



# SHERK

A Genealogy of one line of the Sherk family tracing their lives in Switzerland, Pennsylvania, Humberstone Township in Welland Co., Upper Canada and South Dorchester Township, Elgin County, Ontario

Including Hans Schurch of Sumiswald, Switzerland, born c.1560  
Mary S. Sherk (1845-1887) and her great grandson  
John Adams Becker, born 1932

*The account also includes information on the*

European Families

**Trussel, Kuperschmidt, Eggiman and Grundbacher**

Pennsylvanian Families

**Zavitz, Learn, Swarr and Groff**

Upper Canadian and Ontario Families

**Long, Ballah and Fraine**

*Presented to Catherine Becker Monroe, great granddaughter of Mary S. Sherk,  
and Sidney James Monroe on the occasion of their 39th wedding anniversary  
12 April 1997*

*"fellow family historians; always helpful and encouraging"*

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ISBN 0-919387-36-5

August 1997

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## DEDICATION

To the Mennonites who survived persecution in Europe for over a century and then persevered through the terrors of Atlantic crossings and homesteading in the new world. Their principles and traditions helped them survive another form of persecution during and after the American revolution when republican zealots drove many of them from their homes. Not normally fighters for the British cause in the Revolutionary War or designated Loyalists, they nevertheless sought sanctuary in British Upper Canada in the closing years of the 18th Century.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is the third genealogy I have published. Previous ones focused on the Becker family and the Goldsmith family. I am indebted to many librarians, fellow genealogists, county historians and relatives who have helped prepare this paper, read drafts and provided helpful comments. I was particularly pleased to find the small Pennsylvania public libraries, sometimes housed in inauspicious old residences, which had collected and preserved local history accounts about their communities, accounts which were unavailable anywhere else and which were unrecorded in state or national indices.

## LIMITATIONS AND TYPOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS

I have enjoyed preparing this paper but I have not approached the work as a professional historian. I have not documented or foot-noted every source or statement. Publications used as sources of information are mentioned only once, usually at the beginning of the section in which they are used. Some of the relationships and names contained in this paper are speculations. I hope that the reader will enjoy reading it and will not be surprised if other genealogists prove some of the statements questionable or wrong. The names of all ancestors **in the pedigree** have been printed in **bold type**. That is, people so recorded are grandmothers and grandfathers (with multiple "greats") of the author. In all cases the maiden names of women have been used exclusively, i.e. I have not referred to a woman as **Mrs. Benjamin Sherk** but as **Priscilla Long**. This helps to establish our connection back to the **Long** family. Names and addresses of correspondents who have helped with the research are listed at the end. I do not claim that the addresses are still accurate or that the people named are available to supply any further help.

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**READER'S COMMENTS AND PURCHASES** are always welcome. John Becker may be contacted at 75 Roselawn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario Canada M4R 1E7, telephone 416-483-7282, fax 416-489-1713 email jbecker@interlog.com. There is some cost associated with the production and distribution of this genealogy. Contributions to help defray costs are always welcome. Suggested price: \$15.00

## Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Becker, John

Sherk: a genealogy of one line of the Sherk Family tracing their lives in Switzerland, Pennsylvania, Humberstone Township in Welland Co., Upper Canada and South Dorchester Township, Elgin County, Ontario ...

ISBN 0-919387-36-5

1. Shirk Family I. Title.

CS90.S4223 1997 929'.2 C97-932056-9

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## THE ANABAPTISTS, MENNONITES and PERSECUTION

It is not known if the first **Schurch** in this story, **Hans** born about 1560, was persecuted for being an Anabaptist or not. His marriage is noted in a Mennonite church record. We do know that his great great grandson was thrown in jail 150 years later and deported from Switzerland for his Anabaptist beliefs. For this reason a brief history of these religious movements is useful and will provide some background for the migrations of these groups.

The challenge to the Roman Church in Europe, the Protestant Reformation, was led by two men. Martin Luther (1483-1546) in Germany and Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) in Zurich, Switzerland. Both advocated a new Christian order, preached the Bible in the language of the peasants and proclaimed that Christian grace was available freely to all by faith alone. In 1525 six years before Zwingli's death some of his students in Zurich promoted a third option. They called themselves "**Brethren**" and were nicknamed **Anabaptists** because of their opposition to infant baptism. These Anabaptists were severely persecuted by both the Church of Rome and the Reformers. Their "errors" included belief in a church composed of voluntary adults, baptism upon confession of faith and separation from world and state. This movement spread rapidly and was repressed vigorously; Anabaptists were put to death by the thousands. While the movement started among educated, urban radicals, it rapidly became a rural, peasant movement and believers fled to caves and mountains in south Germany and Switzerland to escape persecution.

A Catholic priest from Holland, Menno Simons, joined the Anabaptist movement in 1536. He became perhaps the best known leader of the Anabaptists although he shared the leadership with many others. Anabaptists adopted a non-hierarchical organization partly out of conviction and partly because so many of the early, able leaders were martyred so rapidly. After 1536 another nickname emerged and the scattered Anabaptists became known as "**Mennonites**" after their leader, Menno Simons. Persecution of the Mennonites in Holland, the country of their origin, started almost immediately and many fled to Switzerland and southern Germany where a cycle of repression started again. One hundred and seventy years after the Mennonites were driven from Holland that country gave them sanctuary and a gateway to religious freedom under the British crown in the new world.

In 1693 another Anabaptist subgroup of the Reformation emerged. A young Swiss Mennonite Bishop, Jacob Amman, felt that the Mennonites were losing their purity and formed a new Christian fellowship which was named "**Amish**" after their leader. They consider themselves to be the conservative cousins of the Mennonites.

## THE RHINELAND

As early as 1527 Anabaptists were fleeing Zurich to a more hospitable Canton Bern. The first migration of Mennonites to the German Palatinate on the west side of the Rhine in the vicinity of Mannheim and Karlsruhe was in 1557. A century later a large migration out of Switzerland started.

The Palatinate was not a safe place for very long. France, a Catholic state, frequently overran the Protestant states on their eastern border and caused much destruction and hardship particularly in the first decade of the 1700s. Protestants of all descriptions, and sometimes destitute Catholics too, were forced to flee downstream to the mouth of the Rhine. Tens of thousands found security in Protestant Holland and England. Many made their homes in Holland for decades.

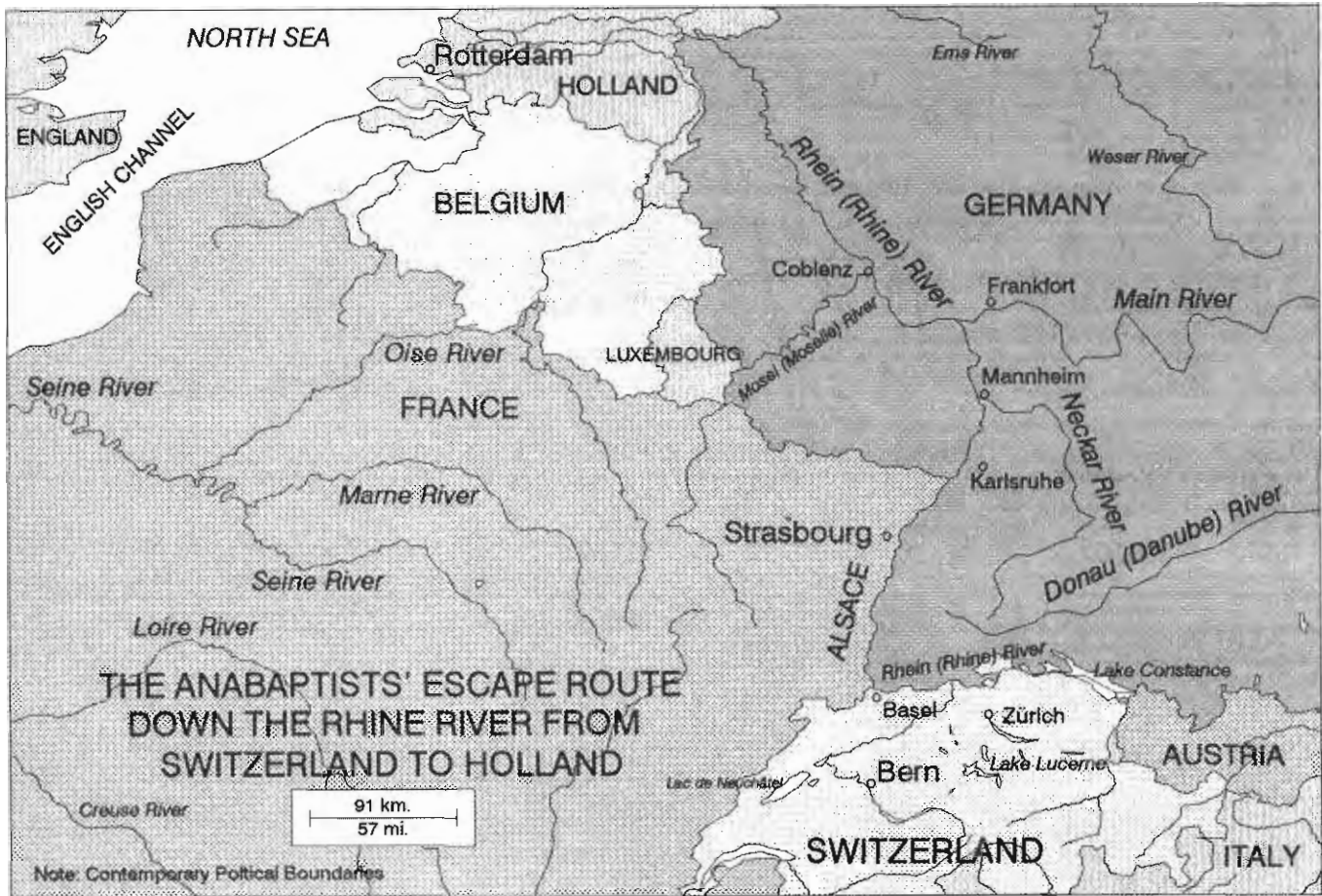
The royal houses of Holland and England were linked by kinship and Britain was ready and willing to introduce refugee European Protestants to American colonies as settlers. Queen Anne of England who reigned from 1702 to 1714 was the sister of the King of Holland. Out of sympathy for the thousands of Protestant refugees in Holland during her reign, the British government sponsored a number of settlement schemes to the new world. The motivation was not exclusively humanitarian; settlers were the basis of a growing economy in the American colonies. The first German Mennonites reached the British colony of Pennsylvania in 1683. Even this early group included *Schurch's*. Our progenitor in America arrived in that same colony in 1728.

## THE SHERK FAMILY - A SUMMARY

**Sherk** (or as it was originally spelt - **Schurch**) is a Swiss name and can be found as early as 1360 in Canton Bern. Spellings varied in the early years - Sherrick, Schurch, Schorch, Schorg, Sherg, Shirk, Shurk, Schorch, Sherck and Schoerg were some of the variations that can be found in early documents. (Sherk will be the spelling used when referring to the Canadian family in this paper.)

The towns in Switzerland where Sherk's were found are Sumiswald (which is about 20 miles north east of Bern, Heimiswil), Wil, Oberburg, Rohrback, Gondiswil and Walterswil.

In 1982 Thomas A. Sherk published *The Sherk Family*, an extensive history of the families in Switzerland and America including detail on many of the lines who migrated to Upper Canada after the close of the American Revolution. Much of what follows in this account of the early generations is a paraphrase of his excellent genealogy.



He has set out ten generations of Sherks of particular interest to us:

The first **four** generations (1570 to 1639) were residents of Switzerland

The **fifth and sixth** (father and his young son, (1663 to 1709) were the European immigrants to Pennsylvania

The **seventh** was born in Pennsylvania in 1750 (the only American-born generation) but became an immigrant to Upper Canada (Ontario)

The **last three generations** in this account (1788 to 1845) were all farming families in southern Ontario.

The ten generations span about 260 years, two continents, four or five nations and were settlers on a number of homestead farms cut from the wilderness. For the purposes of this account the Sherk story ends with the death of Mary S. Sherk in a terrible train wreck in 1887 at age 42 and the death of her brother, Jake, in 1933 at age 81. The descendants of these two do not now include any born with the Sherk name. No attempt has been made to trace descendants of Mary and Jake's siblings who have carried the Sherk name down to today.

Our Sherk clan was Mennonite up to and including the generations who moved to Canada. They were not connected with the Amish. In Ontario some early generations might be called "Pennsylvania Dutch" (which is a corruption of "Pennsylvania Deutsch" and referred originally

to German-speaking people living in that colony). Our Sherk's resided in that colony for 61 years from 1728 to 1789 before heading north to Canada. Perhaps even that short stay in Pennsylvania entitles them to that label.

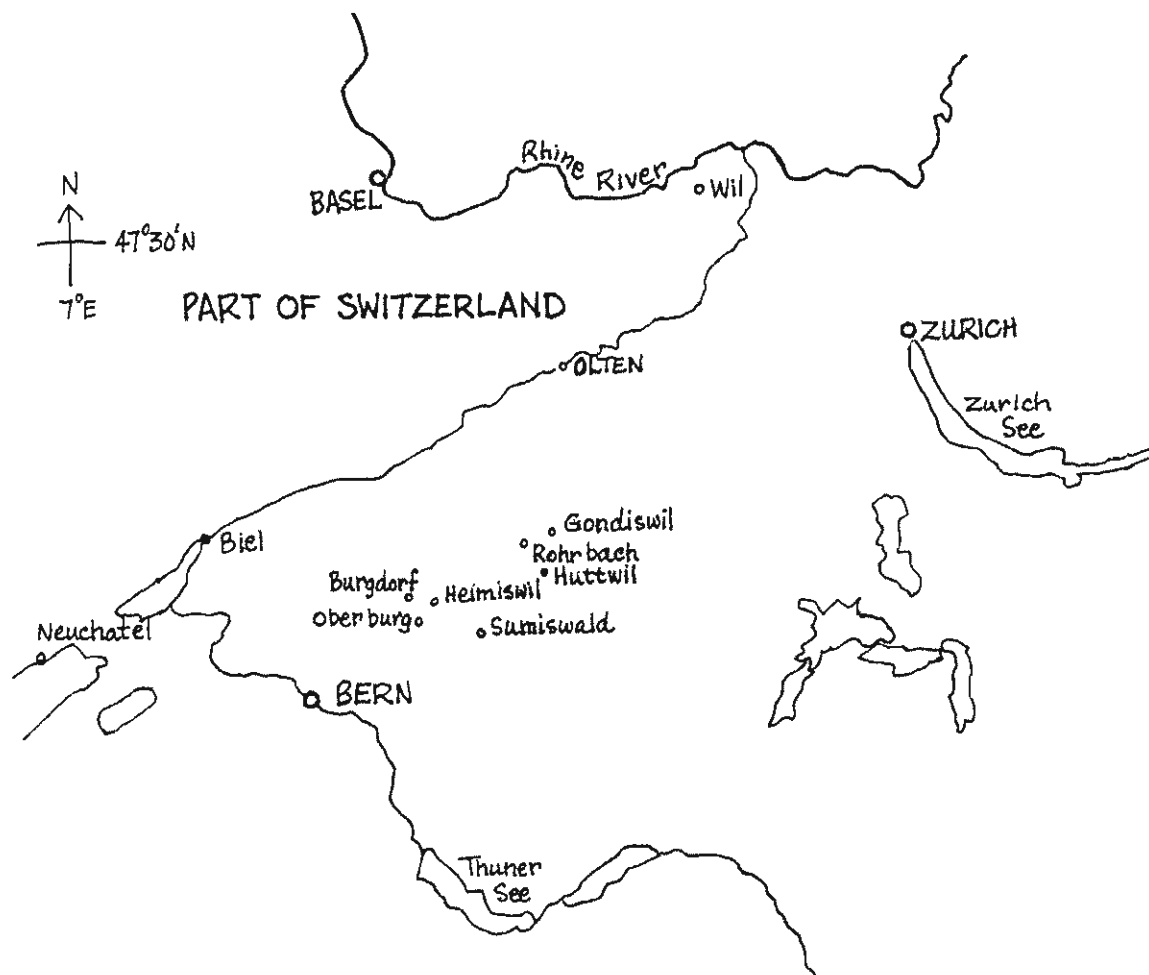
### THE SWISS SCHURCHS

The Schurchs were Anabaptists and the data for the first five generations in this account are derived from Mennonite church records in Switzerland, particularly the Sumiswald Tauf register. Not much more than names and dates are known about them.

- I **Hans Schurch** married **Verena Schneider**. They moved from Walterswil to Sumiswald where his son's wedding took place before 1610.
- II **Casper**, son of **Hans**, married about 1610 to **Margaret Trussel**. Margaret Trussel was born on the 10th of August 1589.
- III **Ulrich**, son of **Casper**, was born on the 19 June, 1614 and married about 1635 to **Barbara Kupferschmid**, born 6 February 1614.

**Barbara Kupferschmid's** parents were **Alex Kupferschmid** and **Verean Brundeli**.

- IV **Peter (A)**, son of **Ulrich**, was born 6 October 1639



and married twice. First to Anna Reinhard and secondly to **Verena Eggiman**, born 29 March 1640. **Verena** is the mother of **Peter Ulrich** (below).

**Verena Eggiman's** parents were **Leonard Eggiman**, born about 1605 and **Barbara Reist**, born 6 July 1606.

**Barbara Reist's** father was **Hans Reist**.

**Leonard Eggiman's** parents were **Leonard Eggiman** (Senior) and **Barbara Haslibacher**.

### IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA

V **[Peter (B)] Ulrich**, son of **Peter (A)**, born 9 March 1663 and married about 1695 to **Barbara Grundbacher**, born 5 November 1672.

This progenitor of most of the Sherks in North America is usually referred to simply as **Ulrich** and sometimes by the diminutive **Uli**. The combination "**Peter Ulrich**" appears only infrequently.

He first appears in the Sumiswald community records as a birth record. He next appears 47 years later on 27 July 1710 when he is among the Mennonite Brethren being held in the Bern jail. A few months later he is deported from Switzerland and sent down the Rhine to Holland arriving on board *the Emmenthaler* on 3 August 1711. We don't know if he was accompanied on this odyssey by his five children born in Sumiswald between 1696 and 1706 and his wife. During the next 17 years (from 1711 to 1728) there is no record of his movements. He may have returned to Switzerland or Alsace to live. He may have remarried to a Helene Myer after the death of his first wife. Because Helene Myer is not recorded as the mother of any of his children, this marriage may not have occurred.

**Peter (B) Ulrich** arrived at Philadelphia with his adult children including (at least) three named sons on 23 August 1728 on the ship *Mortonhouse*. He was over 65 years old and his three surviving adult sons for whom we have birth dates were between 26 and 19. Three other sons, probably the younger, appear in early Pennsylvania records. One was on the *Mortonhouse* with his father. So six sons migrated,



four in 1728, one in 1727 and one unknown arrival date. All appear to have been single when they arrived in America. In addition to these six sons there was a daughter about whom nothing is known and who may not have come to America. One other son died in infancy.

These Atlantic crossings were horrendous; disease was the main enemy. One historian estimates that nearly 40% of the tens of thousands of immigrants who crossed in the 18th century died at sea. There is no reason to think that the crossing on the *Mortonhouse* was any gentler than average! For these Protestant refugees the usual port of embarkation was Rotterdam in Holland with stops in southern England (where passengers were **not** permitted to land), finally debarking in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Some crossings took months.

The family first went to Hickorytown, now Lancaster and then in about 1732 settled at Schoeneck in Cocalico Twp., Lancaster County. This community likely derived its name from Schonegg, a hilly region close to Sumiswald, Switzerland, the European home of the Scherchs. Two thousand acres were acquired and the sons developed extensive farms there.

**Peter (B) Ulrich** died there on 3 July 1739. His wife, **Barbara Grundbacher**, has a death date, three years before her husband on 11 February 1736 when she would have been in her 65th year.

#### Family of Peter (B) Ulrich Schurch and Barbara Grundbacher

**Peter** born 9 Mar 1663 in Sumiswald, Canton Bern, Switzerland, emigrated with family to Pennsylvania arriving on 23 Aug 1728. He died 3 July 1739 in his 77th year having spent the last 11 years of his life in the peace of the new world and away from the strife and persecution of the Mennonites in Europe. His burial place in Pennsylvania is not known.

