

# *The River Brethren Denominations*

OLD ORDER OF RIVER BRETHREN  
BRETHREN IN CHRIST  
UNITED ZION'S CHILDREN

*By* WILMER J. ESHLEMAN

**T**HROUGHOUT the world the "pursuit of happiness," so necessary for successful democracy, depends upon the liberty accorded to humanity in regard to the rights, beliefs and customs of true religious worship. One of the outstanding examples of this philosophy was the policy of William Penn, who laid the cornerstone of religious freedom in what is now the United States by his founding of Pennsylvania in 1683.

It must be remembered that the first testing ground for this theory was in Lancaster County where Mennonites, Lutherans, Quakers, Brethren, Presbyterians, Reformed, Episcopalians, Moravians, Roman Catholics and others lived together in peace, all adding their contributions to the building of the structure which evolved into America's Garden Spot.

It is not a coincidence that so many shades of opinion colored the rainbow of religion at this time, because these differences date back to the Christian Reformation as led by Dr. Martin Luther and beyond.

From this reformation emerged the four great Protestant faiths — Lutheran, Reformed, Presbyterian and Anabaptists — but, as our subject deals only with followers of the latter doctrine, it is necessary to refer hereafter to Anabaptists only, who had accepted Menno Simon (a former priestly colleague of Dr. Martin Luther) as their leader. From this also emerged another small group often referred to as pietists, who never affiliated themselves under the leadership of Menno, but rather looked to Von Hochman

for spiritual guidance; although not believing in formal organization of religion in any form, Alexander Mack of Hesse Kassel organized them in 1708 into what we know today as the "Church of the Brethren." Their belief is based upon much of Von Hochman's teachings.

I cite this because the River Brethren descend directly from Mennonite origin (the followers of Menno Simon), but patterned their mode of worship after the early "Church of the Brethren."

The religious beliefs of many of the "plain" inhabitants of Lancaster County have been divided, or we might say balanced, by two trends of thought, which can be described as that of "progress versus orthodoxy."

For instance, to-day, Lancaster city and county can boast of many imposing church edifices of architectural beauty, and from these grand houses of worship the pendulum swings to the opposite side, that is from the elaborate to the extremely simple or utilitarian places of worship — or simply houses or barns in which to hold services — depending on the degree of "progress" that is permitted to penetrate into the thinking of the various "plain" denominations. Two unique groups of the latter type are known as the "Old Order of River Brethren" and the "Amish," who still assemble in houses or barns to worship, as did their fathers four hundred years ago.

The River Brethren usually worship in the homes of the members. If it is more convenient, on some occasions, they may rent a country schoolhouse in which to hold services, but that is the exception rather than the rule.

In order to inform any one concerned as to the origin and customs of these little-known and often misunderstood people, we must go back to the year 1778 in Lancaster County, when Jacob Engle of Lobata (then known as Stackstown), located east of Bainbridge, Pa., became dissatisfied with the mode of baptism as practiced by the Mennonite Church, as well as with certain other departures from Anabaptist orthodoxy. Jacob Engle's stand on these matters was influenced, no doubt, by the pre-Revolutionary religious awakening that swept through Lancaster County, led by such eloquent men as the former Mennonite minister, the Rev. Martin Boehm, of near what is now Willow Street, Pa., and the

Reformed minister, the Rev. Philip William Otterbein of Lancaster, Pa.

It has been said that many of the pioneer religious leaders to arise on the American Colonial scene were endowed by a certain sense of mysticism, not present in the lives of the rank and file of humanity. This mystic relation in most cases was accredited to some early event in life, and Jacob Engle was no exception.

According to the "History of the Brethren in Christ" by A. W. Climenhaga, Jacob Engle's parents were Ulrich Engle and Anna Breckbill, natives of Switzerland. It appears that Anna Breckbill became a member of the Reformed Church as apparently was her husband, Ulrich Engle. They were the parents of eight children, namely, Ulrich, Jr., Hans (John), Anna, Barbara, Catharina, Christine, Maria and Jacob, the youngest member of the family.

According to "Swiss and German Settlers of Southeastern Pennsylvania," by H. Frank Eshleman, the Breckbill name had been prominent in Anabaptist and Mennonite affairs in Europe for more than a century, so it is not surprising to learn that Anna Breckbill left the Reformed Church (which was the accepted church of the Swiss Government) to return to the faith of her fathers by joining the Mennonite Church before the birth of her youngest son, Jacob or "Yockley" as he was affectionately called after his birth on November 5, 1753.

