

Jacob Meyer (ca1713-1801) and Michael Frantz (ca1726-1796) Leaders of the Little Swatara Congregation, but Were They also Brothers-in-Law?

by Dwayne Wrightsman*

LITTLESWATARO

THIS church also takes its distinction from a river of the above name, in the township of Tulpehocken and county of Berks, 25 miles from Reading and 81 miles nwbw from Philadelphia. Some of the people live in Bether township in Lancaster county. They hold their worship in private houses. Their preacher is Mr. Peter Heckman, but he is not ordained. The families belonging to the society are about 19 whereof 45* persons are baptized. This is their present state. Their beginning was in this manner. About the year 1745 one George Beshler settled in this neighbourhood, and one Michael Frantz, Peter Heckman, John Frantz and others. These were baptized by Rev. George Kleine, and in 1757 coalesced into a church having the said Kleine to their assistance. He has ministered the Lords supper to them ever since; but they purpose soon to ordain Mr. Peter Heckman

* Peter Heckman exhor. and wife, Jacob Heckman and wife, Michael Frantz and wife, Nicholas Gerft and wife, Jacob Moyer and wife, George Beasher, David Marge and wife, Simon Menich and wife, John Frantz and wife, Christian Frantz and wife, Rose Schnables, Jacob Smith and wife, Lifs Kentzel, Adam Henrich, Mrs Cyder, Philip Zeigler and wife, Jacob Breneisen and wife, David Kleine and wife, widow Benedict, Elizabeth Benedict, Sophy Kish, Leonard Sebalt and wife, John Grove, Jacob Baker and wife, Jacob Deal and wife, Hans Stoaker and wife, Jacob Beshler and wife.

This "Littleswatara" graphic was printed by Morgan Edwards in 1770. It is excerpted from pages 83-84 of Part IV ("Treats [sic] of the Germans in Pennsylvania who are commonly called Tunkers, to distinguish them from the Mennonists; for both were known as Die Tauffer or Baptists").

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Jacob Meyer/Moyer and Michael Frantz were two of the founders, leaders, and earliest members of the Little Swatara Brethren Congregation. Both men settled prior to 1745 on lands on Little Swatara Creek, the creek running southeast out of the Blue Mountains north of Lancaster County. Both were important leaders of the Little Swatara Congregation and were among the first to be baptized by Elder George Klein in 1745.

The earliest history of the Little Swatara Congregation was published in 1770 by Morgan Edwards.¹ A later historical account, based on the work of Morgan Edwards, was published in 1899 by Martin Grove Brumbaugh. Brumbaugh's succinct account of the history of the Little Swatara Congregation is given as follows:

In 1745, George Beshler, Michael Frantz, Peter Heckman, John Frantz, and others settled in this district. They were baptized by Elder George Klein of the Northkill congregation. Elder Klein was the first elder, assisted by Peter Heckman. Heckman was ordained soon after 1770. (Note: George Klein served as Elder-in-Charge of the Little Swatara congregation from 1757 up to the early 1770s. During this period, George Klein began to step down as the leader at Little Swatara. Taking his place was Peter Heckman, described as "exhorter" in 1770.) On August 12, 1780, the above named Michael Frantz was ordained elder by elders Sower and Urner; and George Beasher/Baszhaar and Jacob Moyer ordained as deacons. As early as 1770, there were 45 active communicants.

Their names follow: Minister Peter Heckman and wife, John Heckman and wife, Michael Frantz and wife, Nicholas Gerst and wife, Jacob Moyer and wife, George Beasher, David Marge and wife, Simon Merrich and wife, John Frantz and wife, Christian Frantz and wife, Rose Schnables, Jacob Smith and wife, Eliza Kentzel, Adam Henrich, Mrs. Cryder, Philip Zeigler and wife, Jacob Breneisen and wife,

¹ Morgan Edwards, *Materials Towards A History of the American Baptists, in XII Volumes* (A. M., Philadelphia: Printed MDCCCLXX). For those who wish to read the original, see pp. 83-84 for "LITTLESWATARO" and recognize that letter *s* is printed *f*.