**Barbara Grundbacher** born 5 Nov 1672 in Sumiswald, bore eight children starting in 1698 and we know that the first five were born in Switzerland. She died 11 February 1736 three years before her husband. It is not certain whether she remained in Europe or came to America with her family. Her burial place is not known.

#### Children:

1. Elizabeth born 18 Sept 1698
2. Johannes born 3 Apr 1701, d.y. (means died young)
3. Ulrich born 20 Aug 1704, mar. Anna Swar, died Oct 1763
4. Johannes born 19 Dec 1706, mar. Barbara Yoder (Jether), died 1789
5. **Peter(C)** born 24 Oct 1709 (or 18 July 1696), mar. **Maria Swarr**
6. Joseph mar. twice
7. Casper mar. Magdalena Newcomer, died 1783
8. Michael mar. Elizabeth Swarr, died 3 Oct 1757

VI **Peter (C) Scherch (ck)**, son of **Peter (B) Ulrich**, born on 24 October 1709 ("thought to be the correct date") in Sumiswald, Canton Bern, Switzerland and married **Maria Swar** in Pennsylvania.

**Maria Swar's** parents were **Peter Swar (Schwar)**, c1690-1767, and **Adaline Blooming** who were Huguenots from Strasbourg, France and settled in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania after arriving in Philadelphia in the spring of 1716. Many of the Swar's children, perhaps as many as six, married Sherks.

**Peter Swar's** parents were **Ulrich Swarr** and **Helen Myer** of Strasbourg, France. There is no indication that this couple immigrated.

As mentioned above, **Peter (C)** was an immigrant arriving as a single man with his father on the *Mortonhouse* in 1728 at age 19. He probably married about 1740 - at age 31 - unusually late for this community. His children were born between 1742 and 1753 (perhaps later) all in Pennsylvania. He lived on a 190 acre farm in Earl Twp., Lancaster County about eight miles south of the original homestead in Cocalico Twp. adjacent to his brother Michael's farm. His farm was located along the north side of Conestoga Creek by the present day Quarry Road near Weaverland. In addition to farming, **Peter** was a blacksmith and a minister of the Weaverland Mennonite Church in which he was ordained about 1750.

He wrote his own will in German, signed it "**Schurgh**" (although he spelt his name elsewhere **Sherck**) and it was probated 12 March 1770 a few days after he died. He died therefore in his 62nd year and is buried with his wife in the Old Mennonite Weberthal Cemetery near his Mennonite Church. He was born in Switzerland and lived in a British colony for 42 years surrounded by German-speaking Mennonites. On the eve of the Revolution, he probably spoke very little English.

His older brother, Ulrich, had died seven years earlier at age 59. A second older brother, Johannes, would live for another 19 years into his 84th year. Of his younger brothers, Michael had died 13 years earlier and Casper would survive another 13 years. There is no information on Joseph nor is there any information about **Peter (C)**'s wife, **Maria Swar**.

Of his ten children for whom we have death dates, all survived him by between 42 and 60 years. His oldest son, **Casper**, was the first of the clan born in the new world - in 1750 on his father's farm in Earl Twp., Lancaster County.

#### Family of Peter (C) Sherck and Maria Swarr

Children:

1. Peter born 7 Apr 1742, mar. Barbara Zimmerman
2. Elizabeth mar. John Sollenberger
3. Johannes born 7 May 1746, mar. twice
4. Michael born c1748, died 1826
5. **Casper** born c1750, mar. **Feronica Groff**, died Feb. 1813

6. Joseph born 16 Nov 1753, mar. Maria Zimmerman
7. Mary mar. Peter Zimmerman
8. Barbara mar. Michael Sensenig
9. Samuel mar. Susanna Long(?), died 2 Aug 1830
10. Anna mar. John Rice

#### THE SWARR FAMILY

Before leaving **Peter Scherch** and his wife **Maria Swar** there is some additional information about the **Swarr** family which appears in a 1909 genealogy privately published by a descendant, Jacob Mellinger Swarr of Mechanic's Grove, Pennsylvania.

He says that **Peter Schwahr**, born c1690, and his wife, **Adaline Blooming** both of Strasbourg, emigrated to Philadelphia arriving in the spring of 1716. He was fleeing persecution of the Protestants, he being a Huguenot. They immediately left the city and went to a spot one and a half miles west of Lancaster City. He got possession with Hans and Jacob Brubaker of 1000 acres and **Swarr** took the northerly portion of it on the south side of what is now the Harrisburg Pike. The stone arch bridge adjacent to Long's Park was once known as Swarr's Bridge. In a few years he obtained 1000 acres four and one-half miles north of Lancaster City, now East Hempfield Twp. where he built a grist and saw mill. **Peter** died c 1767 at 78 years of age.

Jacob Swarr's account mentions two sons of the original **Peter Schwahr**, Peter and Christian, born to them before they arrived in 1716 and four others born in Pennsylvania - Anna, Adaline, Blanche and John. The three daughters all married Sherks. No mention of **Maria** appears in the account. The reference to her appears only in Thomas Sherk's 1983 book.

#### Family of Peter Schwahr and Adaline Blooming

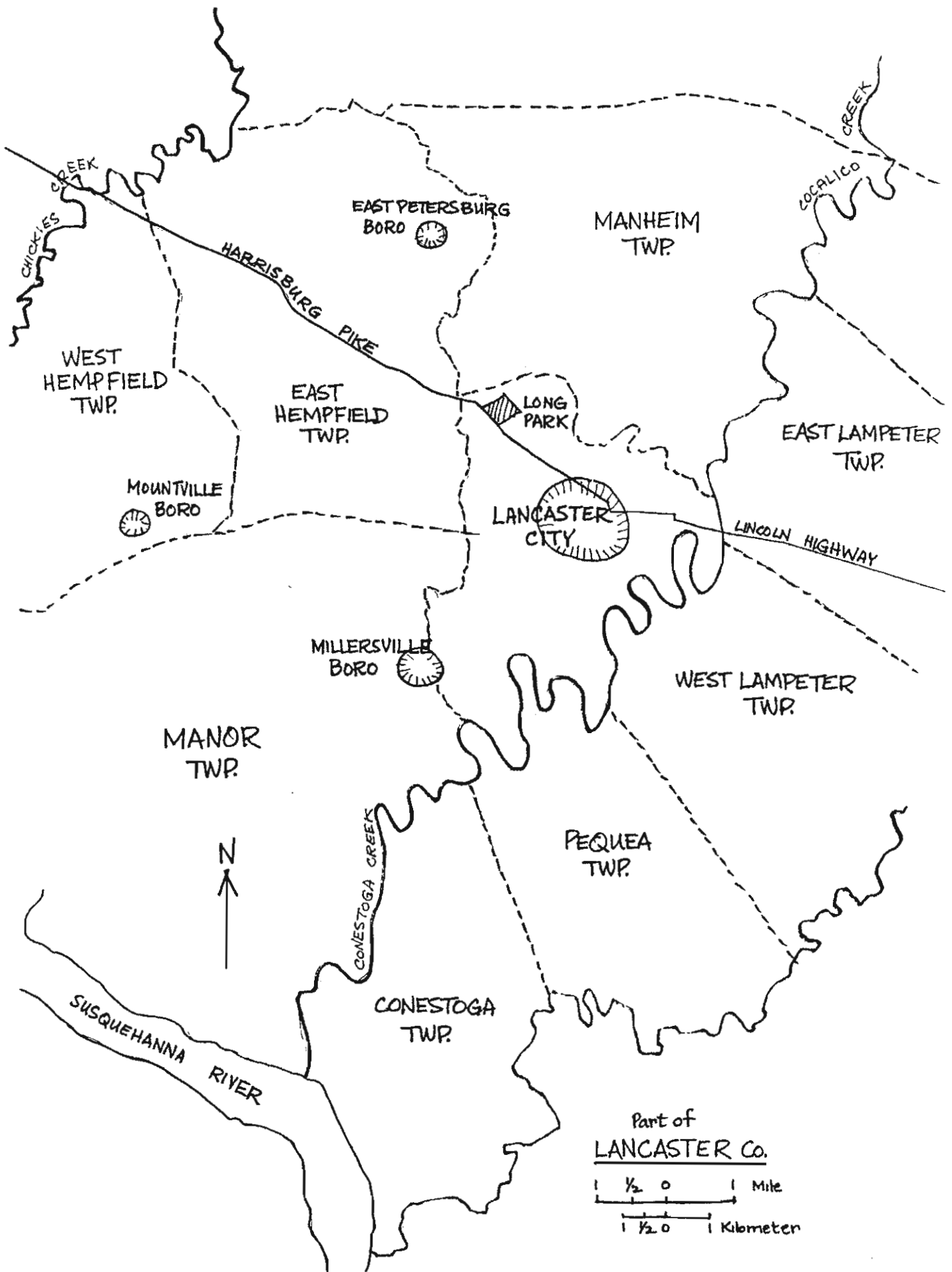
Children:

1. Peter born before 1715, mar. Adah Long
2. Christian born before 1715, mar. Elizabeth Eby, died 1744
3. Anna born c1720, mar. Ulrich Shirk, died 1810
4. Adaline mar. a Shirk
5. Blanche mar. a Shirk
6. John born 1740 or 36, mar. Veronica Shirk, died 1823
7. **Maria** mar. **Peter Schurch**
8. Elizabeth mar. Michael Shirk

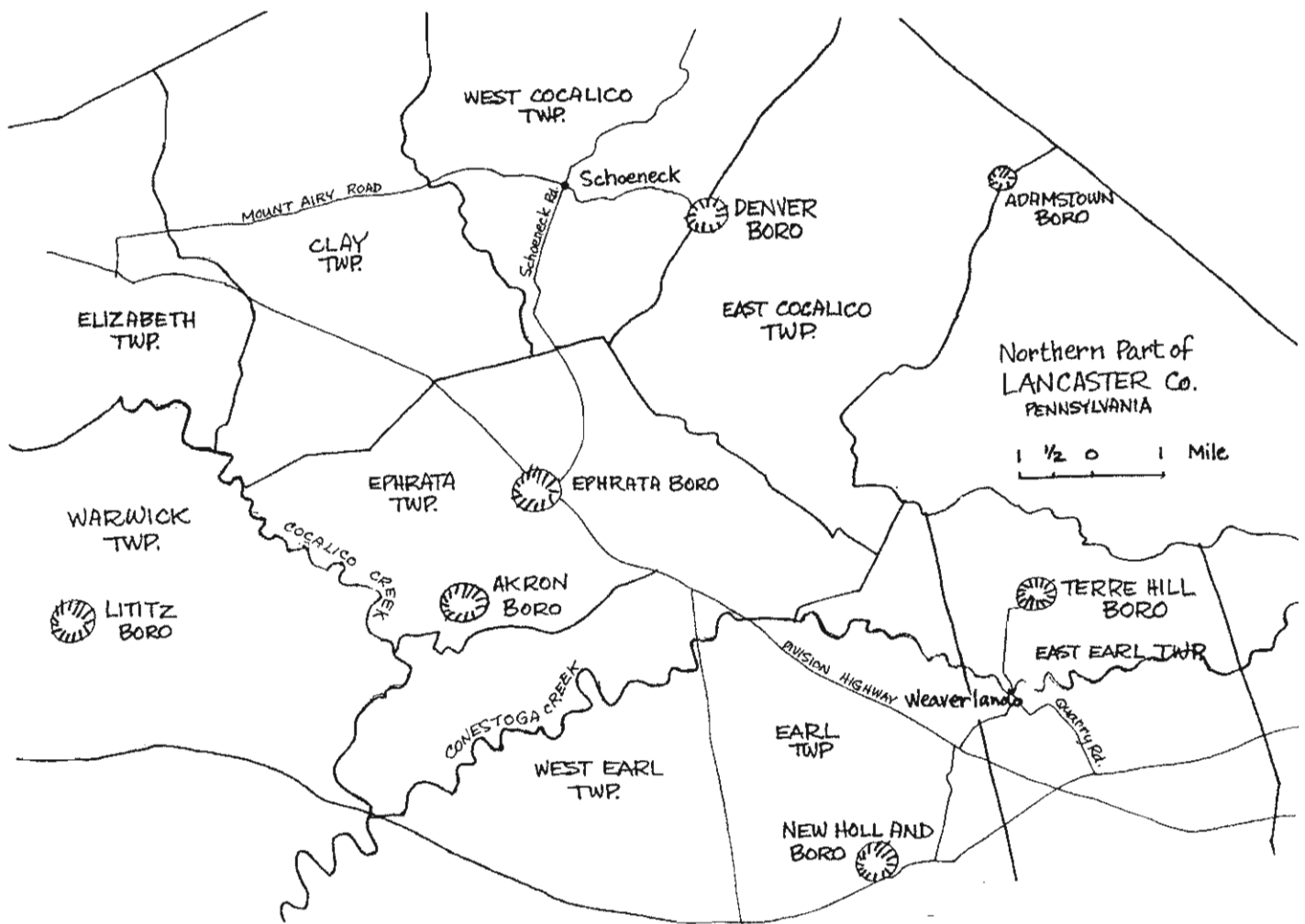
#### THE CANADIAN IMMIGRANT SHERK

VII **Casper Scherch** was born in 1750 at his parent's farm in Earl Twp., Pennsylvania, the fifth child in the family. He was the first American-born member of this clan. He married **Feronica (Fanny) Grove (Groff)** probably around 1778 when he was about 28 years old.

**Feronica Groff's** father was **Jacob Groff** of Earl Twp., Pennsylvania who relocated to Humberstone Twp., Welland County, Upper Canada by 1805. **Feronica** had five siblings but we know very little about them or her mother.







**Groff children:**

1. Jacob;
2. Henry;
3. Martin
4. Peter
5. **Feronica mar. Casper Sherk**
6. Margaret

**Casper's** father was 41 at Casper's birth; his grandfather Scherch, the American immigrant had died 11 years earlier. He joined a family which comprised three older brothers, aged 8, 4 and 2 and an older sister. He would have five younger siblings. His father who probably spoke little English died when **Casper** was about 19 years old. **Casper** may have been moderately bilingual since he was brought up in a German-speaking home and lived in a British colony which was growing rapidly.

For about a decade after marriage they lived on a 60 acre farm in Earl Twp. which was part of his father's estate remaining there until relocating to Humberstone Twp., Welland County in 1789 with his older brother Michael. **Casper** was 39 years old and had three children and a wife when he moved north. After arriving in Canada three more children were born to **Feronica** and him.

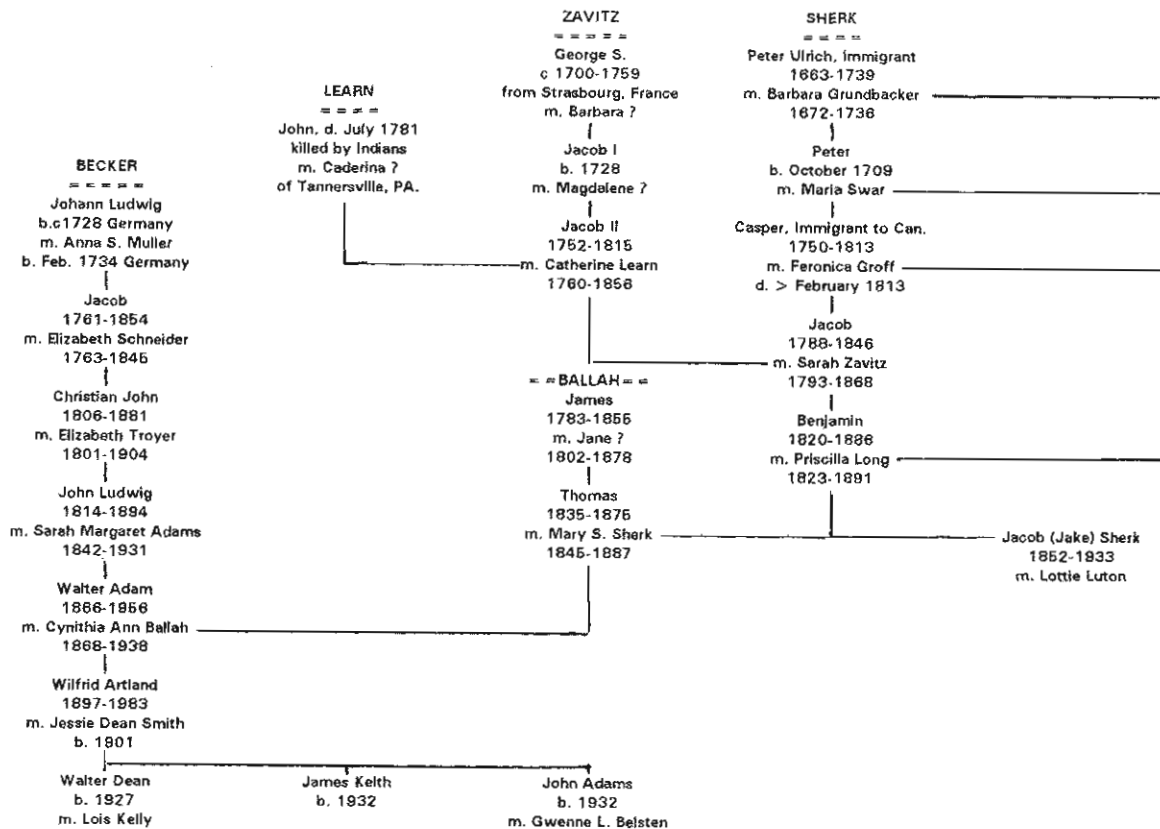
**THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION**

There are accounts of active persecution of some Sherk

families during and immediately after the end of the Revolution. Specific names of family heads are difficult to find and one must conclude that none of our clan were actually burned out or otherwise harassed by republican neighbours or the new government. Some other Sherks undoubtedly were abused however and fear probably stimulated others to migrate north to safe Canada. Elmore Reaman in *The Trail of the Black Walnut* says in the same paragraph that "Sherk was a well-known name in the Niagara Peninsula ... revolutionists burned his home because he ... harboured British officers. He bought land in Willoughby Twp., Welland County." This was probably John Sherk to whom Thomas Sherk gives code N1. He is not part of the clan that we are studying but he was probably a cousin and his experiences would have a dramatic influence on all other Mennonites in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania where he lived.

The United Empire Loyalist (UEL) monograph series published by Dundurn Press provides detail on Peter Sherk 1780-1864 who was probably the 9 year old Peter Sherk who came to Canada with his father **Casper Sherk** (our ancestor) in 1789. As a nine year old he can hardly be classed as a UEL if his father wasn't but the implication is that Sherk families were part of an oppressed group escaping the republicans.

Mennonites as a group had much to fear from the republicans. As a group it was known that they were pro-



British because of the help they had received in their initial migration to the new world and the sanctuary Britain provided them both directly and indirectly. They were opposed to all forms of war and this made them appear anti-revolution and pro-British. Increased taxation on Pennsylvania farms to help the new government pay for the war also caused rumblings amongst the Menno-nites who saw this as another infringement on their religious freedoms and their opposition to war. It would not be difficult for the republicans to define the Mennonites, either individually or collectively, as "loyalists" and to strip them of important civil rights and to proceed to harass them out of their livelihoods.

There was a formal system whereby refugees entering Canada from the south who could demonstrate their active allegiance to the Crown during the Revolution would be given the designation "UE" (United Empire) and liberal grants of land. Lists of those with this designation and those who received land grants as UELs (United Empire Loyalists) exist and **Casper Sherk's** name does not appear. While he did receive Crown grants of land in Humberstone Twp. these grants were available to many who were not UELs.