At this time large groups of persecuted Mennonites and others were emigrating to Pennsylvania.

Anna Breckbill Engle had realized what the penalty would be for joining the church of her choice, and she and her family made their way to Rotterdam in Holland, where after some difficulty she succeeded in getting aboard the crowded ship, *Phoenix*. On October 1, 1754, according to Pennsylvania Archives, Series II, vol. XVII, page 439, Ulrich Engle appears as one of the two hundred and thirty-three male passengers, as well as Abraham Breckbuhl and Christian Brachtbul, who were perhaps brothers of Anna Breckbill Engle (misspelling of names in those days was common as the English clerks had difficulty in recording German names as given by emigrants.)

As women and children were seldom listed in the ship's list of passengers we can readily assume that Anna Engle, with her

eight children, accompanied her husband on the voyage across the Atlantic, which proved to be most hazardous. The *Phoenix* was commanded by Master John Spurrier and, if we account for a wife with every man not to mention any children, there would have been four hundred and sixty-six adult persons on board. We are told that the crowded ship did not allow room for any private possessions. Two merchant vessels, however, accompanied the *Phoenix* with cargoes of the passengers' possessions, but on the third day out one ship sank in a storm, carrying to the bottom all the worldly goods of Ulrich and Anna Engle.

As this merchant ship sank, some of the passengers of the *Phoenix* jumped overboard to rescue their meagre possessions but, when they tried to board the merchant vessels, the crews cut off their hands and they fell back to perish.

We are told there were fifty-odd infants at their mothers' bosoms on this voyage and, due to the terrible storms and crowded living conditions, only one little baby, named Yockley Engle, survived this perilous crossing.

On October 1, 1754, Anna Engle stood on the dock at Philadelphia with little Jacob, or Yockley, in her arms surrounded by the bereft mothers whose babies were buried at sea. As the farewells were given some of the saddened mothers expressed belief that only an act of Providence could have protected this only surviving baby, but not even his mother or father could have foreseen that he would become one of the pioneer religious leaders in this new land they were to adopt as their home.

We do not know the details concerning the arrival of the Ulrich Engle family in Lancaster County. He and his family were next heard of near what is today the village of Rowenna, Pennsylvania, where he (Ulrich) took up a swampy tract of land along the Susquehanna, on the western part of what is now the United States Army Depot at Marietta, Pa. Ulrich Engle died in 1756 and Anna Breckbill Engle died in 1759. They were buried in the little graveyard on the Engle homestead, and today the high wire fence of the Army Depot makes a bend around the plot where but six graves remain.

In the Orphans Court Records of Lancaster County the following guardians of minor children were appointed June 26, 1764:  
John Engle above fourteen years of age chooses

Henry Grove of Donegal.

Barbara Engle above fourteen years of age chooses Christian Farrer of Lampeter.

Christina above fourteen years of age chooses Peter Witmore of Manor Township.

Jacob Kauffman was administrator of the "Goods of Ulrich Engle" worth:

	£	s	d
	299	3	0
Charges .....	177	11	6
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
Balance left .....	51	11	0

On July 2, 1764:

"The Court appoints Peter Witmore of Manor Township guardian over the person and Estate of Jacob Engle, a minor Son of Ulrich Engle."

On October 23, 1765:

"Ulrich Engle (Jr.) Administrator of the Goods and Chattels, Rights and Credits which were of Anna Engle deceased, produced to the Court the Account of the Administration on the Estate of the said deceased, duly passed before the Deputy Register, whereby there appears a Ballance in the Hands of the Said Accountant of one Hundred and Ninety Nine pounds, Six Shillings and one penny half penny to be paid and distributed according to Law, which account being examined is approved of by the Court and the Said Ballance after deducting 12/ the Expenses of this Court is ordered to be paid and distributed as follows, by and with Advice and at the request of the said Ulrich Engle (Jr.) the Eldest Son of the Said deceased here in Court, viz.

That the said Ulrich retain for his share (refusing to accept a double share)

£ 28 . 7 . 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>

That he pay to Catharina Engle.....£28 . 7 . 8<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>  
To Anna Engle ..... ditto  
To John Engle ..... ditto  
To Barbara Engle ..... ditto

To Christina Engle.....	ditto
To Jacob Engle .....	ditto

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£198 . 14 . 1¼

According to Pennsylvania German Society, vol. 7, page 20, Jacob Engle joined the Mennonite Church as the choice of his mother in 1767 at the age of fourteen years; and it appears that he left the home of his guardian, Peter Witmore, at this time, and was hired out to a certain John Funk of Lobata as an apprentice to the weaver's trade and later went to work for Jacob Schock. He was now an alert young man of seriousness and it appears that he was aroused to a great extent by the Reverends Boehm and Otterbein, who were causing a religious sensation on the western frontier.

