Wheat and oats are already showing tan colors as it begins to ripen!! The old cliché re corn, "Knee high by the 4th of July" is wasted this year. Corn is over knee high and we still have almost 2 weeks till the fourth.

Our organization is holding on thanks to the support of the membership. A couple things come to mind I wish to share with you and get input.

1. I am 77 years old and have had this job for almost 13 years. Don't you think it is about time for a relief? A volunteer would be greatly appreciated.
2. Please remember our web site. The old adage of "Use it or lose it", comes to mind. It is not overly brilliant to pay for something no one is using. Log in and give yourself a thrill.
3. We need to plan for another reunion. Let's do this while there are people alive who attended and remember the one in 1999. Volunteer??? We have capital to get one started so please give it some thought.
4. Please remember to pay your dues. We still have several folks who are behind. A dues payment will bring you up to date for the current dues year. Remember we will inactivate members who are in arrears on 15 July. I believe May, June and half of July should be a sufficient grace period.

Enough growling now. Please everyone have a great summer, drive safely and be good to one another.

## *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](mailto:throwcoach@gmail.com) and the necessary information will be sent to you.

Below is the URL for the web site:

<http://www.pannebakkerfamilyassociation.com>

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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."