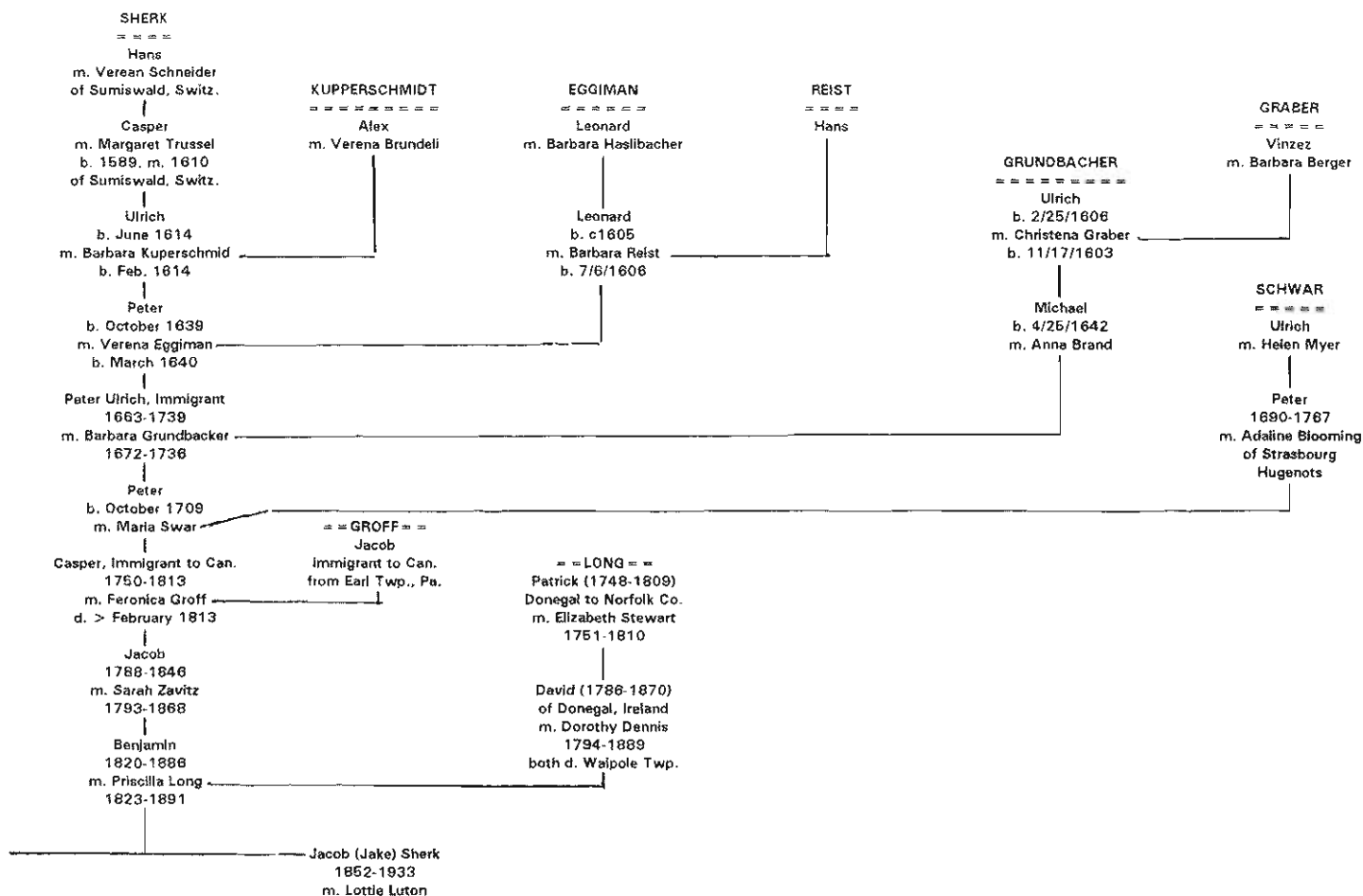
In summary, it seems irrefutable that the Sherks who came to Canada were more pro-British than pro-republican and that the Mennonites as a group had reason to trust the British because of the favourable treatment they had received while fleeing persecution on the European continent 50 and 60 years before the War of Independence started. They also had reason to fear the new republican government. They still were not UELs however and there is

no record that they sought that designation from the British colonial governors. It is also interesting to note that of **Peter (C)'s** six sons, only three moved to Canada and another three remained in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

### THE MOVE TO CANADA

**Casper Sherk** may have come to the Niagara Peninsula in 1789 when he was 39 years old with his brother Michael. His oldest son, Peter, was 9 years old. Initially he may have been uncertain about on which side of the border he would settle. A petition sworn by his son **Jacob** in 1796 says that **Casper** came to Canada in 1793 or 94. The date on his Crown grant for Lot 10, Concession 1, Humberstone Twp. is 12 November 1795 and this could not have been issued less than two years after he occupied the land. He also acquired 200 acres in Concession 2, Lot 7 from his father-in-law, **Jacob Groff** in 1805. He also must have acquired a farm in Concession 3, Lots 4 & 5 before his death in 1813 because it appears in his will.

**Casper** and his sons were members of a Mennonite congregation in Welland County. He died in February 1813 in his 64th year. He had lived the first 26 years of his life, until 1776, in the British colony of Pennsylvania and the last 24 years of his life in Upper Canada. The intervening 14 years - from 1776 to 1789 - may have been filled with some turmoil. A state of war existed for the first 7 years - until 1783 - and the last 7 years could have been even more painful than the active state of war if his Pennsylvania neighbours were hostile to Mennonites.



His wife died somewhat later; we don't have detail about that event and the location of their graves is not known. Like many at that time, they may have been buried in a family plot on their Humberstone Township farm.

His brother Michael lived to age 78 and resided at Point Abino, Bertie Twp., Welland County. Another brother, Peter, of Waterloo County lived to age 70. Three other brothers remained in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. We have no information on where the three sisters resided.

At his death **Casper's** sons were between 33 and (perhaps) 22. There is some doubt about Peter's birth year. It was 1780 if he was the 9 year old in 1789 traveling with his father through the wilderness to a new home in Canada or 1791 as Thomas Sherk records. **Jacob's** and David's birth dates are not known but they seem to be before 1791 and their father's arrival in Canada.

### Family of Casper Sherk and Feronica Groff

**Casper** born c1750 in Earl Twp., Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania, died in Humberstone Twp., Welland Co. February 1813; burial location unknown.

**Feronica** born probably in Earl Twp. date unknown, bore 6 children starting in 1791; death date and burial location unknown.

Children:

1. Peter born 15 Aug 1791, mar. 3 times, died 22 Nov

1853 or 25 Mar 1864

2. **Jacob** born c1788, mar. **Sarah Zavitz**, died 1846
3. David
4. John born 17 June 1780, mar. Abigail, died 3 Jan 1847
5. Nancy or Sarah
6. Mary

VIII **Jacob Sherk** was probably the third son of **Casper** and **Feronica**. Two older brothers, John and Peter, were probably born in Earl Twp., Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Thomas Sherk feels confident that **Jacob** was born there also. An approximate birth year using his wife's birth year as a guide would be 1788, a year before **Casper** was at the Niagara frontier. He married **Sarah Zavitz** sometime before 1810 in Welland County. **Sarah** was born in 1793 in Bertie Twp., Welland County.

**Sarah Zavitz's** parents were the Rev. **G. Jacob Zavitz II** (1752-1815) and **Catherine Learn** (1760-1856) both of whom were born in Pennsylvania and came to Upper Canada about 1788. (See separate chapters on the **ZAVITZ** and the **LEARN** family trees.)

**Jacob** was a farmer and had 300 acres in Concession 3, Lots 4 & 5, Humberstone Twp., Welland County, Upper Canada about 2 miles north of Sherkston. He also operated a grist and saw mill pushed by water power. He obtained the rights to flood land near the headwaters of Black Creek. He entered Canada as a very small child and probably started farming on his own around 1810 when he was

about 22 years old and about to be married. This was just 2 years before his father's death. He and his wife were Mennonites and as far as we know they spent their entire life in Humberstone Twp. They had 12 children all of whom lived to adulthood and married. The 7 sons and 5 daughters were born between 1811 and 1834 when **Sarah** was between 18 and 41 years of age. **Jacob** was about 5 years older.

With a family of this size, it is not surprising that some of the sons would look outside of Welland County for farms on which to settle and raise their own families. This was true with our ancestor **Benjamin Sherk**, 4th son of **Jacob**, born in 1820. He and his older sister both went to South Dorchester Twp., Elgin County further west. The oldest son, John, went to Concession 3, Lot 15 (near Cheapside) in Walpole Twp., Haldimand County also to the west. Four sons and a daughter remained in Humberstone.

#### Family of Jacob Sherk and Sarah Zavitz

**Jacob** born c1788 probably in Earl Twp., Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania, died cNovember 1847 in Welland Co.

**Sarah** born 1793 in Bertie Twp., Welland Co., bore 12 children between 1811 and 1834, died 1868. Burial location of both is unknown.

##### Children

1. John born 1811, mar. Mary House, died 1894
2. Abraham mar. Catherine Hershey
3. George mar. Elizabeth Hershey, died c1901
4. Elizabeth born 9 Apr 1817, mar. Jacob Cline, died 22 Dec 1897
5. Catherine born 1819, mar. Christian Sherk, died 1858
6. **Benjamin** born 1 Dec 1820, mar. **Priscilla Long**, died 27 April 1886
7. Andrew born 17 Jan 1822, mar. Eleanor Marie Burd, died 10 Oct 1909
8. Henry born 1825, mar. Ann Hobbs, died 1898
9. Mary born 1826, mar. Abraham Morningstar, died 1917
10. Peter born 1830, mar. 3 times, died 4 Jun 1895
11. Rebecca mar. Daniel Dobbler
12. Sarah born 1834, mar. Aaron Hobbs, died 1909

IX **Benjamin Sherk**, son of **Jacob**, was the 6th child and 4th son to be born to this Humberstone family and on 1 December 1820. His mother was 27 years old. He married **Priscilla Long** probably about 1843. **Priscilla** was born on 28 October 1823 at her parent's farm in Concession 3, Lot 17 & 19, Walpole Twp., Haldimand County which they had settled in 1814.

(Note that **Benjamin's** oldest brother, John, born in 1811, had settled in Concession 3, Walpole Twp. Perhaps his presence in Walpole and visits from younger brother, **Benjamin**, resulted in the **Sherk/Long** meeting and subsequent marriage!)

**Priscilla Long's** parents were **David Long** (1786-1870; died at 84 years) and **Dorothy Dennis** (1794-1889; died at 95 years). **Priscilla** was the fifth oldest of eleven

children, eight girls and three boys, who were born between 1815 and 1835. See the **LONG** chapter following.

Both **Benjamin** and **Priscilla** were the first of their generations in their respective families to have been born in Canada. **Benjamin's** father was born in Pennsylvania after the republic was formed. and **Priscilla's** father was born in Ireland and came to Canada in 1801 when he was 5 and came to Canada in 1801 when he was 15 years old. When he was 28 he married and took up a farm in Walpole Twp., Haldimand County, to the east of Norfolk County.

In about 1843 **Benjamin** and **Priscilla** started farming Concession 10 & 11, Lot 17 in South Dorchester Twp., Elgin County. At this time **Benjamin** also moved away from the Mennonite Church into which he was born and became a supporter of the Disciples Church which had a congregation at Concession 12, Lot 21, in Mapleton, Ontario, close to his farm. **Priscilla's** family was connected to the Baptist faith. He lived on this farm for 43 years; his wife for 48 years.

Between 1844 and 1855 five children were born to them, the two oldest being girls, Margaret born in 1844 and **Mary S.** born 28 February 1845. Three sons, John L., Jacob (Jake) and David A. Sherk. When **Benjamin** died in 1886 the three sons were ages 31 to 40 and occupied farms adjoining **Benjamin's** homestead. **Mary S.** was 41 years old and living in St. Thomas with her second husband, **Samuel Fraine** and Margaret was 42 and living in the township with her farmer husband, Archie Taylor.

**Benjamin** died of blood poisoning on 27 April 1886 in his 66th year. His wife **Priscilla** died on 6 November 1891 in her 69th year. Both are buried at the South Dorchester Necropolis Cemetery which is adjacent to the Mapleton Disciples Church.

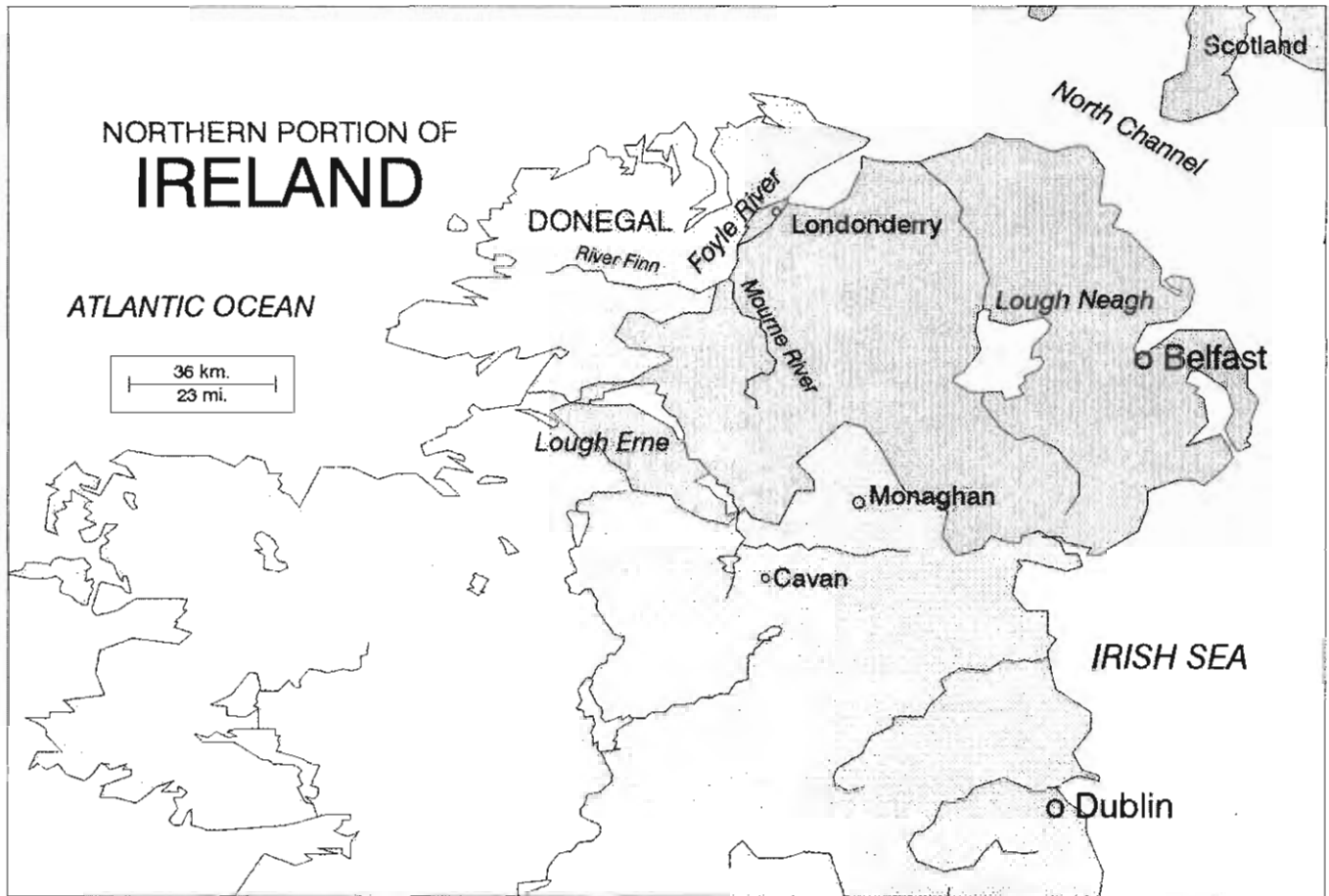
#### Family of Benjamin Sherk and Priscilla Long

##### Children:

1. Margaret born in 1844, mar. Archie Taylor of Belmont, Ontario
2. **Mary S.** born 28 Feb 1845, mar. 1st **Thomas Ballah**, 2nd Samuel Fraine; died 15 July 1887 in train wreck
3. John L. born 5 Dec 1846, mar. Martha Jane Gilbert; died 16 Sept 1887
4. **Jacob C. (Jake)** born 1852, mar. Lottie Luton; died 1933
5. David A. born 1852 or 55, mar. Oretta Finch; died 21 June 1899

#### THE LONG FAMILY - An Irish Connection

The marriage of **Benjamin Sherk** to **Priscilla Long** was the first Sherk deviation from the Mennonite clan. The Longs were Irish and, like the Sherks, had arrived in Canada at the turn of the century and, like the Sherks, been immigrants first to the United States. But unlike the Sherks the Long family had only remained in the new republic for a decade before heading north.



**Priscilla's** grandparents, **Patrick Long** and **Elizabeth Stewart** married in County Donegal about 1785. He had lived on the left side of the River Foyle, 11 miles south of Londonderry. When he migrated he left two brothers behind in County Donegal, William and James Long.

The marriage occurred when they were in their thirties. He was about 37 years old and she was 34. We know from their cemetery gravestones that **Patrick Long** was born in 1748 and **Elizabeth Stewart** was born in 1751. They had their first two children in Ireland before travelling to North America in about 1791. These were their first child, **David**, who was born 11 November 1786 and their second, Elizabeth (Betsy) who was born 14 May 1788.

The family initially went to Fort Pitt (now Pittsburgh) in the American Territories but by 1795 he was requesting a land grant in Upper Canada "between the Grand River and Long Point." There is a 1801 record of him settling in Woodhouse Twp., Norfolk County, Upper Canada. His land holdings in that township were:

On 10 January 1795: Lot 1, Conc. 18  
 On 1 July 1801: SW Lot 10, Conc. 1

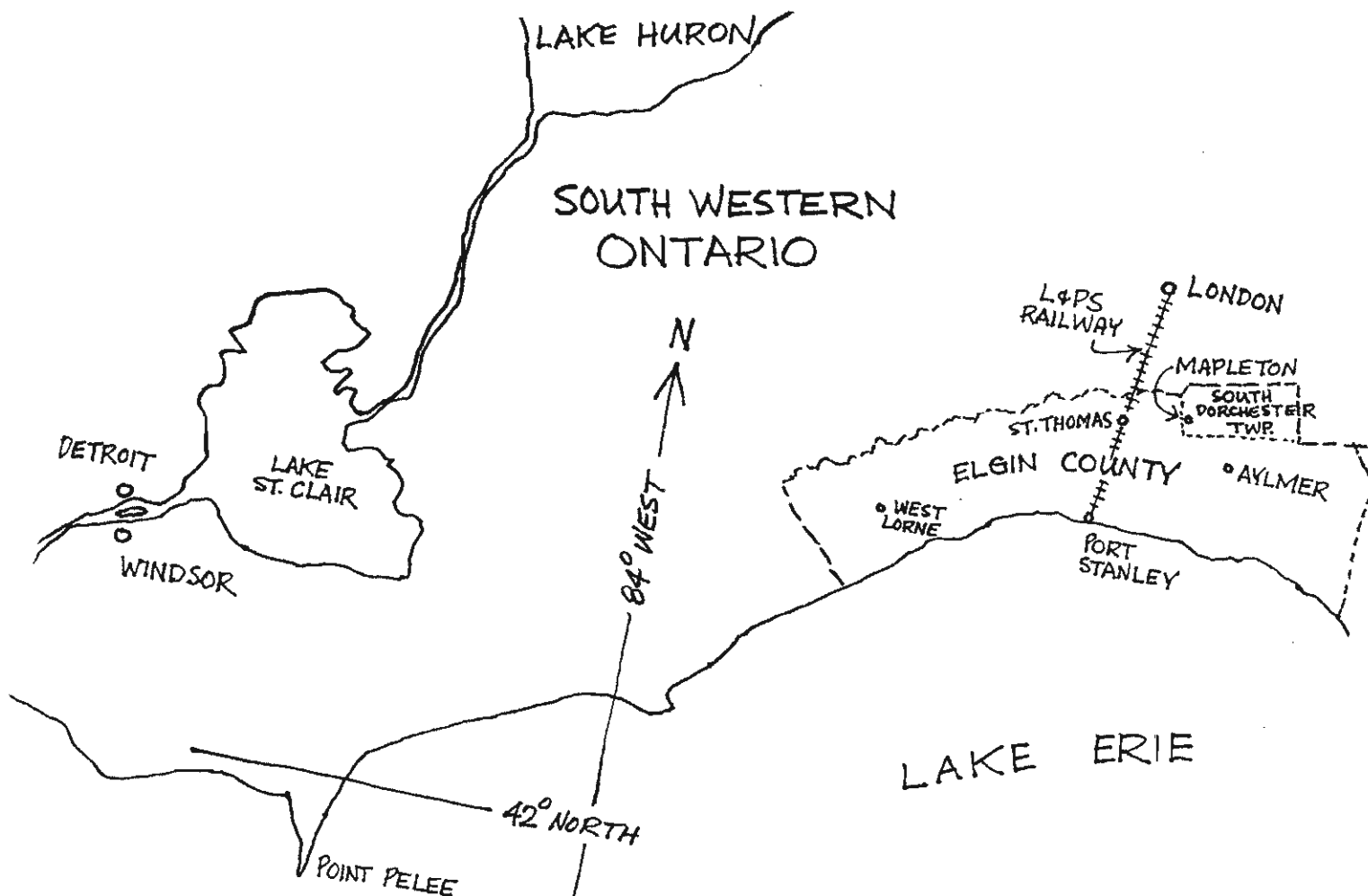
On 7 January 1807: W Lot 10, Conc. 1

While travelling to America a third child, Francis, was born on 1 February 1791 and a fourth, Margaret (Peggy), was born while in America, on 17 July 1794. Their last four children - they had a family of eight all of whom lived to adulthood - were born in Upper Canada. Their last child, Frances (Fanny) was born on 20 March 1805 when her mother was 54 years old. **Elizabeth** died five years later in April 1810 at 59 years of age. She was a widow for eight months; **Patrick** died on 7 August 1809. He is buried in the Doan's Hollow Cemetery, Woodhouse Twp.; her grave is probably there also.