We have no way of knowing, but it might not be in error to assume that he attended the great revival meeting at the Isaac Long barn near Landis Valley in 1767. This was the celebrated revival meeting attended by hundreds from as far as Maryland, where links were forged in the chain of religious thought by Rev. Otterbein as he embraced Rev. Boehm and exclaimed, "Wir Sind Brueder" which was to be the conception of the denomination known as the United Brethren in Christ.

Although as great as the influence these two men may have had here in Lancaster County and elsewhere, their doctrine did not reconcile Jacob Engle in regard to his conception of the proper mode of baptism which he believed should be by immersion, which he interpreted the Gospel of St. Mark 1:5 to command.

"And there went out unto him all the land of Judea, and they of Jerusalem and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins."

As the Mennonites baptized by affusion he and a friend named Witmer discussed this problem at great length, but being unable to reach a conclusion satisfactory to their own spiritual conscience, although desiring to remain in the Mennonite fold, they wished to be immersed in baptism and appealed to the Rev. Philip William Otterbein to perform this rite upon them. Rev. Otterbein refused them saying that due to their previous baptism he could not conscientiously perform the rite of rebaptism.

According to "History of York County," by George R. Prowell, they then went to the Rev. George Miller, (a German Baptist Bishop, of what we know today as the Church of the Brethren); who agreed to perform the rite by immersion, but only upon their consent to become members of the German Baptist Church. This they declined, but the Rev. Miller, anxious to relieve these two troubled Christian pilgrims, gave them some kind advice.

He told them of the experiences of Alexander Mack, the founder of the Church of the Brethren, and how he led his small flock to the River Eder, near his home in Schwarzenau, province of Wittgenstein in Hesse Kassel, Germany, in 1708, baptizing them by trine immersion, and suggested Engle and Witmer do the same.

### **The River Brethren**

And so eighty years later, in 1778, the nucleus of a new denomination was created when Jacob Engle and his friend Witmer decided to baptize one another, it is believed, in the River Susquehanna, near Bainbridge.

They vowed never to disclose who baptized whom first and it has remained a secret to us to-day.

Some writers of topics and origins on the River Brethren have tried unsuccessfully to disprove any connection between the Mennonites and the River Brethren. Under the historical microscope of Lancaster County it cannot be proven otherwise.

According to Dr. Fayette C. Eshelman, late of Hazleton, Pa. (whose extensive genealogical records are now in the Lancaster County Historical Society files), Messrs. Aaron and Noah Weber of the Gehman Mennonite District of Berks County, Pa., which borders Lancaster County, possessed some information which the Doctor casually recorded in his genealogical records, and I quote, "Among the old archives (of the Gehman Mennonite Church) was a letter from Jacob Martin of Switzerland to Daniel Gehman, concerning the emigrants of 1754, many of whom were poor. The Mennonite church in Switzerland had paid their transportation over with the understanding that they would pay back to the church the money advanced them.

"This was done by the children and grandchildren of the ENGLS, but due to rate of exchange and different countries through which it had to go, by the time it reached Switzerland there was not much left."

According to the Pennsylvania Archives there were only three Engles who arrived in America in 1754, and they were Ulrich, George and Peter, who were no doubt relatives.

According to the Mennonite Cyclopedic Dictionary, page 97, Ulrich Engle is listed as a Swiss Mennonite.

I also interject a copy of Lancaster County Recorder's Office Book L, page 233. It throws some light on who was Jacob Engle's co-partner in baptism. The following deed proves that Peter Witmer was married to Jacob's sister, Catharina, and served as her guardian. He was also guardian for Jacob and it is not likely that we would be in error to assume that Jacob Engle and his brother-in-law, Peter Witmer, baptized one another.

HENRY LESHER & Ux

to

CATHARINA WITMER et al.