David Kleine and wife, Widow Benedict, Elizabeth Benedict, Sophy Kish, Leonard Sebal and wife, John Grove, Jacob Baker and wife, Jacob Deal and wife, Hans Stohner and wife, Jacob Beashor and wife.”²

Unfortunately, only the husbands were named. The wives were named “wife” apparently because they bore their husbands’ surnames after marriage. Moreover, the given names of the wives were also unrecorded.

The goal of this article is to discover the names of the wives of Jacob Meyer and Michael Frantz, and to determine whether or not the two men were brothers-in-law.

Was Jacob Meyer (ca1713-1801) Married to Anna Burkhalter?

The author of this article was told years ago by his mother, born a Brubaker and Brethren, that she and I were descendants of Jacob and Anna (Burkholder) Meyer of Lancaster County, and that their daughter Anna Myers was married to John Brubaker, which, if true, means that I am an eighth-generation grandson of Jacob Meyer and wife Anna Burkhalter.

Some years later, I searched the *Brethren Encyclopedia* for the Brubaker Family and found that “John Brubaker was married in 1774 to Anna Myers, daughter of Jacob and Anna Burkholder Meyer of Lancaster County.”³ I later tracked the sources of the Anna (Burkholder) Meyer coverage in the Brubacher Family section of the *Brethren Encyclopedia*, finding that it was based on a meeting of the Indiana Brubaker Association: Mrs. Floyd Blocher, G.L. Betts, and O.G. Brubaker. The meeting was held in Flora, Indiana, on August 25, 1935. Given the ages of the members of the Indiana Brubaker Association, this was as far as I could go.

Turning to the more recent works of Richard Warren Davis, there was indeed a marriage between Jacob Meyer and Anna Burkhalter, but the marriage was not the Jacob Meyer of the Little Swatara Congregation. It was instead a much younger marriage. This Anna Burkhalter was born in 1762. She married Jacob Meyer in 1781. Her husband, Jacob Meyer, was born in 1753.⁴ Our Jacob Meyer of Little Swatara was born 40 years earlier ca1713.

Was Jacob Meyer (ca1713-1801) Married to Magdalena?

Richard Warren Davis was possibly the first to make a case that Jacob Meyer (ca1713-1801) was married to Magdalena (surname unknown), and that they were

baptized by 1770 as Dunkards at Bethel.⁵ Davis went even further and listed the names of their children and the names of the husbands of their daughters:

1. Maria Meyer m. Ludwig Meyer
2. Christian Meyer
3. Elizabeth Meyer m. David Preiss
4. Barbara Meyer m. Jacob Heckman
5. Anna Meyer m. John Brubaker
6. Magdalena Meyer m. John Gro/Groh
7. Feronica Meyer m. Christian Heisy/Heise
8. Jacob Meyer
9. Abraham Meyer
10. John Meyer
11. Hannah Meyer m. Jacob Heisy/Heise

What Davis left out was the surname of Jacob Meyer’s wife Magdalena. Who was she? What was her maiden name? Given the title of this article, the author believes the wife’s name was Magdalena Frantz.

Did Jacob Meyer marry Magdalena Frantz? If so, was she the Magdalena Frantz who was the sister of Michael Frantz?

It is well known among the Brethren that there was a large Christian Frantz family who arrived in Philadelphia with nine children aboard the ship *Samuel* on August 11, 1732. Magdalena Frantz (age 15) was the fourth of the nine children. Michael Frantz (age 6) was the seventh child. The family lived in Lancaster city until the death of the father, Christian Frantz I (born 1685). After his death in 1739, the family moved north, buying land along Little Swatara Creek.