#### Family of Patrick Long and Elizabeth Stewart

Children:

1. **David** born 11 Nov 1786, mar. **Dorothy Dennis**, died 30 Dec 1870
2. Elizabeth (Betsy) born 14 May 1788, mar. John Decow, died 27 Oct 1860
3. Francis born 1 Feb 1791, died 1 Mar 1818 at 27
4. Margaret (Peggy) born 17 July 1794, mar. Robt. Davis, died 6 Apr 1858



5. Mary (Polly) born 1 May 1797, mar. Ellis Buckley, died 24 Apr 1882
6. John Alexander born 2 Mar 1800, mar. Sarah Ann Willson, died 29 Dec 1859
7. Robt. Benjamin born 15 Sept 1802, died 20 Oct 1885
8. Frances (Fanny) born 20 Mar 1805, d.y.

Our ancestor, **David**, was single and 24 years old when orphaned. He is mentioned in his father's will filed on the 7th of January 1811. His siblings, all younger than he, ranged in age from 22 down to 5 years of age, with five being under 16 years of age. We don't know much about how the family survived the next few years; perhaps **David** and his sister Elizabeth as the oldest (she was 22 when her mother died) temporarily became the "heads of the **Long** household".

Shortly after his father's death **David** became involved in the War of 1812 as a soldier with General Brock. He served at Detroit and was awarded a medal for his efforts. At the close of the war in 1814 at 28 years of age he married **Dorothy Dennis** and settled on land on which he would remain for the rest of his life. This farm was east of Norfolk, in Haldimand County, Walpole Twp. and is described as "a strip of land on the west side of Cheapside Sideroad and stretching from the village to the next concession road north". On the property there is an old cemetery facing the side road. A branch of the Sandusky Creek runs through part of the farm and waterpower was used at one time to run some kind of mill. The farm buildings stood where the

road crosses the creek.

**David Long's** bride was **Dorothy Dennis** who was born on 16 April 1794 probably in Walpole Township. Before she married **David Long**, it is reported that she bore a child out of wedlock when she was perhaps only 14 years of age. This son was Robert Levi who stayed with his mother and took the Long surname after her marriage to **David**.

**David** and **Dorothy's** eleven children were born between 1815 and 1835. These children did not know their Long grandparents, both of whom were dead. We are not sure who **Dorothy's** parents were or where they lived. One speculation is that they were **Joseph Dennis** and **Elizabeth Wintermute** of Lot 15, Conc. 1, Humberstone Twp., Welland County (close to the Sherks!); **Joseph Dennis** was born about 1776 probably in the American colonies and his father, **Joseph Dennis, Sr.** had come to Upper Canada about 1788 with his wife and young family.

**Elizabeth Wintermute, Dorothy's** mother was possibly the daughter of **John Wintermute** of Butler's Rangers, Loyalist troops who operated throughout the revolution on the British side.

The Long's fifth child, **Priscilla**, born 23 October 1823, is the one who interests us because in 1843 at 20 years of age she married **Benjamin Sherk** who had recently moved from Humberstone Twp. The bride's parents were



undoubtedly present at the wedding. **David** was 57 years old and **Dorothy** was 49 years old. **Priscilla's** oldest sibling was Elizabeth (Betsy) born in 1815 and her youngest was Nancy Anne, born in 1835 and therefore only 8 years old at the time of her sister's wedding.

**David Long** lived into his 85th year dying on 30 December 1870. He was buried in the Cheapside Baptist Cemetery in Walpole Twp. His wife **Dorothy Dennis** lived for 19 years as a widow, dying on 26 August 1889 in her 96th year. (If he was still alive, her first child, Robert Levi, would have been over 80 years of age.) She was buried beside her husband in the Cheapside Cemetery. She lived in Walpole Twp. for at least 75 years, the last 23 of which were as part of the new Province of Ontario in the new Dominion of Canada.

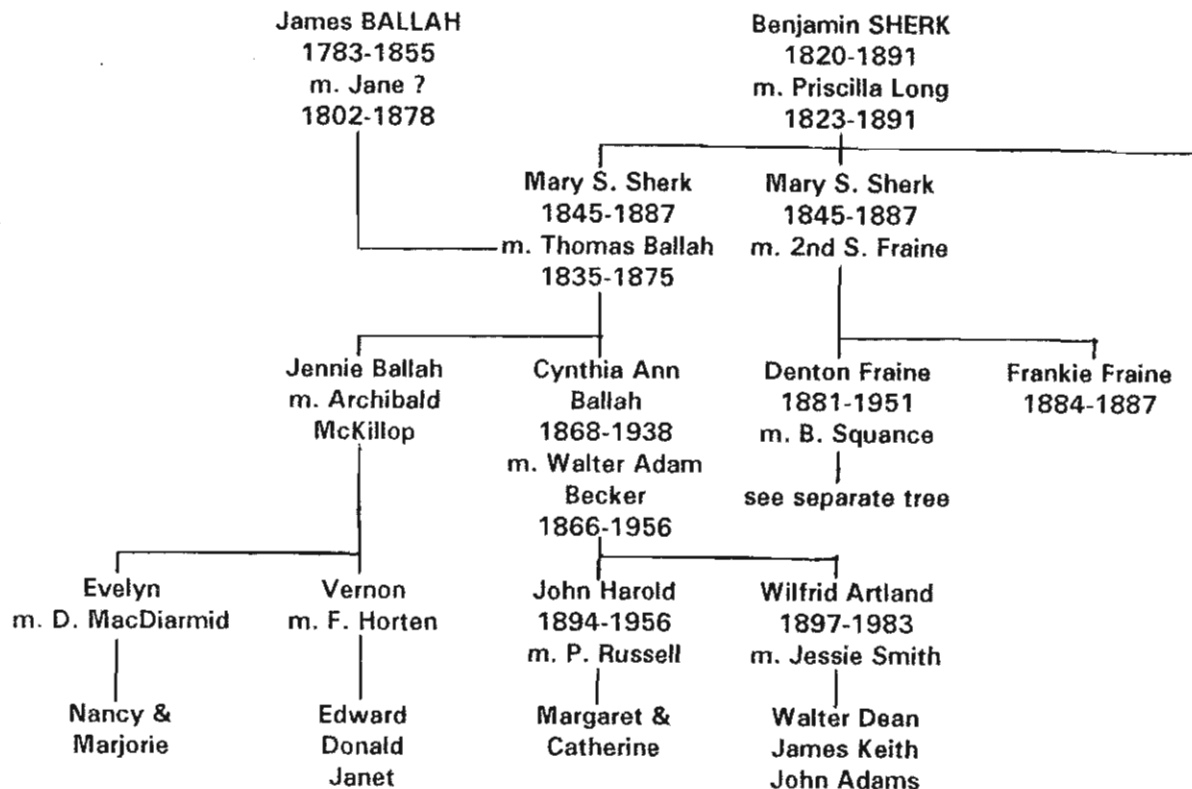
One of the disadvantages of longevity is that one has to hear the bad news about an ever-increasing number of descendants. **Dorothy Dennis** was 93 years of age when she heard the sad news of her granddaugh-ter's death in the 1887 St. Thomas train wreck. **Mary Sherk Ballah Fraine** was the 2nd daughter of **Dorothy's** daughter, **Priscilla Long**. Another interesting longevity item: in addition to having a grandmother who lived to 96 years of age, **Mary Sherk's** great grand-mother, **Catherine Learn** also lived to 96 years of age. See the **LEARN** chapter following.

#### Family of David Long and Dorothy Dennis

1. (not by **David**) Robert Levi born 1 Sept 1808 - raised in the Long family
2. Elizabeth born 21 Apr 1815, mar. Jos Silverthorne, died 5 Mar 1901
3. Jane born 7 Nov 1817, died 7 Jan 1821
4. Margaret born 18 Mar 1819
5. Frances Jane (Fanny) born 24 Dec 1821, died 15 Mar 1898
6. **Priscilla** born 23 Oct 1823, mar. **Benjamin Sherk**, died 6 Nov 1891
7. Mary born 22 June 1825, mar. Atkinson
8. John Joseph born 31 Mar 1827, mar. Mary Stillwell, died 24 Apr 1867
9. Robert born 1 Sept 1828
10. Lucy born 31 Aug 1829
11. David born 21 Dec 1831, died 27 Jan 1908
12. Nancy Anne born 12 July 1835, died 20 Oct 1909

#### Priscilla Long's and Benjamin Sherk's Family

1. Margaret Sherk, born in 1844; the oldest; she married Archie Taylor of Belmont, Ontario on 3 October 1861. (A granddaughter, Mrs. Clara Welden of 140 Lorne Avenue, Belmont, Ontario was over 80 years of age in 1977).
2. **Mary S. Sherk**, born 28 February 1845
3. John L. Sherk, born 5 December 1846; oldest son, 3rd child; married Martha Jane Gilbert on 29 December



1869. (A son was Elmo Sherk. A granddaughter, Mrs. J. Bell lived at 71 Park Avenue, St. Thomas in 1977).

4. **Jacob (Jake) Sherk**, born 1852; of whom more later.
5. David A. Sherk, born in 1852 or 1855; youngest child; married Oretta Finch on 26 September 1874. (Son Gordon; grandchildren Maurice and Betty born after 1909).

This paper is limited to descendants of just two of these children:

**Mary S. Sherk**, born 28 February 1845; 2nd child and 2nd daughter

**Jacob (Jake) C. Sherk**, born 1852; 4th child and 2nd son.

These two offspring are interesting to me for a number of reasons. There were no grandchildren of **Mary and Jake** who carried the Sherk name. One of **Jake's** daughters, **Norma Sherk McKillop**, took as her second husband the widowed husband of her 1st cousin, **Cynthia Ann Ballah**, daughter of **Mary**. This means that 10 of the 24 great grandchildren of **Mary and Jake** have **Norma Sherk** as either a grandmother or step-grandmother. Further, **Mary** married twice and had two families. The two Ballah girls from her first marriage, Jen and **Cynthia**, had a step brother, **John M. Denton Fraine** who had 6 grandchildren all now living in British Columbia. These six people are therefore "step second cousins" of the ten grandchildren of Jen and **Cynthia Ballah** all of whom stayed in the eastern part of the continent.

The twenty-four great grandchildren of **Mary and Jake**

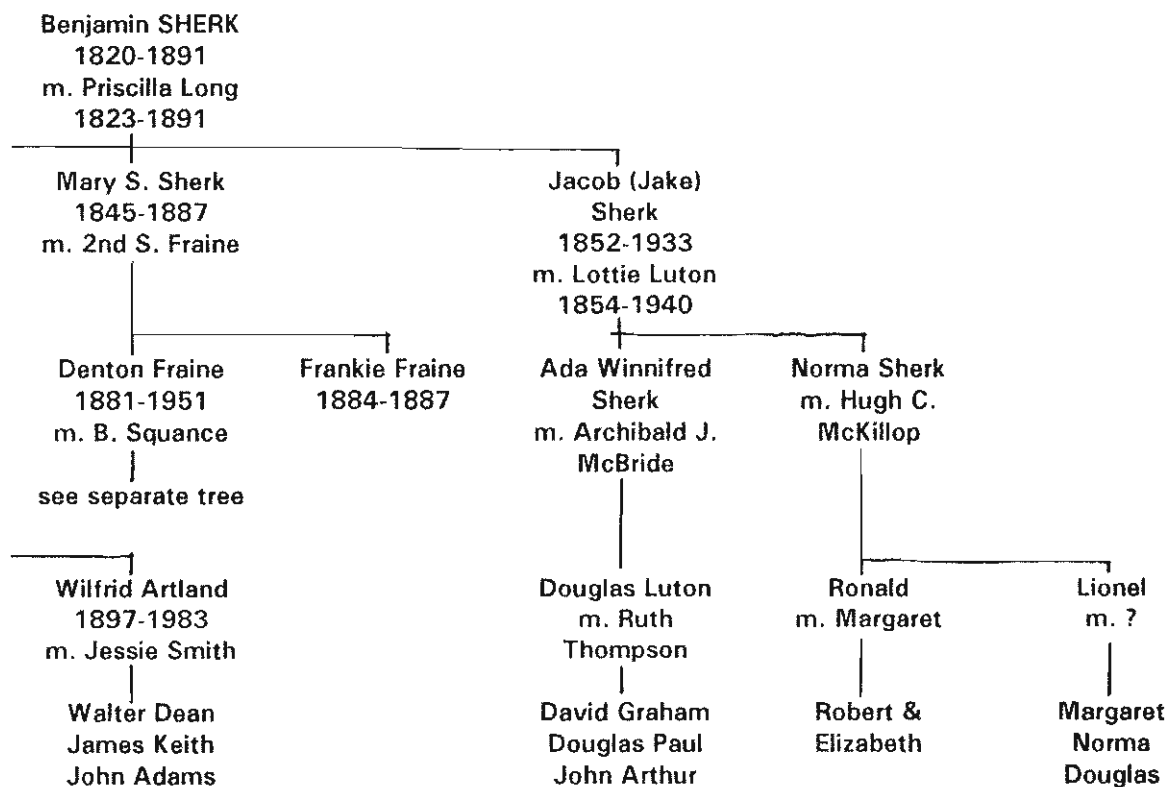
**Sherk** will find this paper of special interest. There is more detail about **Mary's** second daughter by her first husband because **Cynthia Ann Ballah** (1868-1938) is my paternal grandmother. I apologize for what may appear as a lop-sided account.

**Mary S. Sherk** (we don't know what the S. stands for) was born on her father **Benjamin Sherk's** farm in South Dorchester Twp., Elgin County on 28 February 1845. When she was 21, on 16 (or 25) May 1865 Elder Edmund Sheppard of the Christian Disciple Church officiated to her marriage to **Thomas Ballah**, a 29 year old neighbour. They probably lived on the Ballah farm, West half, Lot 18, Conc. 12, South Dorchester immediately adjacent to **Benjamin Sherk's** farm which in 1858 is listed as the North half, Lot 17, Conc. 11. At the time of this wedding, the brides' parents were 45 and 42 years of age. **Thomas Ballah's** father, **James**, had died in 1855 but his mother **Jane ?** (surname not known) was present. **Jane** was 63 years old and held title on the Ballah farm in Lot 18.

### THE BALLAH FAMILY

An 1851 census records **James Ballah's** birth place as Ireland. The death certificate of son John, born 16 August 1835, says that he was born in Monaghan County, Ireland. We conclude therefore that **James Ballah** was from Monaghan County, Ireland and probably born there in 1783. His grave marker says that he died on 19 November 1855 at 72 years of age. From her grave marker we learn that **Jane**, his wife, was 76 years old at her death on 23





October 1878 so she was born in 1802 and 19 years younger than her husband.

In trying to learn when the Ballahs came to America, a search of passenger lists (J. D. Hackett, Irish Passenger Lists) revealed three men, among others, arrived in New York City on Ship Lorenzo from Belfast, Ireland on 2 May 1815:

James Ballagh from Ballybay Co., Monaghan, Ireland  
Robert Ballagh from Ballybay Co., Monaghan, Ireland  
Robert E. Ballagh from Ballybay Co., Monaghan, Ireland

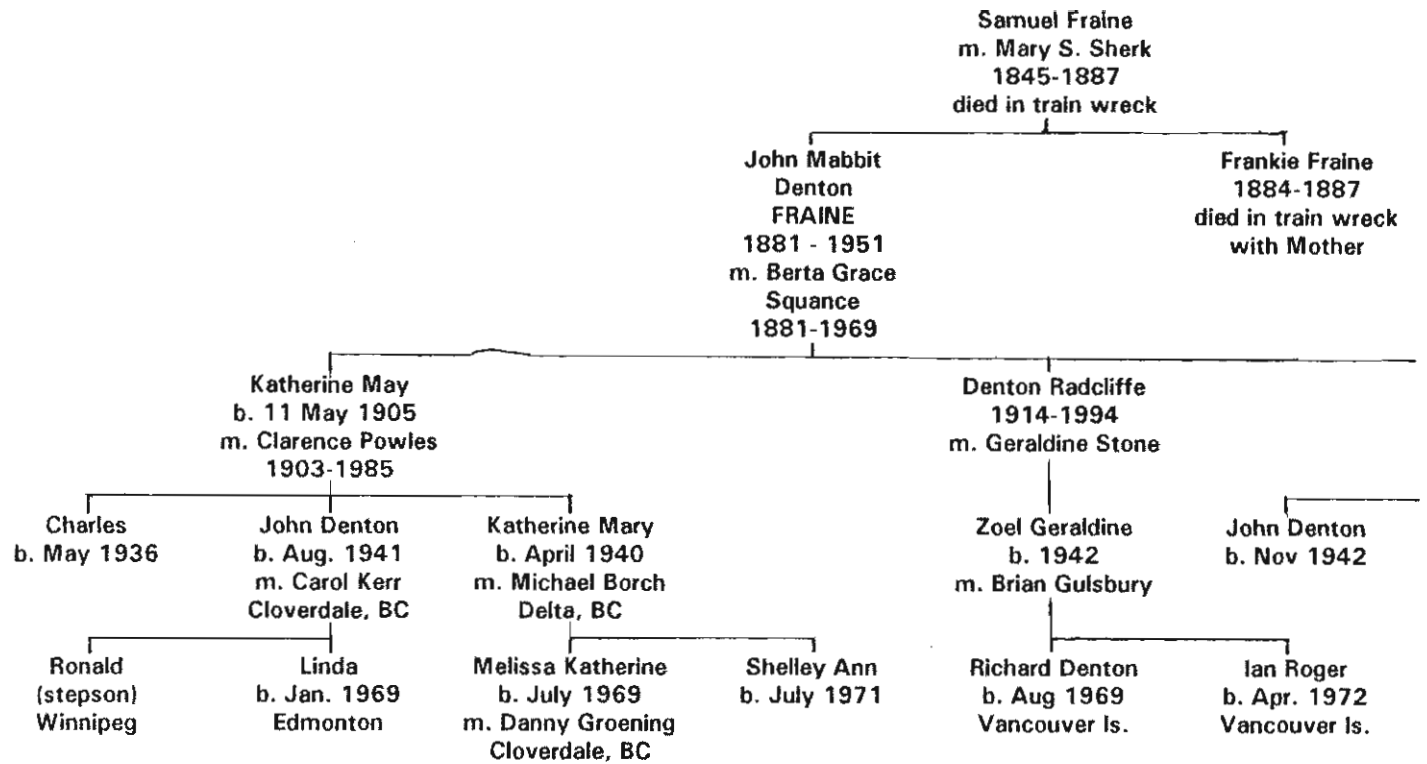
If this was our **James Ballah** of Elgin County, Canada, he would have been 32 years old on the ship Lorenzo. This was ten years **before** son John Ballah was born in Monaghan, Ireland. **James Ballah (Ballagh)** may have migrated twice. He may have come in 1815 with a brother Robert and nephew Robert E., returned to Ireland sometime later and married **Jane** about 1820. They had at least two children in Ireland, their first, William (1821-1861; buried in Mapleton) and John (1825-1880, died in South Dorchester). Their two younger sons, **Thomas**, born 1 June 1835, and Robert, born in 1841, may also have been born in Ireland. We don't know. All are buried in the Necropolis Cemetery beside the Disciples Church just east of Mapleton, South Dorchester Twp.