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS

That we Henry Leshar of the Township of Rapho in the County of Lancaster and Province of Pennsylvania, yeoman, and Frena, his wife (the said Frena being the daughter of Jacob Cety, late of Donegal Township in the County aforesaid and the sister of the within named Peter Cety) for and in consideration of the sum of One Hundred and Twenty Pounds Six Shilling and One Penny lawful money of Pennsylvania to us paid by John Hare<sup>1</sup> late guardian of the estate of the said Frena as and for her part and share of the Lands within granted according to a valuation appraisement thereof formerly made by order of the Orphans Court for the County aforesaid and also in consideration of the sum of Twenty-two Pounds and Ten Shillings lawful money aforesaid to us in hand well and truly paid by the within named Catharina, Anna, Ulrich, John, Barbara, Christina, and Jacob, children of the within Ulrich Engle, deceased, (the receipt and payment thereof we do hereby acknowledge) HAVE and each of us HATH granted bargained sold, aliened, enfeoffed, remised, released and forever quit claimed by these presents DO and each of us DOTH grant, bargain, sell, allein, enfeoff, remise, release and forever quit claim unto the said Catharina (now wife of Peter Witmer) Anna (now the wife of Henry Grove), Ulerick Engle, John Engle, Barbara Engle, Christina Engle and Jacob Engle, all our and each of our part and parts, share and shares, purport and purports whatsoever of in and to the within mentioned and described tract of One Hundred and Fifty Acres of Land, and of in and all the singular, the Homes, Outhomes, Edifices, Buildings, Ways, Waters, Water Courses, Woods, Underwoods, Liberties,

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<sup>1</sup> John Hare was a Mennonite elder or deacon according to Will Book B, vol. 1, p. 219 of Lancaster County Register's Office. In my possession I also have a copy of a receipt signed by this same John Hare where he received one bushel and three pecks of seed wheat from John Eshleman on March 29, 1749.—W. J. E.



Privileges, Advantages, Hereditaments and Appurtenances whatsoever thereunto belonging or in any wise appertaining and the reversions and remainders thereof, etc.

Signed June 12 in the year of our Lord One Thousand seven hundred and sixty-six.

Henry Leshner (Seal)

Frena Leshner (Seal)

Catharina Witmer

Anna Grove

Ulerick Engle

Barbara Engle

Christena Engle

Jacob Engle

Recorded July 24, 1776 at Lancaster.

According to "History of York County" by George R. Prowell, page 143, the Rev. Martin Boehm, at the close of the Revolution in 1784, made an evangelistic tour into Donegal and conducted a large revival. Prowell says in 1907 at the time of his publication, that hand-written notes still existed which listed Jacob Engle, John Engle, John Stern, Samuel Meigs and Christian Rupp (the latter two of York County) and a sixth unknown man as attending this revival.

It would appear that this revival was not without effect because Jacob Engle, as did many of his friends near Lobata with whom he talked at great length, now felt that something more than baptism was necessary, and who also desired baptism by immersion.

A year later, in 1785, a day was set and Jacob Engle agreed to perform the baptismal rite by immersion in the River Susquehanna upon twelve applicants.

Five of those names, preserved for us to-day, according to Pennsylvania German Society, vol. 7, p. 20, are John Funk of York County, Gnauss, Rohrer, Lichty and wife Barbara, and Barbara Heisey. Since John Engle, John Stern, Samuel Meigs and Christian Rupp accompanied Jacob Engle to the Rev. Martin Boehm's revival a year before and Prowell (page 143) tells us that Christian Rupp became one of the first River Brethren ministers of York County, we can assume that some of these may have made up a portion of the unnamed six, as well as Hans Moyer who in 1770 wrote a lengthy German manuscript entitled "Articles of Faith," according to Morris M. Engle's "Engle History," page 104,

who says, "It was found in the family bible of Rev. Daniel Engle" at his death in 1881. It runs parallel to and in many instances quotes the "Eighteen Articles of Faith" drawn up in Dortrecht, Holland, April 21, 1632, by a Mennonite General Conference. (See "Martyr's Mirror.") It also appears that a neighbor of Jacob Engle, one Simeon Ritter and his wife, the former Barbara Witmer, also agreed to be baptized, but as the time for the ceremony approached Simeon withdrew as a candidate for baptism. We are also told that as the eleven entered the water, Ritter termed them ranatics.

On May 3, 1773, Jacob Engle had married Veronica Schock, the daughter of his employer, who had lived at Lobata. The father-in-law had provided Jacob with a loom of his own and by the time of the above mentioned baptism, he had his own home near Lobata. Here he took his new converts to an upper room and held the first love feast of the River Brethren.

The new church was organized, and the mode of worship and custom of dress were patterned after the Church of the Brethren. The manner of dress differed from the Mennonites to the extent of beards, which Jacob Engle prescribed. We are told that convert Gnauss wanted both beard and mustache but later became separated from the new church.

It is easy to understand that the mode of worship should be patterned after the Church of the Brethren rather than that of the Mennonite because of Jacob Engle's zeal for baptism by immersion rather than by affusion; and from the former advice by the Brethren Bishop, the Rev. George Miller.