The oldest brother, Christian Frantz II, bought land on the south side of Little Swatara Creek (adjacent to where the Little Swatara Church is presently located). The second brother, John Frantz, settled downstream on the north side of the creek. Both older brothers lived in Berks County. The youngest brother, Michael Frantz, settled downstream even further, living in Bethel Township immediately across the county line from Berks County.⁶

Michael Frantz warranted 100 acres along Little Swatara Creek, which he patented on October 11, 1753.

² Martin Grove Brumbaugh, *A History of the German Baptist Brethren in Europe and America* (Brethren Publishing House: Elgin, Ill., 1899), p. 320.

³ *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, Vol. 1 (1983), pp. 216-17.

⁴ Richard Warren Davis, *Emigrants, Refugees and Prisoners, Vol. I* (1995), p. 108. See, also, Richard Warren Davis, *Burkhalter/Burkholder*, p. 27.

⁵ Richard Warren Davis, *Meyer/Moyer*, pp. 9-10.

⁶ See “Warrant, Patent & Survey Records for Bethel Township, Lebanon County, Pennsylvania,” by James B. Wolfson, 1994, first ed.

His neighbor, immediately downstream, was Philip Houtz. The next neighbor, immediately downstream, was Nicholas Kearst/Gerst/Garst. He bought 174 acres from Simon Bauginreif, patenting it on October 23, 1765. Nicholas Gerst, like Michael Frantz, became a member of the Little Swatara Congregation. Moreover, he was married to Elizabeth Frantz who was the youngest child of the nine children of Christian Frantz I.⁷ Consequently, Nicholas Gerst was a brother-in-law of Michael Frantz.

The next landowner, located immediately downstream from Nicholas Gerst, was Jacob Meyer. He warranted 109 acres along Little Swatara Creek on October 12, 1738. He also warranted 141 acres located north of the creek on November 15, 1749.

This writer believes that Jacob Meyer's wife was Magdalena (Frantz) Meyer who was a few years younger than Jacob Meyer and a few years older than Michael Frantz and Elizabeth (Frantz) Gerst.

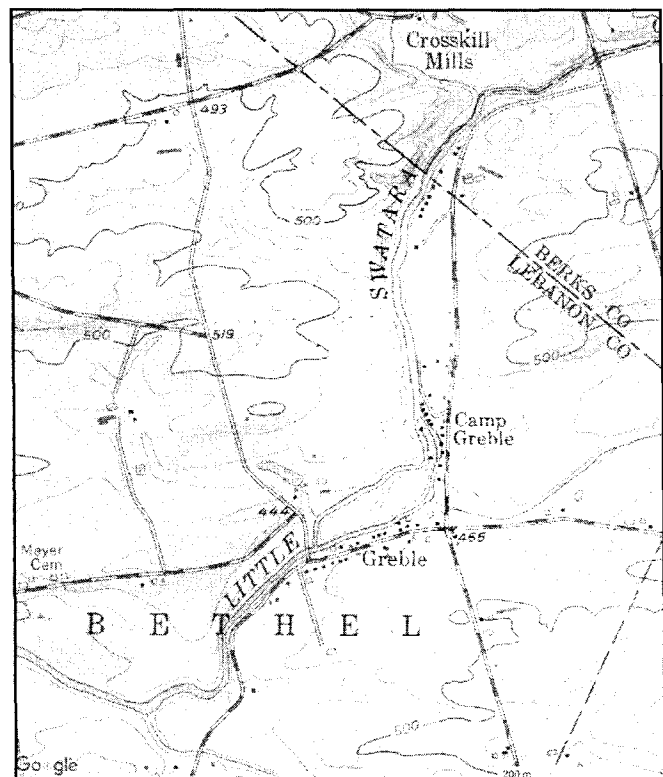
A second reason why this writer believes that Michael Frantz, Elizabeth (Frantz) Gerst, and Magdalena (Frantz) Meyer were siblings is that the wives were listed with their husbands' names in the 1770 membership list of the Little Swatara Congregation.⁸ Given that Michael Frantz and wife, Nicholas Gerst and wife, and Jacob Meyer and wife were listed sequentially in the membership list, one wonders if they had been baptized sequentially in Little Swatara Creek.