**James Ballah** must have arrived sometime before November 1855 because on the 19th of that month he died

in his 73rd year in South Dorchester Twp. and he was buried at the Necropolis. His sons were 34, 30, 20 (**Thomas**) and 14. William and John were married. The two younger sons were single.

A research trip to Monaghan County, Ireland in September 1989 provided no information about **Jane's** surname, the marriage date or location, the births of their sons or any thing to help with this genealogy. The Ballagh name is not common but is associated with Monaghan. MacLysaght's publication on Irish Families says that in ancient times the name is derived from Irish *ballach* (specked, marked). In more modern times the surname is associated chiefly with Ulster, especially Co. Monaghan. A Ballagh researcher living in Belfast confirmed that she too had failed to turn up anything new or useful about the comings and goings of Ballaghs in the 19th century.

**Jane's** husband predeceased her by 23 years and so did three of her four sons: William, her oldest died in 1861 in his 41st year, five years after his father; Robert, her youngest died in 1871 at only 30 years of age; our ancestor, **Thomas**, died on 23 July 1875 in his 41st year. We don't know why he died so young. The last three years of her life **Jane** only had one son, John Ballah, with her. He died in his 56th year in 1880. His three brothers all died before they reached their 41st birthday! **Jane** does not seem to have had a happy life watching the men in her family all die early. She probably lived more than 30 of her 76 years in Ontario.



She is the only one of my eight great great grand-mothers of the author whose surname is unknown.

#### Family of James Ballah and Jane (?)

**James** born c1783 probably in Monaghan Co., Ireland, emigrated to Ontario, died 19 Nov 1855 at 72, buried Necropolis, Mapleton

**Jane (?)** born c1802 in Ireland (probably Monaghan Co.), bore 4 children between 1821 and 1841, died 23 October 1878 at 76, buried Necropolis, Mapleton.

Children:

1. William born 29 Mar 1821, mar. Parali Porttom, died 31 Mar 1861 at 40.
2. John born 16 Aug 1825, mar. Elizabeth Rutherford, died 29 Mar 1880 at 55.
3. **Thomas** born 1 June 1835, mar. **Mary S. Sherk**, died 23 July 1875 at 40.
4. Robert born c1841, mar. (?), died 11 Dec 1871 at 30.

#### Mary Sherk's First Family

During the ten year marriage of **Thomas Ballah** and **Mary S. Sherk** two daughters were born, **Jennie** in about 1866 and **Cynthia Ann** on 24 March 1868. They were probably born on the Ballah farm then owned by their grandmother, **Jane**. The family probably lived with her until **Thomas Ballah's** death in the summer of 1875. The girls were 9 and 7 years of age when their father died. We don't know if the widow **Mary Sherk Ballah** left the Ballah farm

immediately or whether she continued to live with her mother-in-law for another three years until **Jane's** death in 1878. We have one report that as a 34 year old widow in 1879 she had relocated to Alma Street in St. Thomas, was maintaining a house and taking in boarders. By that time only her brother-in-law, John Ballah, remained of the Ballah clan and he died in March of 1880. After that time no one remained in Ontario who was born with the Ballah name except Jane's two daughters.

#### Family of Thomas Ballah and Mary S. Sherk

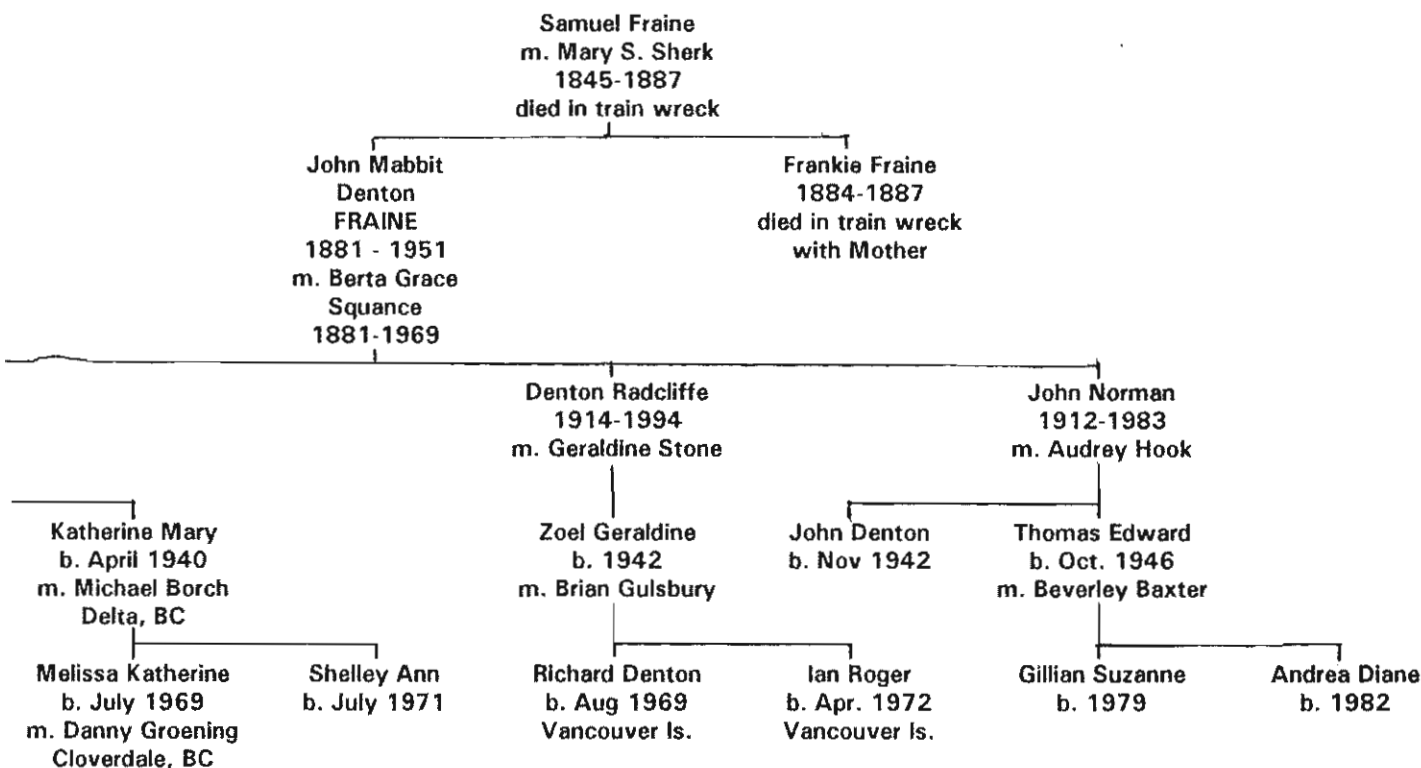
**Thomas** born 1 June 1835 probably in South Dorchester Twp., Elgin Co., died 23 July 1875 at 40 years and 1 month; buried Necropolis, Mapleton.

**Mary S.** born 28 Feb 1845 in South Dorchester Twp., bore 4 children by two husbands between 1866 and 1884, died 15 July 1887 in train wreck, buried Necropolis, Mapleton.

Children:

1. Jennie (Jean, Jen) born c1866, mar. Archibald McKillop
2. **Cynthia Ann** born 24 Mar 1868, mar. **Walter Adam Becker**, died 18 Mar 1938

**Cynthia Ann Ballah** married on 24 February 1892 and the ceremony took place at her uncle **Jake Sherk's** home on the farm in South Dorchester Twp. The undated newspaper announcement of the wedding mentions that her groom, **Walter Adam Becker**, was the Michigan Central Railway (MCR) in West Lorne. We know that he took up



that appointment on 2 December 1891, six and a half years after he started to work for MCR on 16 May 1885. Following a honeymoon in Chicago the new couple set up housekeeping in "Aunt McMillan's cottage" and paid rent of \$4.50 per month. They remained in West Lome for 28 years and then moved to St. Thomas in March of 1920 where he was freight agent until his retirement on 31 October 1938. He had worked for the MCR for 52 years and five and a half months.

**Mary Sherk and Thomas Ballah** had four grandchildren but they never met any of them. All were born after his death in 1875 and her death in 1887. **Jennie Ballah McKillop** and **Archibald McKillop** had a daughter, Evelyn who married Douglas McDiarmid and a son, Vernon who married Frances Horton.

**Cynthia Ann Ballah Becker and Walter Adam Becker** had two sons, **John Harold Becker**, born on 2 November 1894, and **Wilfrid Artland (Fred) Becker** who was born on 10 January 1897. **Fred Becker** is the author's father.

### THE FRAINE FAMILIES

Following the death of her first husband in 1875 **Mary Sherk** Ballah married **Samuel Fraine**, a St. Thomas master tailor. We assume that the marriage took place about 1879 because their first child was born in January

1881. This marriage brought together a total of seven children from the previous marriages of Mary Sherk and Samuel Fraine some of whom must have lived under the same roof in the St. Thomas home after the 1879 marriage.

In order of birth the Samuel Fraine offspring were:

With his first wife, **Sarah (?) Wilmot**

1. Harry Samuel Fraine, born 1853 and therefore 26 years old when his father married **Mary Sherk**. He was probably in the United States marking his career as a tailor by 1879. He married late, probably in 1896 or 97 when in his 40's and settled in Vicksburg, Virginia. His mother was Samuel's first wife, Sarah (?) Wilmot who died in child birth in 1853.

With his second wife, **sister of Sarah (?) Wilmot**.

2. Wilmot (Mittie) Fraine, born in 1863
3. Jennie Fraine, born in 1865
4. Harriet (Hattie) Fraine, born in 1867
5. Mary (May) Fraine, born in 1869. These four girls were between 10 and 16 when their father married a 3rd time.

### The First Two Fraine Marriages to Wilmot Sisters

The five children that Samuel Fraine had before marrying **Mary Sherk Ballah** are the subject of a separate chapter

which outlines only those children and their descendants. There is no blood relationship between these Fraine descendants and the other families mentioned in this monograph. This brief chapter is included for interest only and is not researched or documented in any depth. All of the information displayed here has been received from either Diane Martin Spohn or Katherine Fraine Powles.

### Samuel Fraine's Third Family with Mary Sherk Ballah

Before her marriage to Samuel Fraine **Mary Sherk Ballah** had two daughters both of whom were living with their widowed mother when she married Fraine in 1879.

In all likelihood these six girls (numbers 2 to 5 in the list above and the two Ballah girls) made up the new Fraine household in 1879 when Samuel Fraine married for the third time. Samuel was 42 years old and his new wife was 34 years old in 1879.

**Mary Sherk Ballah** bore Samuel Fraine two sons.

8. **John Mabbit Denton Fraine** (referred to as Denton), born in January of 1881
9. Frankie born in 1884. Frankie died tragically with his mother in the 1887 train wreck.

**Denton Fraine**, the half brother on his mother's side of Jennie and **Cynthia Ann Ballah** and half brother on his father's side of the five Fraine offspring named above, was the only surviving member of this union and was six years old when his mother and brother died. His father was 50 years of age and widowed for the third time; he never remarried.

**Denton's** half sisters closest to him in age were Mary (May) Fraine who was 18 at the time of the train wreck and **Cynthia Ann Ballah** who was 19 when her mother died. It is likely that only these two younger girls remained at home for any period of time after Mary Sherk died. These two girls would have been the six year old Denton's "mothers" for a few years following the 1887 tragedy.

The four older female children who were probably not living in the Fraine household at the time of the accident were Jennie Ballah who would have been about 22, Harriet (Hattie) Fraine about 20, Jennie Fraine about 22 and Wilmot (Mittie) Fraine about 24 in 1887. Harry Samuel Fraine, Samuel Fraine's first child was 34 years old at the time of the accident and long gone from the family home.

Denton Fraine shares in all of the family connections of the Sherk line that Jennie and Cynthia Ann Ballah do. This story therefore is as relevant for Denton Fraine's descendants as for all the other grandchildren and great grandchildren of Benjamin Sherk and Priscilla Long. There are seven great grandchildren of Mary Sherk and Samuel Fraine and it is to them that this part of the monograph is dedicated.

### Family of Samuel Fraine and Mary S. Sherk

**Samuel** born in Devon, England, mar. twice before marriage to **Mary S. Sherk**.

**Mary S.** born 28 Feb 1845 in South Dorchester Twp., bore 4 children by two husbands between 1866 and 1884, died 15 July 1887 in train wreck, buried Necropolis, Mapleton.  
Children:

1. **Denton** born 22 Jan 1881, mar. Bertha Grace Squance, died 4 Jan 1951
2. Frankie born c1884, died 15 July 1887 in train wreck with mother

### The Train Wreck and Mary Sherk's Death

Tragedy struck on a summer day in 1887. At 7:30 pm on Friday evening, the 15th of July, **Mary Sherk Ballah Fraine** was returning from a trip to Port Stanley on a London and Port Stanley excursion train. The train which was

"loaded down with people rushed headlong into a special freight train which was crossing the L&PS track near the Michigan Central Railway station (in the heart of downtown St. Thomas and only a few yards south of the main street) and almost instantly the wreck was a mass of flames."

Included in the 12 dead in the wreck were **Mary Sherk Fraine** and her three year old son, Frankie Fraine. Two cars of "petroleum" on the freight had ignited and flames spread through the excursion train very quickly. Half an hour or so after the impact one of the oil tanks exploded "buming and scorching hundreds of persons and causing panic in the great crowd that had gathered." "Besides the killed a very large number were injured by being burned or run over by horses and hose carts or crushed by the crowd. The number (of injured) is something over fifty." After the accident another man died of his wounds.

**Samuel Fraine**, the tailor from Devon, father of seven and step-father to two, was a widow for the third time! The crash had taken his wife of 7 years and his three year old son. **Denton Fraine** was six and a half years old when his 42 year old mother died. **Denton's** step sister, **Cynthia Ann Ballah** (the author's grandmo-ther) had turned 19 the previous March. About the same time or shortly after **Jennie (Jean) Ballah** (also nickna-med **Jen**) was married to Archibald McKillop. They settled for a time in West Lorne, a few miles west of St. Thomas.

On the 17th of July, two days after the accident, the *Tillsonburg Liberal* ran a long article about the accident and the aftermath events in St. Thomas. It makes sad reading. The prose is the purple shade popular in the Victorian period and very dramatic. It is reprinted below in its entirety.

(The newspaper account)

### Eleven Persons Cremated

One of the most appalling and heartrending railway accidents that has ever fallen to the lot of newspapers to

chronicle, and one which will be long remembered by almost everyone in the country and to a great many the remembrance of which will be carried to the grave with them, in company with sorrowful hearts, happened at St. Thomas about 7:30 on Friday evening last.

A special freight train on the MCR (Michigan Central Railway) was crossing the London & Port Stanley track near the MCR station when an excursion train from Port Stanley loaded down with people from St. Thomas and London, rushed into it headlong, striking the freight a few cars back from the engine and almost instantly the wreck was a mass of flames. Two cars of Petroleum on the freight train became ignited and the flames spread with such rapidity that in a very short time nearly the whole neighbourhood was in a blaze rendering it impossible to approach the scene of the crushed and burning excursionists.

The firemen of St. Thomas were soon on the spot but for over an hour could do nothing but confine the flames as far as possible to the buildings and cars that were already burning. Engines approached the wreck from three directions and pulled the burning cars which still remained on the track out of the heat and the fire in these was soon extinguished.

As the firemen were rapidly gaining control over the fire in the wreck, one of the oil tanks exploded with a terrific crash, burning and scorching hundreds of persons and causing a panic in the great crowd that had gathered. Women and children fainted and were carried off in all directions, some with broken limbs and doctors enough could not be found to equal the emergency.

The following is a list of the names of those who were killed, numbering a round dozen who took their last excursion trip on the ill-fated train:

Engineer Harry Donnelly, London  
Mrs. John Baynes, London  
Edna Baynes, London, aged 11  
Vina Baynes, London, aged 7  
Lylia Baynes, aged 11 months  
**Mrs. S. Fraine, wife of Samuel Fraine, St. Thomas**  
**Frankie Fraine, St. Thomas, aged 3**  
Mr. S. G. Zealand, St. Thomas, clerk for J. W.  
Mickieborough  
Annie Zealand, St. Thomas, aged 2  
Mrs. J. Smither, St. Thomas, wife of John Smither, dry  
goods merchant  
Robbie Smither, St. Thomas, aged 3 months  
Herman Ponsford, fireman

Besides the killed a very large number were injured by being burned or run over by horses and hose carts or crushed in the crowd. The number is something over 50.

The L&PS Railway track crosses the Michigan Central at right angles almost in the centre of St. Thomas. Before reaching this crossing there is a slight curve and as the train rounded this Engineer Harry Donnelly, one of the oldest,

best and most experienced drivers on the road, observed a Michigan Central oil train across the track. To reverse his engine and sound on brakes was the work of an instant. But the heavy train failed to answer to the brake and rushed on to its destruction. The brave engineer never left his post for an instant. When the crash came his hand was still on the throttle and when the broken and shattered engine was overturned and hurled back into the cars following, he was buried beneath the debris. Harry Donnelly was never seen alive again. His burned and bruised body was recovered from the wreck some hours later.

Within two minutes from the crash the flames had entirely enveloped the engine, baggage car and adjacent freight cars and were greedily devouring the forward passenger car in which were still imprisoned men, women and children. At the forward end of the car where the fire was greedily creeping several women were imprisoned by broken seats. The rescuers tore out the windows and literally pulled the prisoners from the very jaws of death. Those who did this noble service say that not a soul in that car was lost. If this be true the victims must all have been on the front platform. It is a certainty, however, that some of them were in the car as among the missing are ones who were seen sitting on the front seats.

Up to this time no one had any conception of the true nature of the tragedy. The fearful flames fed by the oil and wooden cars effectively prevented all investigation and kept the crowd at a respectful distance. Those of the injured who had been succoured were promptly taken into the houses that abutted on the scene where their wounds and burns were attended to by the many physicians present. To the friends of these it was a positive relief from the horrible uncertainty of the hour to know at least that their fate was not that of instant death within the funeral fire that now lighted the heavens for miles around.

All that could be done was to prevent the fire's spread, it appearing probably that the Dake House and Elliott & Reath's stable would fall before its steady advance. On these and adjacent buildings the firemen played while dozens of men ascended the roofs and kept them drenched with water handed up by the pail brigades. By half past seven warehouses No. 1 and 2, two large coal sheds and Campbell's house were beyond saving. Then came the dreadful sequel of the holocaust of half an hour before. The fates had not yet worked their worst. Without warning in the twinkling of an eye the heavens, black until that moment with densest smoke, were illuminated as by a flash of lightning, a dull smothered sound smote the ear and all eyes turned upward at the ominous sound beheld a sight once beautiful and horrible. All along the side of the cloud of smoke which edged it like a funeral pall rolled upward as a unfolding scroll or the rising billows or a sea of fire, a flame of saffron and of crimson. Reaching its highest point it spread until it appeared to cover all who looked upon it. But they who looked stood only for a moment and then with one accord fled for their lives. Men, women and children fled, their object being to reach a place where the horrible-looking flames could not touch. The crowd instinctively

knew that the oil tank's burning contents would descend on them [undecipherable]... although its sound, knocked scores of people upon the streets and broke the heavy plate glasses in the windows of the stores on Talbot Street, a full block away. Hundreds more tumbled to the ground as they rushed, terrified and panic-stricken from the spot. And then the fiery stream came down carrying with it death and horrible suffering.

On the roof of Elliott & Reath's livery stable stood Herman Ponsford. Him the flames enveloped as it sped on its way and for a moment he stood there a statue of fire. Then his friends bade him jump and down he came his coat being torn from his back as soon as he reached the ground and the flames extinguished. Horribly burned so as to make the men sick who looked at him, he was yet able to walk and supported by two friends he went to the Dake House. Passing up Railway Street, in all his pain the poor fellow was still able to recognize his friend and meeting Mr. Upper he called "Good bye, Upper". From Dake House he was conveyed to his own home on Hughes Street where he was attended by Dr. Kaine. At an early hour Saturday he died.