As to how the name of River Brethren was applied to this denomination has always been of more interest to those outside the church than those associated with it. The first recorded reference to a denominational name we find in a docket in the office of the Lancaster County Register of Wills — an unrecorded will written in German in 1817, and probated in 1821, by Magdalena Engle, widow of Ulrich Engle, Jr., a brother of the Rev. Jacob. Folded inside the German will is an English translation from which the following quotation is taken, "It is my will that twenty pounds of good and current money of Pennsylvania shall be paid out of my estate to the Elders of the Congregation of the Persuasion to which I belong for the use of the poor."

Due to the similarity of the Church of the Brethren, then known as German Baptist Brethren or Dunkard Brethren, many uniformed people believed then and still do that the River Brethren are the same. However, this is quite a misconception.

Jacob Engle's Brethren did not remain on the banks of the Susquehanna but settled in other communities, although visiting one another from time to time. We are told that it became a common phrase for those who lived away from the Susquehanna to say "Today we must go down (or up) to visit the River Brethren," referring to those who lived around Lobata near the river. And, too, we cannot discount their mode of baptism in the Susquehanna which also had its effect. At any rate, the name "River Brethren" stuck, to distinguish them from other denominations.

By the name of River Brethren, the church grew and prospered under the leadership of Jacob Engle, who became the first Bishop, with John Engle (his blood brother) and John Gish (a son-in-law of John Engle) as the first two deacons.

According to "Engle History," page 61, the Rev. Jacob Engle was a man of small stature, gifted with eloquence. We do not know how he received his education but are informed that he taught school at Lobata. On one occasion he was reproved by a neighbor for some reason, whereupon he reached in his pocket and handed his accuser one dollar and thanked him, in order that he would be reminded not to make the same error again. It also appears that he once differed with a Mr. Wealand, and so upon returning home he washed a bushel of turnips, procured a piece of beef from the family supply and took them over to Wealand's home in order that he might not be offended.

On February 10, 1832, the Rev. Jacob Engle, after a full and honorable life, passed on. He is buried near Maytown, Pennsylvania, in Reich's Cemetery. The large sandstone grave marker, about four inches thick, is inscribed in German and is still quite legible, as follows:

"Hier ruht ein alter Gries, der orbeite im werk Gottes wahr mit flies, nun ist er in sein Vatterland Jacob Engle wahr er genant sein nahm yetz veil besser ist er lebt und storb ein wahrere Christ er hat sein alter bracht furwahr 3 Monath 79 Jahr 5 tag darth lebt.  
Yetz in ewiger ruh."

Hier ruht ein alter grüß  
der arbeitsam mercklich gottes  
wohlthut fleiß mit ihm ist er  
in sein vaterland  
Jacob Engel untr. er  
gestand dem haken ist  
viel Jahre in der welt  
starb ein wasser sein  
er hat sein alt  
fürwahr ein wasser ist  
2 tag am 11. 1788  
ist in ewigen

Tombstone of the Rev. Jacob Engle in Reich's Graveyard, near Maytown, Pa.

## English translation :

"Here rests an aged Patriarch who labored in the work of God with true diligence. Now he is in his Fatherland. Jacob Engle he was called. His name now much better is. He lived and died a true Christian. He brought his age well nigh 3 months, 79 years and 5 days therein lived. Now in eternal rest."

### **The Stricklers of York County**

With the death of the Rev. Jacob Engle, Bishop of the River Brethren, the mantle of leadership fell on the shoulders of the Rev. Jacob Strickler of York County, Pennsylvania, who was confirmed as the new bishop.

According to "Stricklers of Pennsylvania," page 239, by the Strickler Reunion Association, the Rev. Jacob Strickler was born April 1, 1768, the son of a blacksmith. From York County Orphans Court Records, D 69, February 24, 1779:

"Comes into Court Henry Strickler and prayed that a Guardian may be appointed to take Care of the Person and Estate of Jacob Strickler aged Ten years and upward, the only minor Orphan Child of John Strickler late of Hellam Township deceased, Which being Considered by the Court, It is Ordered That the said John (sic) Strickler be and is hereby appointed Guardian of the person and Estate of the said Jacob Strickler, the minor Orphan Child aforesaid."

Henry Strickler was an uncle to Jacob.

In the meagre records of the River Brethren, the history of the Rev. Jacob Strickler until now has been to a degree obscure; and his relation to the Engles had been forgotten, due to the fact that the York County River Brethren later became separated from the original body.