Jacob Meyer: Executor of the Estate of Michael Frantz

Michael Frantz was an important leader of the Little Swatara Congregation. He was appointed as elder in charge of the congregation on the same day (August 12, 1780) that Jacob Mayer/Meyer was appointed minister.⁹ Prior to this, Michael Frantz, at an early age, had written his will (March 9, 1768).¹⁰ He was only age 42 at the time.

In the words¹¹ of his will, he wrote: "... I see that there are many Poor People everywhere, and I believe that such are the needy (?) according to the will of God. First it is my desire and my will, that in case my Mother should survive me, it shall everything be given to her again, what she had given unto me, in case she should want, and Secondly it is my desire and my will, that all my Estate real and personal (so as it is in my hands) shall be, and remain, in the hands of my beloved Wife during her natural life. . . ."

No mention was made in Michael Frantz's will about children of his own. Instead, he wrote: "... after



Map of the Little Swatara Creek flowing downstream from Berks County to Lebanon County, Pennsylvania.

her (his wife's) decease . . . it is my desire that the same shall be sold . . . at a reasonable price, and shall be shared among the poor. . . ."

The will made it clear that Michael Frantz and wife did not have children.

The will was signed by Michael Frantz, his wife Anna Frantz, and three witnesses including Michael's brothers, Christian Frantz II, and John Frantz, and Jacob Meyer (who was seemingly Michael's brother-in-law).

As things turned out, Michael Frantz did not die until 1796. His will was probated on August 17, 1796. By then, both of Michael's two blood brothers, Christian and John, were deceased.¹²

⁷ "Elizabeth Frantz (b. 1729), Daughter of Christian Frantz (b. 1685), Wife of John Nicholas Garst (b. 1727), Mother of the Frantz-Garst Brethren, *Mennonite Family History*, Vol. 34, No. 4, Oct. 2015, pp. 171-75.

⁸ See footnote 2.

⁹ See Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Brethren in Colonial America* (The Brethren Press: Elgin Ill.), p. 222.

¹⁰ Dwayne Wrightsman, "Michael Frantz of Little Swatara Creek," *Mennonite Family History*, Oct. 2008, pp. 176-78.

¹¹ The will was written in both German and English.

¹² Dwayne Wrightsman, "The Frantz Families of Little Swatara Creek," *Mennonite Family History*, Jan. 2006, pp 24-30.

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Jacob Meyer, brother-in-law (?), became the sole executor of Michael Frantz's estate. In 1801, five years after the death of Michael Frantz, Jacob Meyer, himself, died. In his will, he bequeathed his estate to his ten surviving children.¹³ No mention was made in his will of a surviving wife.

The only circumstance found indicating the name of Jacob's wife is the name "Hanna" appearing in several places in the deed of sale of Jacob's 141-acre plantation to his son John Meyer in 1792.¹⁴ "Hanna" was probably the mother of Jacob's youngest daughter, "Hannah" (married to Jacob Heise), and therefore Jacob's second wife.

Given that Jacob had a much older daughter, also named "Anna" (married to John Brubacher), this writer believes that Jacob Meyer was first married to Magdalena Frantz, and that Magdalena died prior to the death of her husband. This writer also believes that Magdalena Frantz was a sister of Michael Frantz, and that Jacob Meyer and Michael Frantz were brothers-in-law.

German will written in 1768 has Michael Frantz's signature and the signature or mark of his brothers Johannes and Christian, his wife (or mother) Anna, and his neighbor Jacob Meyer. Those who "signed" this will belonged to the Little Swatara Brethren Society.

¹³ His dau. Maria had died earlier.
¹⁴ Indenture made Nov. 20, 1792, between Jacob Moyer of Bethel Twp., Dauphin Co., State of Pa., Yeoman, and Hanna his wife of the one part, and John Moyer of the same place, Yeoman, of the other part, Recorded Feb. 7, 1823.