The fireman on the ill-fated excursion train, Mr. Henry Angles, has been in the employ of the railroad company (for) a number of years and has acted as a fireman on a number of GTR (Grand Trunk Railway) branches. He said:

*"The run was made to St. Thomas in between twenty and twenty-five minutes. When within about a mile of the MCR crossing I noticed that the signal was out for the train to stop but the engineer did not try to apply the air brakes until within about a quarter of a mile of the semaphore. Then the engineer informed me that the air brakes did not apparently have any effect on the train. I left the cab and went to the tender to see if the air valve there was all right and I found that it was. I then jumped on top of the baggage car and put on the brake there. The train was now nearing the crossing at a lively rate and I saw that my services would be of not further avail and prepared to jump. Climbing down upon the tender I sprang from it onto the ground. I did not sustain any serious injuries. I alighted on my knees which were skinned and somewhat stiffened for some time but these did not pain me to any appreciable extent when I arrived home. After leaving the cab (of the engine) to apply the (hand) brakes I saw no more of the engineer until he was taken out from under the boiler of the engine. The head was severed from the trunk and parts of his arms and legs were torn off. The flesh of his body and limbs was burned and scalded to a crisp - in a word, it was impossible to anyone to recognize him at all."*

The engineer had stuck bravely to his task to the last and had his brakes not refused to answer, the disaster would have been avoided. He reversed the engine and did everything in his power to prevent the collision. Donnelly was a most careful and experienced engineer and has been

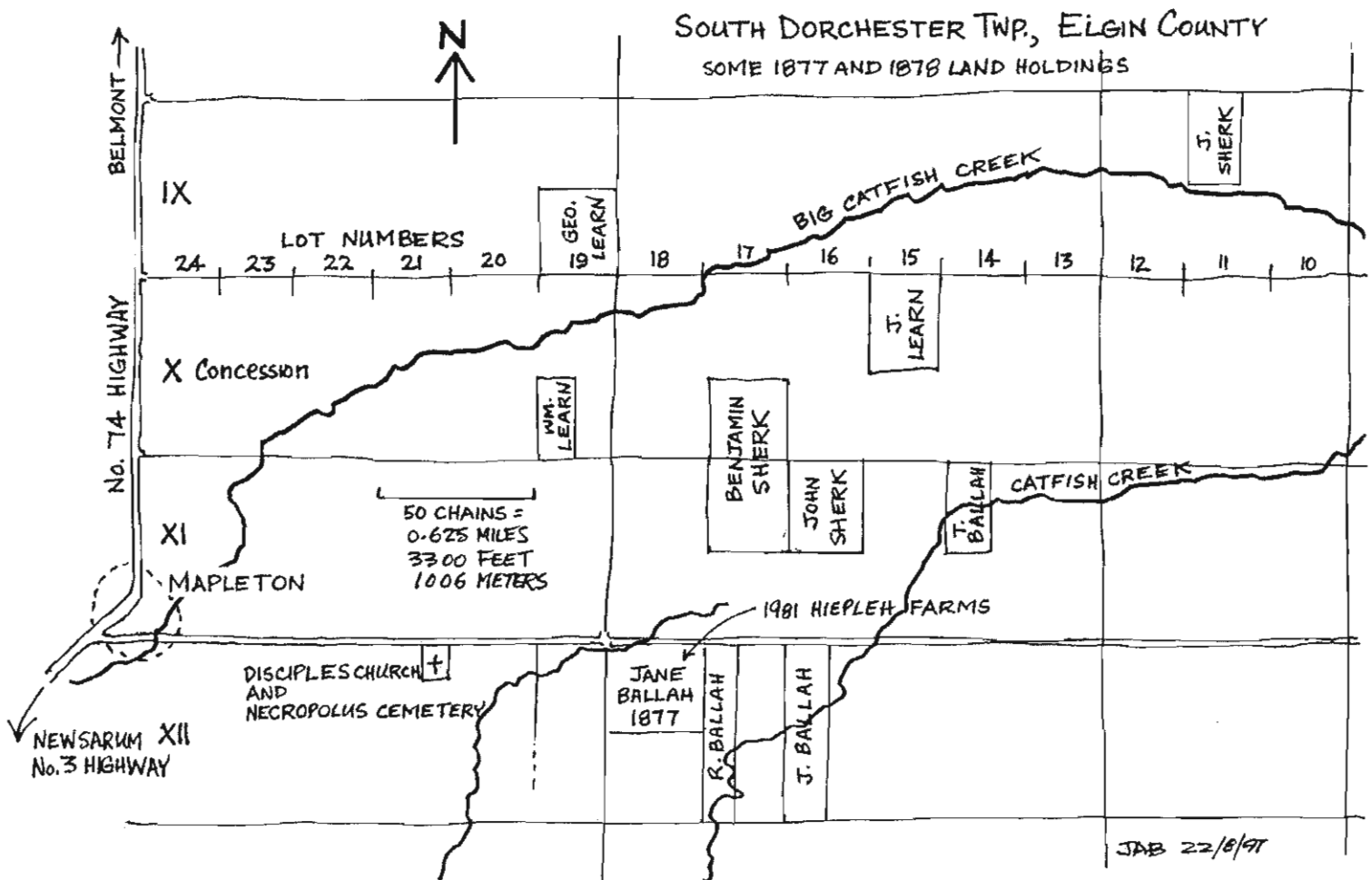
in the employ of the company for a number of years.

Mrs. Zealand whose husband and child were killed and herself so badly injured that her life was despaired of, was told on Saturday evening that her husband and child had perished in the wreck. The fact had previously been kept from her, it being thought that, in view of her low condition, the result might be fatal. She heard the news calmly and replied that she knew all along that they were dead - that as soon as the collision occurred the interior of the end of the car was a seething furnace and a spire of red flames shot up through the roof hiding her husband from view. She succeeded in clambering partially out of the window where she hung by her hands until the wood-work burned away, her hands burning with it to a crisp. While hanging onto the sill she could see Mrs. Smither who occupied the same seat, her babe still clasped in her hands not three feet away, sitting upright in her seat completely enveloped in a fiery maelstrom, clasping her offspring tightly to her breast as if to shield it from its impending doom. Merciful unconsciousness came to her relief and blotted out the absolutely agonizing sight and she fell to the ground just as the horrible surging, encroaching wall of fire swept past the seat she had occupied and enveloped Mrs. Baynes and her three children who were seated on the opposite side of the car a short distance further back.

Never before in its history did such a cloud of sorrow hover over St. Thomas as did on Saturday and Sunday (16 and 17 July 1887). Hundreds from the surround country drove in to visit the scene of the disaster. On the day after the accident the excitement ran high but Sabbath brought the citizens for the first time since the calamity to realize the dreadfulness of the disaster which had occurred, the awfulness of the affliction with which they had been visited and the sad and solemn ordeal through which they had passed. It was a day of mourning around many a hearthstone and a day of suffering in many a once happy home. Home circles that had in the past been unbroken would in the future have a vacant chair and hearts that knew not the throb of sorrow were now ringing in despair. Loved ones were taken without a last, long look, without a parting kiss, without a fond farewell. There was no friend near in their hour of trial, no hand to soothe, no voice to cheer but all along they had to grapple that bold monster, Death, who ounced upon his victims and crushed them to earth. 'Twas not until the quietness of Sunday that citizens began to realize all that had happened and bereaved ones to comprehend the immensity of the pall of bereavement which had been so suddenly flung over them. Well might it be designed a Day of Mourning.

During the afternoon no less than five bodies were conveyed to the cemetery and laid to rest in the silent tomb. Citizens returned from one funeral to take their place in the next procession and proceed again to the grave yard. In different churches sermons were preached bearing on the disaster.

*(end of newspaper account)*



### SOUTH DORCHESTER TOWNSHIP

About halfway between St. Thomas and Aylmer on No. 3 Highway at the town of New Sarum county road 74 intersects and heads north to Belmont. Not far north of No. 3 the small hamlet of Mapleton lies alongside Big Catfish Creek at the intersection of an east-west road between Concession XI and XII. This small part of South Dorchester Township, Elgin Co. holds a special interest for Sherk descendants and particularly those who are descended from Mary Sherk's three surviving children.

Four lots east of Mapleton in Lot 21 on the south side of the road stands a sizeable red brick structure, the Church of Christ Disciples Church and beside it is the Necropolis Mapleton Cemetery. This graveyard is remarkable for all descendants of Jennie Ballah McKillop and Cynthia Ann Ballah Becker because it contains the graves of their parents and both sets of grandparents. Six direct ancestors in two generations whose death dates spanned the period from 1855 to 1891 is a very unusual concentration of graves. The fact that all graves are well marked and easily identified

makes this cemetery even more remarkable.

For all of the grandchildren of Jennie McKillop and Cynthia Ann Becker this cemetery holds the graves of two great grandparents:

**Thomas Ballah** (1835-1875) and his wife, **Mary S. Sherk** (1845-1887)

and four great great grandparents:

**James Ballah** (1783-1855) and his wife, **Jane** (1802-1878)

**Benjamin Sherk** (1820-1886) and his wife, **Priscilla Long** (1823-1891)

According to the 1877 map, further east, Benjamin Sherk had a farm in Lot 17, Concession XII. The Ballah farm was on Lot 18, Concession XII and the building which housed the Ballah family in the 1860s still stands, complete with its Victorian fretwork wood mouldings. The property in the 1980s was called the Hiepleh Farms.

## ZAVITZ

The **Zavitz's** and the **Learn's**, two Bucks County, Pennsylvania clans, are also part of the Sherk line. We are indebted to a talented and energetic group of Ontario Zavitz descendants for collecting and recording the Zavitz story from their early days in Strasbourg, France to homesteading in Pennsylvania and the Niagara peninsula. Two documents form the core of what follows. A number of years ago James Zavitz of Poplar Hill, Ontario published a genealogical paper on his family and more recently Mrs. Helen Clark of Chatham, Ontario published an updated version. I have borrowed freely from these fine articles and depended on them for the story below.

Many different spellings have been encountered of this family name. To mention a few: Savitz (still the most common spelling in Pennsylvania), Sevitz, Sevits, Sivets, Savits, Sivitts, Savage, Zewitz, Lavity, Seavets, Sarvier, Zawis, Zavies and Sewitz. As in the papers mentioned above, we will confine ourself to Zavitz.

**A. George S. Zavitz**, the first to come to America, is reported to have "lived within sight of the spires of the famous cathedral in Strasbourg, France." As a Protestant he and his family were part of a flood of immigrants to the William Penn colony where rights to religious freedom had been included in the founding constitution as early as 1681. The Sherks were definitely part of the Mennonite or Swiss Brethren group actively persecuted in Germany, Switzerland and France. A brief history of these events appears above. There is no specific documentation that the Zavitz's were Mennonites on arrival although they were part of that community once in America and after 1797 in Canada. Strasbourg seemed to be a "safe haven" for many years to Anabaptists like the Mennonites. There is no record of the death sentence against these individuals in Strasbourg.

Nevertheless Protestants in that city felt the pull from the new world. The Rhine was just two miles away with its access to Dutch religious freedom, ships to America and there was news of British support for settlement. Undoubtedly the Zavitz's had heard much about the migration of tens of thousands of Palatine Protestants down the Rhine to Holland and Britain and then on to settlement areas in the Pennsylvania and New York colonies. Promoters were advertising "the good life" in these colonies and Anabaptists, particularly those with relatives who had gone before were much attracted to the prospect of escaping the harshness of European society, the lack of productive farm land and the security to raise a family. They must also have been aware of the long waits in refugee camps before ships would be available to take them, the thousands who embarked who never made it to the new world (as many as forty percent of those attempting the crossing died of disease at sea) and the settlement mismanagement that plagued many who did survive the Atlantic crossing.

There is no record of **George Zavitz** and his wife **Barbara** on the immigrant ship list nor of his arrival in Philadelphia. Since these records were started in 1727 we

may assume he arrived before that time. The first record of him in the new world is his purchase of three hundred acres in 1732 from a Caspar Wistar, a button manufacturer in Philadelphia. This land was near Center Valley about 50 miles north of the city in a new district in a fertile valley along the Saucon Creek, Upper Bucks County (about 6 miles south of what was later to be the site of Bethlehem). As a miller he looked for mill sites. He and the small group of Mennonite settlers he was with were also influenced by the opening of the Durham Iron Works about 15 miles away. The local Indian tribes, Saucon, Lenni-Lenapes and Shawnees were friendly at this time and did not resist the arrival of these "whites" in their hunting grounds.

**George** may have hired out as a miller in Bucks County after first arriving in order to put together a stake for land purchase. In any case he seems to have been on his own land by 1731. The grist mill which he built about 1731 provided him with some independence. His Mennonite neighbours had all helped with its construction; milling stones were floated upstream from the city and metal parts forged at Durham. It had three storeys, four runs of stone and was water powered. **George** was paid with a share of his neighbours' crops processed through the mill. Traces of this mill were still visible 238 years later. In 1969 the last evidence disappeared under the median of Highway 309 about 100 yards south of its intersection with Highway 191.

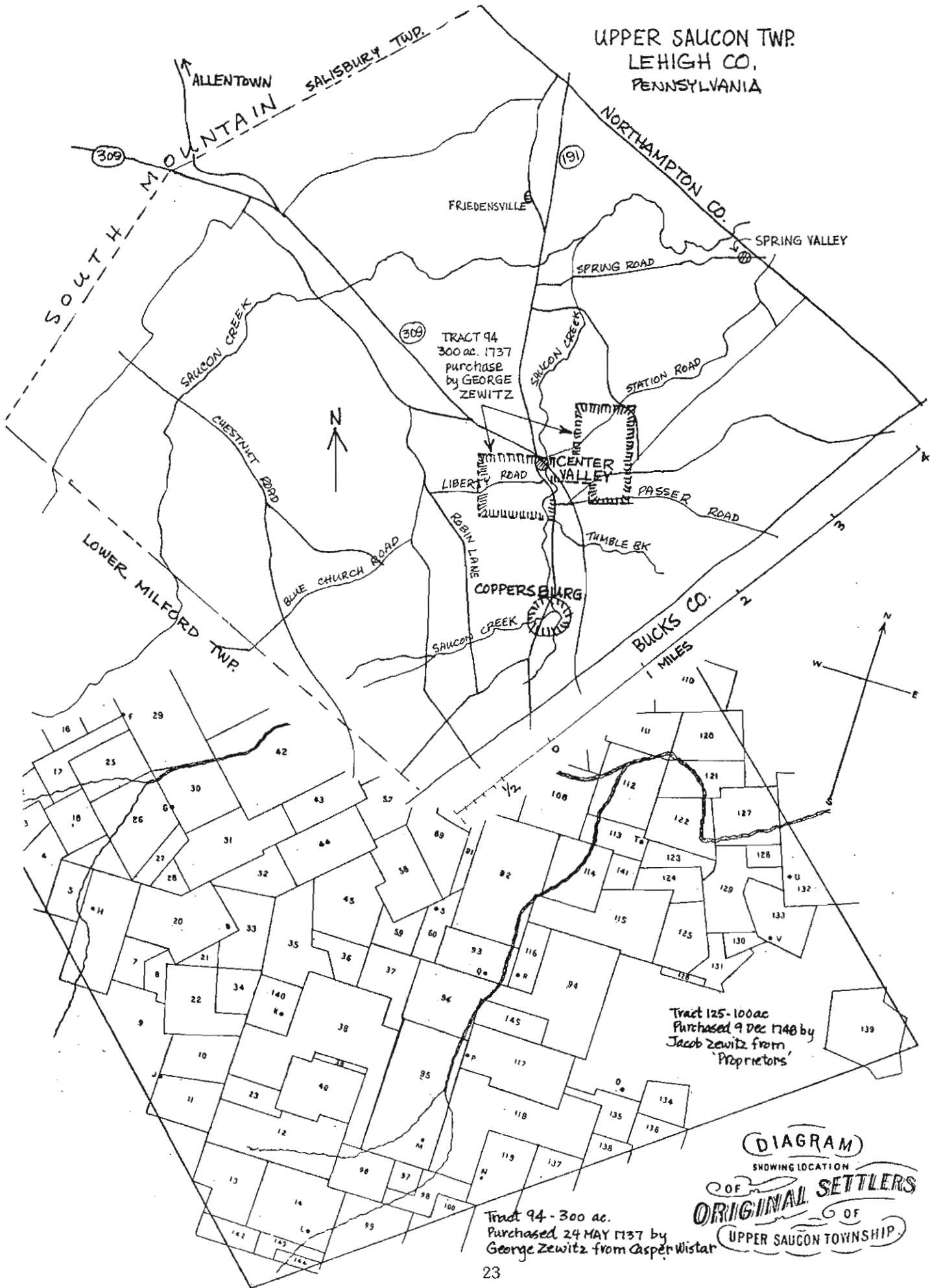
In a few years the Zavitz's were settled and feeling moderately secure and successful but the Quaker (English) government in Philadelphia was not sympathetic to land being passed from "alien father" to "alien son" so it was necessary for the Mennonites to become citizens of the British colony through "naturalization" if they wanted to provide for the next generation. **George** was naturalized on March the 29th, 1735. He obtained a final deed on the 300 acres on May 23, 1737 and then added 50 acres to that parcel in 1738. By 1743 the district was well populated and the residents petitioned to become the Township of Saucon. In 1748 an advertisement for the sale of **George Zebitz's** 310 acre farm including the grist mill appeared in the *Pennsylvanische Berichtl* (Germantown) newspaper but no sale is recorded and the Zavitz's remained on that homestead until **George's** death in June 1759 and **Barbara's** death about 1766.

**George's** will went to probate 13 June 1759. He is buried in a Mennonite cemetery less than a mile south of his homestead. As the immigrant progenitor he had lived about half of his life in an oppressive Europe and half in Pennsylvania where he experienced religious toleration. All of their eight children had lived to adulthood and married. Most were still in Bucks County close to their parents. All probably spoke German exclusively.

There is some confusion about **George** and **Barbara's** family. One report is that only Joseph, the youngest, was born in America in about 1735. The seven earlier children would have been in the crossing with their parents. Another report is that all children were born in America in which case **George** and **Barbara's** arrival as a



UPPER SAUCON TWP.  
LEHIGH CO.  
PENNSYLVANIA



309 TRACT 94  
300 ac. 1737  
purchase  
by GEORGE  
ZEWITZ

Tract 125-100 ac.  
Purchased 9 Dec 1748 by  
Jacob Zewitz from  
Proprietors

Tract 94 - 300 ac.  
Purchased 24 MAY 1737 by  
George Zewitz from Casper Wistar

**DIAGRAM**  
SHOWING LOCATION  
OF  
**ORIGINAL SETTLERS**  
OF  
**UPPER SAUCON TOWNSHIP.**

childless couple might have been as early as 1725. The birth dates of the parents is not known but was probably about 1700. The oldest, **Jacob**, our ancestor, was born in 1728 probably in Pennsylvania.

There were six sons and two daughters. George, a miller, migrated to North Carolina in 1766. The others stayed in Pennsylvania. Abraham took part in the French and Indian Wars and also served in a Pennsylvania unit during the American Revolution and died in 1777 before the end of the war. The youngest son, Joseph, became a member of the Pennsylvania Assembly and a colonel in the Revolution. One must assume that at least these last two sons were not pacifists!

### North American Politics

Before pursuing **George's** children's settlement journeys it is useful to summarize the political events of the day and particularly the machinations of the British and French governments. Both French and English influence had been steadily expanding in north American preceding **George Zavitz'** arrival in Pennsylvania.

Just after Penn arrived in his new colony, La Salle descended the Mississippi and reached Texas in 1685. The British had ejected the Dutch from New York just two years after Penn had organized his colony and seven years later, in 1690, the first English Colonial Congress was convened in New York.

Coincident with **George's** and his sons life in America, Britain had recognized a Newfoundland colony in 1729 and captured Louisburg from the French in 1745. The so-called French and Indian War started in earnest in 1754 culminating in the Battle of Quebec (or as Canadians call it, the Battle of the Plains of Abraham) in 1759 and France's loss of all of Canada to the British in 1760. The Peace of Paris was signed in 1763. During this period, and later, Indian tribes had been recruited by both sides. In the thirty year period through to the conclusion of fighting in the American Revolution Indians were harassing and threatening inland settlements in Pennsylvania and New York. This was in contrast to the early experience of cooperation and peaceful coexistence that **George Zavitz** enjoyed with Indian neighbours during the first twenty-five years of his American sojourn when populations were smaller and expansionist European governments were not arming and inciting Indian allies.