His father, John, was born 1744, a son of the pioneer Ulrich Strickler who came to America on the ship *Charming Nancy*, landing at Philadelphia October 8, 1737. Ulrich acquired an assignment of two hundred acres of land in what is now York County. In 1741, Samuel Blunston granted him a partial license for the land. He died November 1, 1750.

An interesting report appeared in the "Page News and Page Courier of Luray, Virginia," August 31, 1934, concerning Conrad Strickler who was an uncle of the wife of Ulrich Engle, Jr.

Referring to the Border War in 1737 between Pennsylvania and Maryland, over the issue as to which state should have jurisdiction over York County, H. Frank Eshleman, page 263 of "Swiss & German Settlers of Southeastern Pennsylvania," lists the horrors endured by the settlers of that period and mentions a ruthless Captain Higginbottom of Maryland who seized six men digging a grave for a child. In cold winter weather, he starved them and eventually committed them to prison at Annapolis. The "Page News and Page Courier" lists these six men as Michael Farmer, Conrad Strickler, Henry Bacon, Joseph Welshans, Charles Jones and Joseph Evans, and also lists the site of the grave digging as being at Wrightsville in York County.

The charge against these six men was that they were Pennsylvania squatters on the so-called Maryland soil of York County. They were later released on bail.

In the York County Register's Office, Book J 9, Conrad Strickler of Hellam Township dated his will September 18, 1790, and mentions his wife, Christina, as sole executrix. Will was probated December 31, 1793. I believe we can assume this to be the son of the Conrad who was seized by Captain Higginbottom.

According to Genealogical Reports by Henry J. Young for the Historical Society of York County, vol 13, "Conrad Strickler fined £3-10 by warrant dated May 10, 1777, while a resident of Hellam Township for failure to 'meet and exercise in order to learn the art of military,' as was required in an Act of Assembly of February 14, 1777." He was a private in the Eighth Class of Captain Jacob Heyer's company (the Fourth), Second Battalion, York County Militia, within the period 1777-1780, in which capacity he paid fines aggregating £40 for non-performance of militia duty. He was also a private in the Eighth Class of Captain Jacob Comfort's Company, Third Battalion, York County Militia, 1780-1782, in which capacity he paid "class fines" aggregating £11-6s-11d before 1783, and substitutes and muster fines aggregating £6-4 from 1781 to 1785. Members of the Eighth Class of inhabitants of Hellam Township, classified under an Act of Assembly passed 1780, entitled "An Act to complete the Quota of the Federal Army," were required "to provide in fifteen days from this Date (January 30, 1781) one able-bodied Recruit for the Continental Army, to serve during the War" under penalty of a fine

of £15 *specie*. There are no records to show whether this class satisfied the requisitions or not.

In Christina's will, dated August 16, 1796, and probated November 9, 1798, she mentions her brothers, John, Christian, and Joseph, and Michael Bixler. We also know that Ulrich Engle, Jr., died 1799, and that his wife, Magdalene Bixler, had a sister Christina, so we can assume they were members of the same family. This brings the Engles and Stricklers together at an early date.

Christina Bixler Strickler also mentions her children to wit:

1. Veronica Strickler married . . . . . Ellemberger
2. Eve Strickler married . . . . . Ellenberger
3. Magdalena Strickler married the Rev. Jacob Schock Engle  
(a son of Bishop Jacob Engle)
4. Catharina Strickler married John Strickler
5. John Strickler married and deceased by 1796.

According to Deed Book T, vol. 3, page 36, of York County, the Rev. Jacob Strickler and Catherine Cormeny were the parents of the following children, to wit:

1. John Strickler, 1787-1865, never married
2. Barbara Strickler, 1788, married Valentine (?) Schock
3. Elizabeth Strickler, 1790, married Henry Good
4. Magdalena, 1792-1864, married Abraham Flory
5. Rev. Jacob Strickler, Jr., 1793, married Diana Meyers
6. Catherine Strickler, 1795-1884, married Samuel Landes
7. Rev. Joseph Strickler, 1797-1879, married Mary Leib
8. Mary Strickler, 1800, married Jacob Treiber
9. Anna Strickler, 1802-1869, married Henry Stoner
10. Samuel Strickler, 1805-1875, never married.

According to a York newspaper record of June 13, 1822, as compiled by Henry J. Young, "Jacob Trieber and Mary Strickler, daughter of the Rev. Jacob Strickler, of Spring Garden Township, were married by the Rev. Mr. Engle." We can assume this to have been Bishop Jacob Engle, as only a Bishop is eligible to perform the marriage ceremony in the River Brethren Church.

The foregoing court record also states that Rev. Jacob Strickler's property was sold to a David Witmer, with John Schock as witness. We recall that the Rev. Jacob Engle married Veronica Schock, and that he also baptized Peter Witmer sixty-four years before.

I do not know what relation Conrad Strickler was to the Rev. Jacob, but one thing is sure: they were all well acquainted in doctrine and were related through marriage to the Engles. I have cited the Strickler data from York County to prove the close friendship between these two families as the reason for the Rev. Jacob Strickler being called upon to lead the River Brethren after the death of the Rev. Jacob Engle.

The above should be sufficient proof that the Rev. Jacob Strickler was closely associated with the Rev. Jacob Engle and shared his faith for a long time, and the fact that the River Brethren deemed his qualifications great enough to enable him to step into the shoes of their founder and lead them, confirms the fact that he had been one of the early converts.

Rev. Strickler was a coppersmith by trade and resided at Stony Brook, Hellam Township, for many years. He married Catherine Cormeny, who was born April 2, 1765, and died March 28, 1841. Rev. Jacob Strickler died January 17, 1842, and both he and his wife are buried in the Strickler graveyard in Springettsbury Township, York County, Pennsylvania.

The River Brethren were now no longer an infant congregation who could worship in one group, but had assumed the proportions of a denomination with congregations and districts.

In 1839, the necessity for an additional Bishop arose in Lancaster County, as the denomination was growing rapidly. As bishops are elected by a vote of the membership, the Rev. John Gish, a son of Deacon John Gish, and the Rev. Jacob Hostetter were both candidates. Strange as it appears, they both received an equal number of votes; so both were confirmed as bishops. Soon thereafter, the Manor-Pequea District, or all territory south of and including the City of Lancaster, was separated from the Donegal District, and Bishop Hostetter assumed authority over Manor-Pequea, while Bishop Gish led the Donegal section, assisted by the aging Bishop Strickler of York County. The Rev. Daniel Engle became bishop of the Dauphin-Lebanon District and the Rev. Christian Hoover became bishop of the Franklin County District.

As the Donegal District was the cradle of the River Brethren, it is not surprising that, next to Bishop Strickler, Bishop John Gish should assume precedence in authority. That the Rev. Gish had many qualifications befitting his office as bishop is not to be



doubted, but it is evident that he did not exercise the proper diplomacy demanded of him at this time. He traveled quite extensively on trips which took him to Ohio, Illinois, Iowa and Canada. In his advancing years, in 1869, he visited Germany.

It appears that about 1839 the old issue so common to the followers of Anabaptism, that of progress versus orthodoxy, was looming again on the horizon of the River Brethren.

The orthodox group contended, as their fathers did centuries before them, that the Bible should be the only law in determining customs as to dress and modes of living; and that any deviation which was not in accord with the interpretation of certain gospel teachings by the founders of the church, was not to be considered in order, regardless of the opinion of the majority of the membership.

The progressive group interpreted the same gospel to be broad enough in its application that moderation, if it be the will of the majority of the church membership, should prevail.

It appears that although Bishop Jacob Strickler was rather inclined toward the orthodox group, he was able to keep the church united as long as he lived, but after his death in 1842 when the Rev. John Gish assumed the authority, the long-smouldering embers of dissention were fanned into open flame.

It also appears that the Rev. Jacob Strickler, Jr., a son of the old Bishop, had been confirmed as Bishop of York County; and at this time he was excommunicated from the church for his defense of orthodoxy. The great majority of the River Brethren of York County, as well as the Rev. Christian Hoover of Franklin County and those who chose to follow him, also a group of members of Lancaster County, declared themselves in accord with Bishop Jacob Strickler and his orthodox doctrine.

This orthodox congregation in Lancaster County chose as their first ministers Christian Musser (born 1803, died 1892) and Abraham Wissler (born 1820, died 1903). In 1860, this group chose as Bishop of Lancaster County the Rev. Jacob S. Hostetter (a son of the old Bishop Hostetter mentioned above), who lived and guided the destinies of this group who were termed Yorker Brethren, but which are known and registered today as the Old Order of River Brethren, until his eighty-eighth year of age.

Most of the Lancaster County membership remained in the progressive group of River Brethren which were later to become the Brethren in Christ.

### **United Zion's Children**

And, now, as the division was accomplished and both groups were again worshipping in the manner which suited each best, and all seemed to be well, another rumble on the far distant horizon was heard in the main body of River Brethren, who only wanted peace, but time and progress march side by side, as is so evident by this story.