### The First American-born Zavitz

**B. Jacob I**, our ancestor, was **George's** oldest son, born in 1728 in Pennsylvania. He too was a miller. Because of the bewildering succession of Jacobs each has been given a number. The first is "**I**".

**Jacob I** appears in the records as an ambitious, almost compulsive, type. He was constantly on the move. His various locations were:

**First** A 100 acre (98 perch) farm and mill at Spring Valley, 2 miles from his father's place in Center Valley. He and his new wife **Magdalene** (surname unknown) were issued a deed dated 9 December 1748. He was just 20 years old. From 1748 to 1751 he was the Overseer of Highways for that portion of Pennsylvania and for part of that time was also a Constable. He sold this property to John Yoder, in 1752.

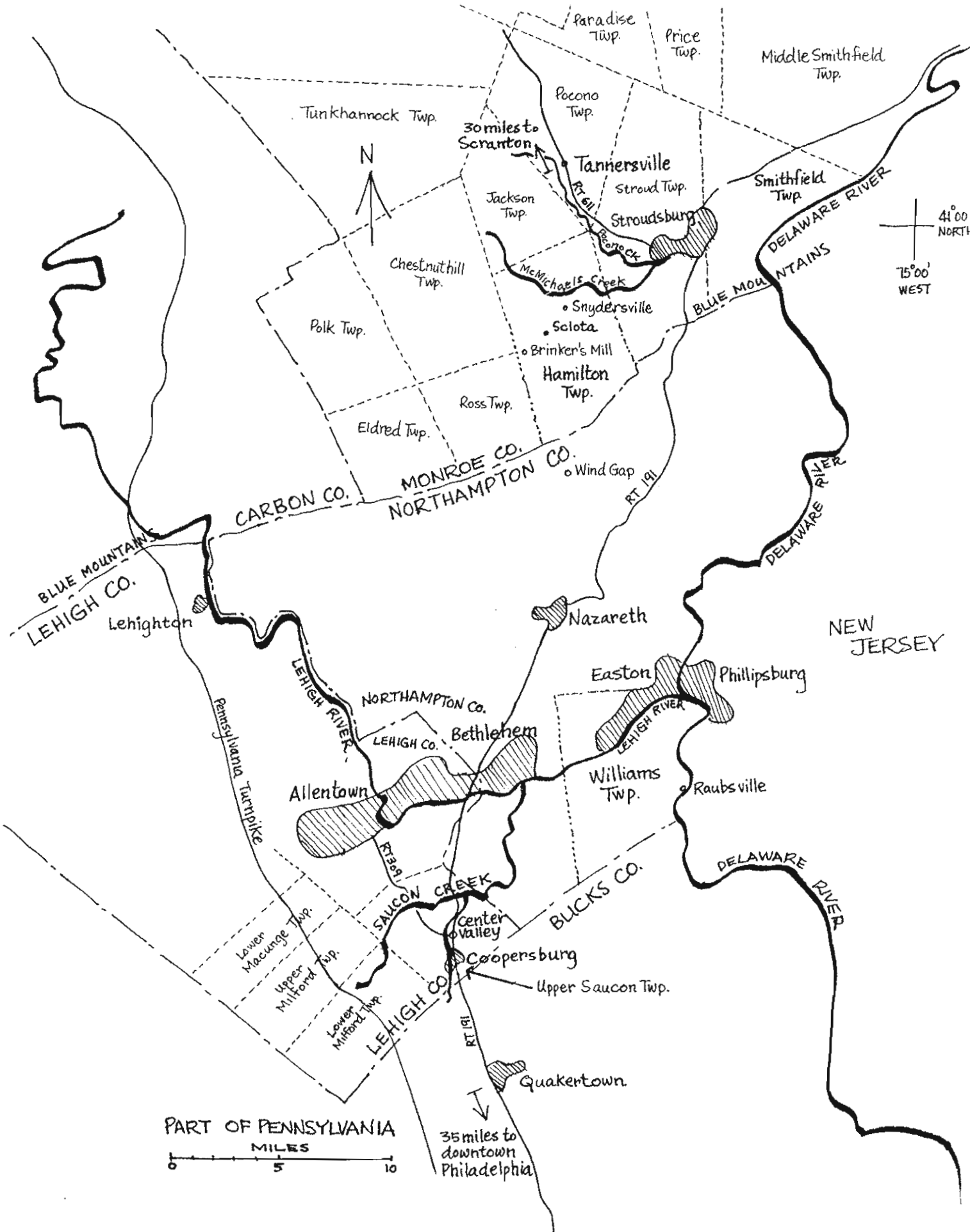
**Second** He moved to Williams Township, not far from Easton. He was 24 years old and had a family of three sons, Henry, Christian and **Jacob II**, our ancestor, who was born in August 1752.

**Third** In either 1761 or 1763 **Jacob I** moved into Indian Territory north of the Blue Mountains in Smithfield Township, found land on an excellent mill stream and built a mill at the present village of Kellersville known as the Keller Mill. This building was still standing in 1971. On 4 January, 1764 **Jacob I** paid Timothy Horsefield of Bethlehem, a noted Moravian leader, 160 pounds for these 150 acres.

**Jacob I's** father, **George** died a couple of years before the 1761 move. **Jacob I** was 33 years old. Both undoubtedly communicated with each other through their lives in German. **George** was probably not fluent in English but **Jacob I**, having been born in Pennsylvania, was probably bilingual.

In the fall of 1763 while warnings came of Indian uprisings in Smithfield Township and about outlying homes being burned with settlers killed or taken captive. The area was so sparsely populated that settlers for several miles around collected together in Brinkers Mill for protection. From there in September 1763 nineteen people appealed to a Timothy Horsfield, one of the colonial officials, for assistance and protection with this petition:

*"These are the humble addresses of the Nabours that are now Living or Reather Stay here at this Present Time. Now with grief we begin to consider the trouble and Dificoultly before our Eyes that We have once past through being Drove from House and Home having our Livelyhood Destroyed by these Savaages yet we gladly Retourned to our Disolate habitation where we have Laboured through many hardships and great Dificoultly will we obtained the privilege once more of a mill. Leasened our trouble and made us begin to think our Selves happy and to forget our former troube! We once passed through but now we are every day and hour Liable to Louse the priviledges we So Lately enjoyed besides our lives is every day and hour Ezsposed to the unmarcyful hands of These Rageing Savages jest at our Backs pray consider our Mallencoly Condition not the one half of us a Gun to Dfend our Seves with nor yet one charge of powder of Leed to help our Selves With but lving under the protection and preservation of the Allmity god for our help and asistance pray consider our disolate Pepol Distive of your tender Care our humbel petition is that you would be pleased to plaise Eight Solgers*



at the Mill in order for the preservation of that and Safety of our Lives will all so that through the assistance of god it may be the means of keeping the peopole together other ways this place is oeing and we may as Well give over now as to stand any longer but we Dont in the least dout your honour granting our poor pertition with all Redyness & Speed that posable it may be attained. These are the Humbel Pertition of Saundry famileys now gathered at Jacob Brinker's Mill and there waiting for a Retourn from you honour.

(signed by) **Jacob Zewitz, John Learn, Lonans Romic, Jess Washburn, Jacob Brinker and others.**"

As a result of this petition twenty-four soldiers under the command of Captain Weatherholt were sent to patrol the area but when they arrived they found no Indians.

By 1765 **Jacob I** had cleared 20 acres of his 150 and has acquired two horses and three cattle.

**Fourth** In 1764 he bought 150 acres in Hamilton Twp.

**Fifth** About the same time he bought 155 acres about a mile below Tannersville in the McMichael's Creek/Pocono Creek/Cranberry Creek area.

**Sixth** After the start of the American Revolution (the formal period of war was from 1776 to 1783) he moved to Quakertown, Northampton Co. and became the proprietor of a tavern there. His brothers, Abraham and Joseph, served with the republican army during the revolution.

**Seventh** Following the Revolution, probably in 1788 when son Christian relocated, he and his wife moved to Humberstone Twp., near Port Colbourne in Upper Canada. He was in his 60th or 61st year. He was to spend the last dozen or so years of his life in the British colony.

Christian Zavitz, **Jacob I's** second son, according to family tradition, built one of Upper Canada's first water-powered mills on the Niagara River in 1786 above the Falls known as the Bridgewater Mill. He applied for land at that time and later was given 200 acres in Sugarloaf Twp. as a Loyalist. He returned to Pennsylvania in 1787, married a Mary McCarty and persuaded his family to return to Canada with him. Two of his brothers including **Jacob II**, our ancestor, and his parents, **Jacob I** and **Magdalene**, and a number of nieces and nephews, came to Upper Canada with him at that time. Christian's Loyalist status is interesting considering that two of his uncles, Abraham and Joseph Zavitz were active in the army on the other side. Christian subsequently migrated to Elgin County, continued to build mills and is buried with his wife at Union, Elgin County.

**Jacob I** and his wife **Magdalene** had seven children all of whom survived to adulthood. Of the four sons, only one, George, remained in Pennsylvania, became the postmaster in Allentown and died there in 1826 in his 74th year. Three daughters also came to Canada in 1788. **Jacob I** and his wife **Magdalene** both died in Humberstone Twp. in the early 1800s. We don't know the precise dates or their

burial spots. They were probably both speaking some German having spent the first three decades of their lives with German-speaking parents. Whether their children who were Pennsylvania-born and grandchildren of the original Mennonite immigrant from Strasbourg spoke much German once in Upper Canada is unknown although we do know that they were part of a Mennonite community which still prayed in German. For instance, **Jacob II**, one of these grandchildren, is buried in a Mennonite Cemetery near Ridgeway, Ontario in Bertie Twp., Welland County. There is a report that even some of **George's** great grandchildren born in Upper Canada (after 1788), that is **Jacob II's** children, prefer-red German. John, born in 1798 in Bertie Township who succeeded his brother George as minister of the Bertie Mennonite congregation "sometimes preached in English" implying that most of the time he preached in German! His older sister **Sarah**, born in 1793, is our ancestor.

#### Family of Jacob I Zavitz and Magdalene (?)

**Jacob I** born c1728 probably in Center Valley, Pennsylvania, moved to Canada 1789, died in Humberstone Twp., Welland Co., date and burial unknown. **Magdalene (?)** bore 7 children between c1748 and ?, birth, death, burial unknown.

Children:

1. Henry born c1748
2. Mary mar. Isaac Minor
3. Christian born c1750, mar. Mary McCarty, died 27 Apr 1826
4. Barbara mar. Jacob Ott
5. Sarah mar. Fink
6. **Jacob II** born Aug 1752, mar. **Catherine Learn**, died 12 Jan 1815
7. George born c1753, died 1826 probably in Allentown, PA

**C. Jacob II** was born in Williams Twp., in August 1752, on the second farm that his father had. He was third son in the family and sixth child - the second youngest. (Only his younger sibling, George, remained in Pennsylvania.) About 1779 when his parents were in still in Tannersville he married **Catherine Learn** who was born (probably in Tannersville) on 20 June 1760. She was eight years younger than **Jacob II**, about 19 when she married. When his father relocated to Quakertown, **Jacob II** remained at Tannersville close to his father-in-law who was an innkeeper in the hamlet of Tannersville. Just before their move to Upper Canada in 1788, about ten years after their marriage, his farm is described as "100 acres on the Great Road from Windgap to Wyoming in Hamilton Twp. and had a house, a barn, outbuildings and a saw mill on the Jones' River." By that time they had five of their eleven children. He was 36 and she was 28 years of age when they moved north.

The five older, Pennsylvania-born children included possibly three daughters, Elizabeth, Polly and Barbara and two sons, the oldest boy, George (minister of the Bertie Mennonite congregation - "the peacemaker") and Henry who was the last born in Pennsylvania in 1787.

## Family of Jacob II Zavitz and Catherine Learn

**Jacob II** moved to Welland Co. 1788, died 12 January 1815 at 63, buried Mennonite Cem. near Ridgeway, Welland Co. **Catherine Learn** was born 20 or 25 June 1760 probably at Tannersville, Pennsylvania, bore 11 children between 1780 and 1802, and died 9 Oct 1856 at 96. She is buried with husband.

Children:

1. Elizabeth born 1780, mar. John Baxter, died 1846
2. George born 1 Aug 1781, mar. Susan Sherk, died 1858
3. Mary or Polly born 16 Sept 1783, mar. Nichols (see #8 below)
4. Barbara born 13 Aug 1785, mar. Clark
5. Henry born 21 Aug 1787, mar. Catherine Ott, died 1874

After they migrated with their siblings, parents, in-laws, nieces, nephews and children to Upper Canada in 1788 they had five or six more children including

6. Jacob III who married into the Loyalist family Pound (This family migrated to Middlesex County and became part of a Quaker community there)
7. **Sarah**, our ancestor who married **Jacob Sherk** from the Mennonite community in Welland County
- 7b Mary mar. Peter Fretz (perhaps same as #3 above)
8. John
9. Christian and
10. Rebecca

**Jacob II** petitioned for confirmation of ownership of land in 1797. There is no indication that **Jacob II Zavitz** ever sought or was given a United Empire Loyalist designation.

*"The petition of **Jacob Zavitz** of Wainfleet, yeoman, humbly shews; That your petitioner came to this province in the year 1788 with a wife and five children and received himself 200 acres of land in the above named township. That he has never received any family lands therefore prays your honor would be pleased to grant him 300 acres, as such and your petitioner as in duty bound will ever pray.  
Newark, 25 April 1797 (signed) **Jacob Zavitz**"*

**Jacob II** had lived in Canada for the last 27 years of his life; **Catherine** for the last 68 years of her life - over 70% of her life. Her life spanned interesting times. She was 16 and living in Pennsylvania when the Declaration of Independence was announced, 21 when her father was killed by marauding Indians (reported to be the last such death in Pennsylvania), 23 when the revolutionary war was declared over, 29 when the French Revolution started, 55 when Wellington defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, 81 when the union of Lower and Upper Canada took place in 1841.

## MENNONITES, QUAKERS and DUNKERS

It is perhaps useful to pause to consider some of the religious reasons and affiliations that contributed to these

migrations to British colonies. Firstly it was not clear that the new republican government would grant the same religious liberties to the Mennonites that they had enjoyed under the British Crown. The Mennonites' reluctance to fight - their traditional pacifism - put them under suspicion of being pro-British in the eyes of many republicans. And the new republican government was very short of money and war taxes were levied on everyone, even pacifists. This troubled the Mennonites greatly.

There was "an ancient exemption from bearing arms under the government of British States" granted to specific religious groups. This exemption which had prevailed for decades in Pennsylvania was made explicit by Governor Simcoe for members of the Society of Friends in Upper Canada in May 1792 and the next year was made explicit for "Quakers, Mennonites and Dunkers[Tunkers]". While these announcements came after many Pennsylvania Deutsch "plain folk" had already migrated north, it was expected that the British governors would confirm these "ancient" exemptions.

There was mixing between these three groups. Members are found buried side-by-side. Worship together, first in homes and then in churches was not uncommon. Mennonite names are found in Quaker and Tunker congregation records after the early migrations. Similar practices included pacifism, a lay clergy, an anabaptist tradition, opposition to "established or state" churches and "plain" living practices. Many descendants of these people follow similar traditions in the latter part of the 20th century!

The continued use of German in Mennonite churches was the source of controversy. The use of English in preaching by pastor John Hershey (1816-1904) who attempted to follow George Zavitz (1781-1858) and Jacob II, brother of ancestor **Sarah Zavitz** as minister of the Bertie congregation may have contributed to discord. George's brother, John Zavitz (1798-1872) who had taken over as minister was getting old and the congregation seemed to favour handing leadership to Bishop John Lapp of Clarence Center, New York State. Lapp also favoured the use of English which was not generally permitted in services by the Mennonite Conference of Ontario before 1890. Language questions tended to weaken membership in these Mennonite congregations. Ancestors of these German-speaking Mennonites had arrived in Pennsylvania 165 years before 1890 but the religious, cultural and the language issues in Ontario were sensitive even after all that time; less so in Pennsylvania where German is still common in the Mennonite and Amish communities.

## THE LEARN FAMILY

This story about the Leams has been drawn from a number of histories and genealogies which were discovered in Pennsylvania. They include:

-*Descendants of John Learn* by Wayne E. Learn, Monroe Public Library, Penn.

-*Things to Remember* by Pauline G. Learn

-*For John Learn's will refer 17 May 1777, File No. 941,*

*Lower Smithfield Township Will Book No. 1, page 281; probated 27 October 1781, Northampton County Court House, Easton, Penn.*

*-The History of Monroe County*

*-Genealogy of Western Pennsylvania, Vol. II by J. W. Jordon (1915)*

*-History of Pennsylvania by Dr. Egle*

The Learn name was spelt variously. Research has encountered such variations as Lam, Lame, Lamer, Lamards, Lamed, Leme, Lemer, Lernes and Leamer. Considering the language barrier faced by German-speaking immigrants in English-speaking Philadelphia, it is understandable that there was confusion. English speaking clerks, listening to the German immigrants, wrote down what they thought they heard. However Learn is the most common and presumably 'correct' spelling and that form has been used consistently in this account.

There is also a hint that Learn might have been related to the English Lardner family. Lynford Lardner whose father was a Dr. John Lardner of London accompanied Thomas Penn to the 1751 Peace Conference with Indian tribal leaders some of whom were not pleased with the outcome. There was a story associated with that Conference that all of the settlers who took part were either killed or visited by Indians into the next generation. Because of **John Learn's** death in 1781 one speculation was that **John Learn** (Lardner) was the son of Lynford Lardner and that the Indians had set out to "get" his family.

Geography reinforces this connection. Lynford Lardner received a 3000 acre grant of land in Jackson Twp., Pennsylvania in the middle of Indian hunting grounds and other lands in Whitehall Twp., Lehigh County. Tannersville where **John Learn** settled is very close to Lynford Lardner's Jackson Twp. holdings.

**John Learn**, the original settler, has not been found in any of the normal documents regarding immigration - passenger lists, oaths of allegiance records or ports of entry lists. We don't know when or why he came to America. According to a number of accounts he lived in Philadelphia for a time before venturing north to the forests of the Pocono Mountains which were still inhabited by the Delaware Indians in the mid 1700s. The History of Monroe County notes:

*About the year 1750 **John Lamer (Learn)**, formerly of Philadelphia, purchased the land now embraced in the village of Tannersville. He found it a vast wilderness but with the aid of his sons soon effected a clearing and erected for his family a comfortable abode. He proceeded to the cultivation of the land and obtained abundant crops as the reward for this labour. His children settled around him and devoted their energies to farming pursuits.*

The Jordon genealogy states "**John Learn** settled at a place now called Tannersville in Monroe County, Pennsylvania. He purchased a large tract of land and his house was located on the present site of Brown's Hotel."

The will of the first **Learn, John**, is also a clue to nationality. In May 1777, some four years before his death, **John Learn** made a will. He was ill but he subsequently recovered. In that document he names all eleven children and spells the names of two of them in the Dutch or German fashion: his daughter (our ancestor) is recorded as Caderina (named after his wife). This subsequently became **Catharine** and Andreas, the German spelling, subsequently became Andrew.

Other obvious connections with the German-speaking and Mennonite community in Pennsylvania are the marriages of his children with families with surnames like Brinker, Ramage, Everhard, Miller, Romig, Maier, Zavitz, Yockey and Schooley.

The extent and precise location of the lands owned by the first Learn settlers has not been discovered. A patent dated June 1785 for land in Pocono Twp. is to John Learn but this must have been the son of the original. Similarly a John Learn is listed among the names of earlier settlers in Smithfield Twp. as a "taxable inhabitant" in 1786 and had 55 acres. Both of these are probably the John Learn who was born in 1756, son of **John**, the pioneer of Tannersville.

**John and Cadarina Learn** settled at Tannersville, Monroe County around 1750 having "come from Philadelphia." They had probably just married. We have no information about **Cadarina's** surname or parents. Their eleven children were born between January 1751 and September 1769 presumably all at Tannersville. The oldest, George was 30 years old when he and his father were killed by Indians. The next oldest sons, John and Jacob, stayed in Pennsylvania. Two younger sons, Andrew and Peter both left Pennsylvania, Andrew to Indiana and Peter coming to Welland County, Upper Canada at the time of his sister's migration to Canada with the Zavitz clan. The youngest in the family were twins, a girl Sarah and a boy, Adam. We have no information on them or their older sisters, Mary, Rachel and Rebecca.

References to the offspring of the original **John Learn**:  
*From the Archives of Pennsylvania under Northampton County Warranties, 3rd Series (1752-1886):*  
John Learn, Senior, 15 acres, (survey June 22, 1818)  
John Learn, Jr., 120 acres  
John Learn, 100 acres, (date of survey April 12, 1822)  
All of these appear under the heading 'warranties of land'.

-Another record shows a warrant dated XX, 13, 1786 granted to Jacob Learn covering 105 acres. Deed dated May 9, 1823 conveyed the same to Andrew Learn.

-The first 1790 Census of the United States comprises the enumeration of those in seventeen states. For Northampton Co., Lower Smithfield Township, PA there is the following:

Jacob Lam, 2 free white males of 16 years & upward, 1 free white male under 16 years, 5 free white females.  
(Some inhabitants were likely missed in this first census.)

## Family of John Learn and Cadarina (?)

**John** born c1730 somewhere in Europe, emigrated to America c1750, killed by Indians at Tannersville, Monroe Co., Pennsylvania 3 July 1781.

**Cadarina (surname unknown)** bore 11 children between 1751 and 1769, birth, death and burial unknown although she died after July 1781 in Pennsylvania.

Children:

1. George born 26 Jan 1751, mar. Anna Margaretha Brinker, killed 3 July 1781 at age 30 years
2. Mary B. born 14 Jan 1753
3. Rachel born 22 Aug 1754
4. John born 17 May 1756, mar. three times, died 1833
5. Jacob born 11 July 1758, mar. twice, died 29 Aug 1844
6. **Catharine** born 20 June 1760, mar. **Jacob II Zavitz**, died 1856
7. Rebecca born 24 July 1763, mar. F. Everhardt
8. Andrew born 30 Nov 1764, mar. Susan Yockey, died 28 Jan 1807
9. Peter B. born 8 Feb 1767, moved to Canada
- 10 Sarah born 22 Sept 1769
- 11 Adam born 22 Sept 1769

**Catharine Learn**, daughter of **John and Cadarina Learn**, was born in Pennsylvania on the 20th of June 1760. We are fairly certain that the Learn family came from a German or Dutch speaking part of Europe because of the community into which they settled in Pennsylvania. A history of Hanover & Wyoming Valley (1885) by Plumb states that "George Learn (the one killed in 1781 and son of **John Learn**) was of German descent." Their descendants and neighbours in 18th century Pennsylvania claimed German (Deutsch) or Dutch ancestry. A temporary home in England is mentioned prior to their migration to Pennsylvania. This was not uncommon for Mennonites who escaped down the Rhine River from Switzerland or Germany to a safe haven in Protestant Holland or England.

## THE LEARN MASSACRE IN 1781

What follows is an attempt to unravel a number of different accounts and references to the killing of four members of the Learn family on the 3rd of July 1781, reported as "the last killings (of whites) by Indians" in Pennsylvania.

As mentioned earlier in this account, life on the frontier during the French and Indian War and the more recent revolution involved definite hazards from Indians opposed to American settlers. There was a history of trouble in the region. In fact **John Learn** was evacuated to Brinkers Mill in 1763, eighteen years earlier. He and a neighbour, **Jacob I Zavitz** (their children were to marry one another about 16 years later) both signed a petition asking for armed protection from "Rageing Savages."

Earlier in the war there had been warnings of trouble in the area. For the previous year Indians sympathetic to the British were harassing the frontier. The American Revolution was in full swing and Indians had been recruited by both

sides to carry out guerilla raids. Undoubtedly not all of these "soldiers" were well disciplined or well controlled by superior officers. Every civil war sees a rise in simple hooliganism and indiscriminate looting and killing. There also may have been a domestic reason for the killings. Indian youths and the young Learn boys would often play and wrestle with one another. A Learn boy had hurt an Indian youth and the Indian parents were angry. They may have sought some form of revenge.

On the day before the massacre a neighbouring settler discovered some Indian tracks about two miles from Tannersville on the boat path along the Pocono Creek between Stroudsville and Tannersville. He told **John Learn** immediately so he could guard against attack.

Another story concerns the Storm family in nearby Snydersville. They had heard about Indians approaching from Lehighon intent on killing the Leams. The road to Tannersville went through the Storm farm. When Mr. Storm learned of their approach he hid his family in the woods and he concealed himself in a nearby rye field with his gun. The Indians came, went through his house, did no damage, and left. They proceeded in the direction of Tannersville.

On the 3rd of July 1781 a band of Indians, probably four in number, came to **John Learn's** fields by Tannersville and positioned themselves between the three men working in the fields and the house. George, John's oldest son, age 30 at the time, was mowing grass in a meadow. He was shot and wounded. He tried to defend himself with a fence rail but was overpowered, killed and scalped.

**John Learn**, George's father and about 50 years of age at the time, and his second son, John Jr., aged 25, were in a rye field when they heard shots. They started moving towards the house immediately and encountered an Indian. **John Sr.** fired on him but may have missed. In any case, his firing revealed his location and two other Indians turned on him, shot him and then scalped him.

Afterwards an Indian cap was found at the spot. Buckshot was lodged in it. Perhaps **John Sr.** was successful in hitting or killing the Indian he had aimed at. There was no evidence of a body so perhaps his comrades carried the wounded man away.

While two Indians pursued **John Sr.**, John Jr. saw a third Indian in the rye field bowing down as if he was doing something with his gun. John shot him through the head. He did not fire a second time, fearing that he would reveal his position. He knew his father was dead and feared that his brother George might be dead also.

The Indians who killed George and **John Sr.** now entered the house and captured George's wife, Anna Margaretha Brinker, and his four month old daughter, Susanna. They then took two horses and some plunder from the house and ran off with their two female captives in the direction of the Pocono Mountains.

George's two year old son, was not present at the farm that day; he was visiting his grandmother Brinker at the time and escaped the attack. We don't know where **John Sr.'s** wife, **Cadarina** was at the time of the attack. The home was referred to as **John Sr.'s** home and after the attack John Jr. asked for a guard to be posted to "protect his Mother and younger brethren." Daughter **Catharine**, our ancestor, had moved away a few year's earlier when she married **Jacob II Zavitz**.

Frank H. Learn, an early Learn family historian, recorded a story in 1913, 132 years after the attack which may be more fiction than fact. The day following the attack John Jr. saw an Indian "skulking around the house," so he hid behind a stump and then tricked the Indian into showing his intentions. The Indian fired his muzzle loader at John's hat held high on a "root." John Jr. at once "sped a bullet through his head." He was able to identify this Indian as Edsky, formerly of Chemug. This native had given himself the name Jacob Stroud. When he was shot, Edsky had seven rifle balls in his mouth - so he could load his gun "with expedition." This Indian "Jacob Stroud" should not be confused with Col. Jacob Stroud, commander of the local guard unit who will appear later in this story. It is reported that John Learn Jr. disposed of Edsky's body by dragging it with oxen and chain to a nearby mine hole where it was "stamped down and left to moulder."

When the Learn's neighbours heard about the attack and the abductions of the mother and baby, they started in pursuit and on reaching the Pocono Mountains discovered the scalped body of the baby and the dismembered body of the mother, parts of which had been suspended from a tree.

That same day the commander of the local guard unit, Col. Jacob Stroud, set off in pursuit of the Indians with as many men as he could collect together. They followed the track until dusk when they reached the edge of the Great Swamp. There they made camp and waited until morning and in the first light they discovered the Indians' camp which was hastily abandoned during the night. They had left behind the two horses, sundry plunder, a number of their own things and what appeared to be **John Learn's** scalp. They had scattered and escaped on foot into the dense "laurel, logs and thicket" and could be followed no further. Since only two tracks were observed at this camp site it was assumed that the Indian **John Sr.** had wounded had died or been abandoned sometime earlier. In any case there was no sign of him.

There was much dissatisfaction with Col. Stroud's behaviour as Commander of the Guard prior to and throughout this incident. Colonial records contain a detailed report by Robert Levers, the newly appointed County Militia Administrator sent to Joseph Reed, President of the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania written five days after the massacre makes two charges about the pursuit.

Firstly, he says that the posse was drunk by the time it reached the edge of the Great Swamp. In fact, Levers letter

suggests that one of Stroud's men had almost tricked the Indians into revealing their campsite in the dense Swamp by whistling to them in Indian fashion but the "hoop and hallo" of the drunken troop alarmed them and they ran away.

Secondly, it seems that Col. Stroud may have "lost his party" somewhere between the place where the two female bodies were found and the Great Swamp. It is reported that he was found by a reinforcement party alone on the road about four miles away from the main party almost two hours after the posse set out.

Perhaps more seriously, Mr. Levers speculates in a letter to President Reed that the Learn family "have unhappily fell a sacrifice to malicious resentment" as the result of past dealings with Stroud. It seems that **John Learn** had made "frequent application ... to Col. Stroud for a guard" for protection against roving Indian bands. Levers felt that the Learn farm was "certainly a proper post" for such a guard but Stroud constantly refused him. **John Learn** claimed Stroud would not give him this protection because he asserted without evidence that **John Learn** "was a Tory and only wanted soldiers on his farm so he could destroy them." Just before his death **John Learn** had brought a legal action of slander against Stroud for making these statements. **John Learn** and Robert Levers were not alone in their criticism of Stroud.

In addition a Col. Chambers had made a number of charges against Stroud and in a letter to Levers just three days before the attack asked Levers to arrest Stroud. Levers had declined to do so at the time because he felt he was "young in office" and inexperienced in such matters but agreed to make a "strict enquiry" and seek advice from the President of Council when he had more information. Levers' well known "unfavourable opinion" of Stroud could result in an early arrest being misinterpreted.

A few weeks later the Supreme Executive Council ordered a Court Martial to consider the following charges against Stroud:

- 1/ Abusing the legislative authority with contemptuous language.
- 2/ Discouraging the Recruiting Service in defense of the frontiers.
- 3/ Cowardice and incapacity when marching as part of the militia in pursuit of the Indians.
- 4/ Scandalous behaviour in signing a Paper unbecoming the character of an officer and gentleman, and
- 5/ Four other charges regarding Stroud's deployment of militiamen and his mistreatment of his lieutenants.

The Trial started in August 1781 but was adjourned when the appointed judge, Judge Advocate Nathaniel Potts, was called to Reading and Lancaster on other judicial matters. In the end Stroud was acquitted of all charges.

One can speculate about this unfortunate situation. A picture emerges of great hostility between **Learn** and Stroud. This springs from Stroud's suspicions that Learn was a "Tory," a British sympathizer. Even though Learn's farm is



a natural guard post and Learn frequently requests protection, Stroud refuses to provide it and questions Learn's loyalty. Stroud is sued by Learn shortly before four Indians arrive and kill **John Learn** and three members of his family. One of the Indians has taken an English name 'Jacob Stroud.'

Col. Stroud is responsible for the pursuit of the murderers and the troop botches a capture because some of them are drunk. Stroud absents himself from the pursuit for a number of hours for no apparent reason.

As far as **John Learn's** loyalties or political sympathies are concerned, they remain a mystery. We do know that two of his children and perhaps a third moved to Upper Canada within six years of the end of the War in 1783. **Catharine**, born 1760, married **Jacob II Zavitz** and moved with him and five Zavitz siblings and the Zavitz Seniors to the Niagara Peninsula in 1788. This clan located in Wainfleet, Bertie or Humberstone Twps. in Welland County via Fort Erie. Catharine's younger brother, Peter Learn, who was born in 1767, also moved to Canada. But none were officially United Empire Loyalists.

On the other hand, Jacob Learn, born in 1758, another brother of **Catharine's** served as a private in 1782 in the 8th Company, 5th Battalion (Richard Shaw, Captain) of Washington's American Revolutionary Army. It would not have been unusual for the family to have supported both sides of the Revolution.

**Catherine Learn** was the sixth child; there were three older brothers and two older sisters all born within nine years. At the time of **John Learn's** evacuation to Brinkers Mill in 1763 (with **Jacob I Zavitz'** family) Rebecca was just three months old and the other six children ranged in age up to George who was 12 at the time. **Catherine** was just three. Leams accounted for nine of the nineteen people sheltered in the Mill.

When **Catherine Learn** left Pennsylvania in about 1788 she was 28 years old; she left behind two older brothers, 32 and 30, and perhaps five surviving younger siblings. We know only that two of these younger ones survived to adulthood and married. She had suffered the death of her father and one brother in 1781 when she was 21 years old and pregnant with her second child, George Zavitz. She had two or three more children in Pennsylvania before migrating north and then had five more in Canada including our ancestor, **Sarah Zavitz** who married **Jacob Sherk**.

A remarkable woman, **Catherine Learn** lived to 96 years of age, dying on 9 October 1856 in Bertie Twp., Welland County.

## ATLANTIC CROSSINGS

While we have not yet tracked down the detail, we do know that at least seven of the ancestors mentioned in this story crossed the Atlantic in sailing vessels during the early decades of the 18th century. Here is a list in chronological order of the crossings.

**1716 Spring** Peter **Swar** (Schwar) came to Philadelphia when about 26 or 27 years old with wife, Adaline **Blooming**, from Strasbourg, Alsace with three of their seven children and settled in Lancaster Co. He is reported to have been a Huguenot. Their daughter Maria was with them on the crossing and married Peter **Sherk** (1709-1770) probably around 1729 in Lancaster Co.

**1725??** George S. **Zavitz**, born about 1700 in Strasbourg, France was naturalized in March of 1735 in Pennsylvania. One report suggests that seven of his eight children were born in Europe. Another theory is that none were born in Europe and that his oldest, Jacob I, was born in Pennsylvania in 1728. We don't know the surname of Barbara, his wife. They probably were married in Europe and landed at Philadelphia and settled in Upper Saucon Twp., Lehigh County before 1727. They were members of the Old Mennonite or Swiss Brethren church.

**1725??** Jacob **Groff** (Grove) birth location unknown. Settled in Earl Twp., Lancaster Co., Pennsylvania. Wife unknown. Whether he crossed the Atlantic as a married man is not known. His fifth of six children, Feronica married Casper **Sherk** (1750-1813). Jacob Groff was in Humberstone Twp., Niagara peninsula in 1805.

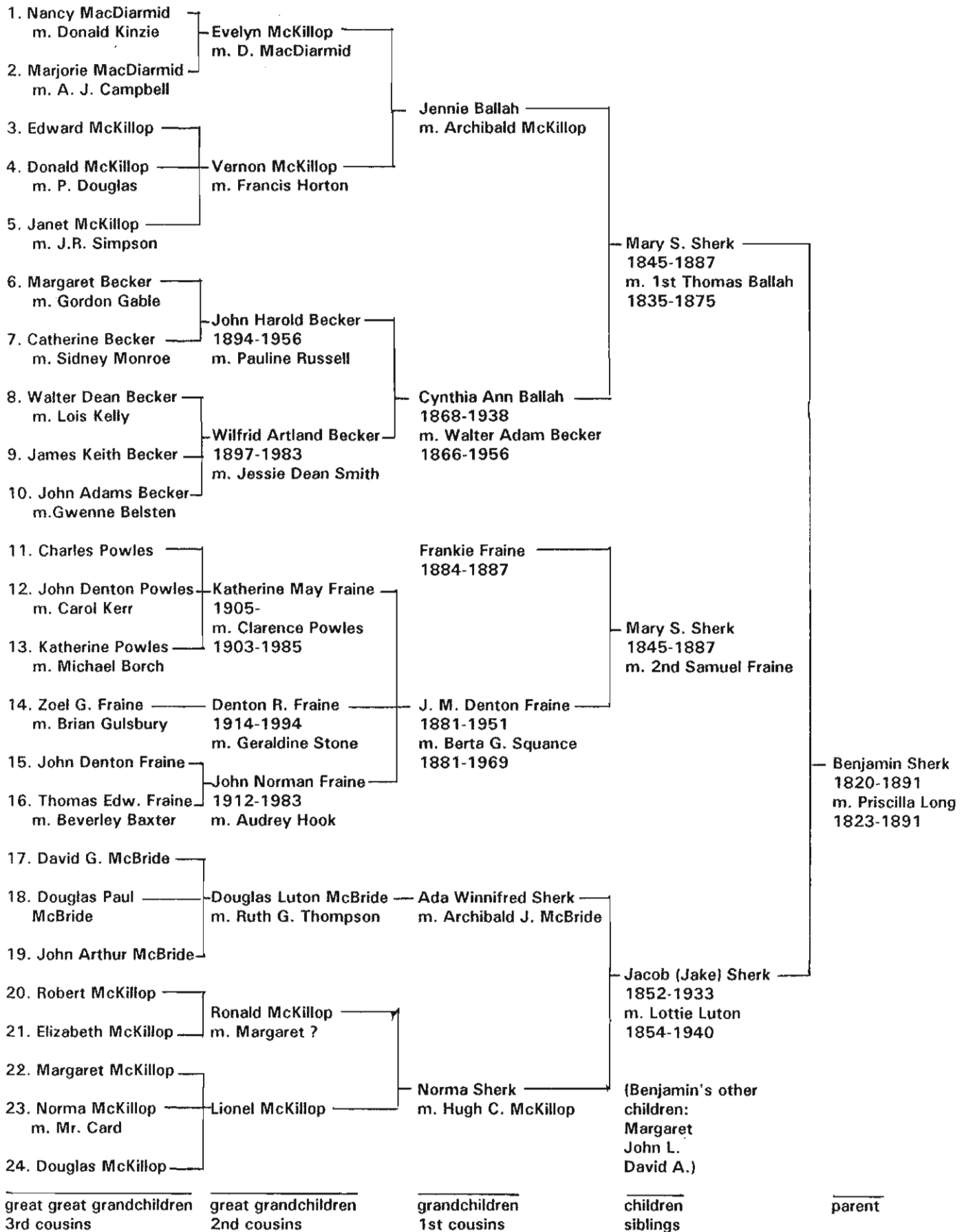
**1725??** Parents of **Magdalene**, surname unknown, **wife of Jacob Zavitz**, was born about 1730, unknown location, and married Jacob in Upper Saucon Twp. before 1748 which is the birth year of her oldest child. Her parents probably migrated from Germany as a young, childless couple about 1725 or earlier. Probably landed at Philadelphia and settled in Upper Saucon Twp. or thereabouts, Lehigh County before 1727.

**1728, August 23 on "The Mortonhouse"** Peter Uli (Ulrich) **Sherk** (Schurch), born 9 March 1663 in Sumiswald, Switzerland, arrived with wife Barbara **Grundbacher** and perhaps three of his six children. Peter Uli was over 65 years of age at the crossing and son Peter was 19 and single. They were Mennonites and settled in Cocalico Twp., Lancaster County.

**1750??** John **Learn**, born ??, perhaps travelling with his parents and single. Perhaps married in Pennsylvania to Cadarina; they had eleven children between 1751 and 1769. Landed at Philadelphia and settled in Tannersville, Monroe County.

**1750??** Wife of John **Learn**, Caderina, born ??, perhaps travelling with her parents and single. Perhaps married in Pennsylvania.

SHERK FAMILY TREE - limited to the families of Mary and Jacob Sherk





**The Jacob Sherk Family, c1890: Ada, Norma, Jacob (Jake), Lottie**



**Mary Sherk Ballah's daughters c. 1873  
Cynthia Ann and Jennie**



**The Becker Grandchildren c. 1936  
Dean, John, Margaret, Keith, Catherine**



Back row: Harold Becker, Pauline Russell Becker, Francis Horton McKillop, Grandma Russell, Jennie Ballah McKillop, Cynthia Ann Ballah Becker, Evelyn McKillop MacDiarmid, Walter Becker, Archibald McKillop, Wilfrid (Fred) Becker, Jessie Smith Becker  
 Front row: Janet McKillop, Donald McKillop, Dean Becker, Margaret Becker, Catherine Becker  
 Taken at Ormond Beach, Lake Erie, summer 1931



Donald McKillop, Janet McKillop, Margaret Becker, Catherine Becker, Dean Becker  
 Taken at Ormond Beach, Lake Erie, summer 1931

Alphabetic List of some relatives mentioned in this paper, many of whom have been most helpful in supplying information and encouragement. The relationships of these people may be seen on the enclosed charts.

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