This time, from the direction of Dauphin County where the rumble had been heard, a cloud appeared in the form of whispers for a church building in which to worship.

As the River Brethren advanced into the frontier they could not build large barns and houses adequate to house the whole congregation, and it appeared that the homes of some brethren had become more popular places for services than others, sometimes causing ill will.

Bishop Matthias Brinser of Dauphin County and his brethren felt it was necessary to construct a building for worship, whereas the majority of the church leadership disapproved; progress and orthodoxy were again engaged in conflict. In order to fully understand the situation it might be well to describe this able bishop.

Matthias Brinser was born in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, May 10, 1795; he married Catharine Heisey, and died July 27, 1889. He is buried on the old Brinser homestead near Middletown, Pennsylvania.

He was well educated, served as a schoolmaster in his early years and possessed a gift of eloquence unsurpassed by many of his fellow clergymen; he was ordained as a minister by the River Brethren in 1829 and some years later was confirmed a bishop.

He was exceedingly popular inside his church, as well as with members of other denominations, and was sought after to officiate at funerals everywhere. His ability is attested to by the fact that he preached in the Dauphin County Courthouse in Harrisburg upon request. This event did not increase his popularity with the more conservative element of the River Brethren, but his membership

in Dauphin County, who believed in a building for worship, were now ready to follow him.

After much discussion, as the issue gained momentum, a conference was called at the home of the Rev. John Engle, one mile from Lobata in Lancaster County, with Rev. Brinser present, according to "Pennsylvania German Society," vol. 7, by John K. Miller.

We are told that it rained all day and all night. And that the River Brethren leaders labored and discussed the good or evil which a church building would involve. This conference in the damp rainy atmosphere lasted until 2:00 A. M. the following morning but the Rev. Matthias Brinser, leaving earlier, had refused to yield the courage of his convictions.

In February, 1853, the River Brethren of Dauphin County had met and had already decided by unanimous vote to erect a meeting house. After the above stated meeting the following letter was received by the Rev. Matthias Brinser, Bishop of Dauphin County, from his brethren in Lancaster County.

Conoy Township  
Lancaster County  
May 16, 1853

Beloved Brethren:

We wish you the peace of God and the love of Jesus Christ with heartfelt greeting, we the undersigned brethren have held a council, concerning the contemplation of building a meeting house in your neighborhood, and have unanimously concluded to ask you that you shall not build it, as such a building we believe would become an open door to a great evil, and would make heavy hearts for many brethren, therefore, we request of you, out of heartfelt love, that you will accept our council.

Jacob Strickler	Christian Musser	Daniel Engle
David Stoner	John Engle	Henry S. Engle
John T. Gish	Henry Engle	Joseph Lehman
Jacob Hostetter	Henry Musser	David Engle
Jacob M. Engle	Benjamin E. Musser	John N. Graybill
Daniel Grove	John B. Engle	J. B. Hoffer
Michael Hoffman	Isaac Hershey	Jacob S. Engle
John Hostetter	Christian Hoffman	Jacob Grider
Benjamin Martin	Jacob E. Crider	

In the spring of 1855, in Dauphin County, in the corner of a cornfield a small meeting house was erected at a cost of about

\$400.00. It was weatherboarded vertically with unplanned boards and appeared more as a farmer's implement shed than a church. The interior was plastered and two old-fashioned chunk stoves served for heating; the seating capacity was about three hundred. It stood until 1893, when it was removed to straighten a curve on the railroad.

After the meetinghouse doors opened in the summer of 1855, the River Brethren suffered a second division by the excommunication of their bishop of Dauphin County, the Rev. Matthias Brinser, and all the members who chose to follow him.

Upon this action Rev. Brinser remarked "Sie fressen einmal was sie now kutzen" or translated, "They will some future day vomit up what they now refuse to swallow." Twelve years later Rev. Brinser's prediction came true when, in 1867, the River Brethren of Bedford County built the Woodbury meetinghouse, and the Lancaster County church fathers remained silent; in just ten years more, in 1877, the first church building was erected in Lancaster County at "Cross Roads," one mile west of Mount Joy, Pa.

Soon after the separation of Rev. Brinser from the River Brethren he was joined by a United Brethren in Christ minister, the Rev. Henry Grumbine of Lebanon County, who later moved to Ephrata, Pa.

The church of Rev. Brinser became known as the United Zion's Children, and is so registered today.

There is little enmity today between the United Zion Church and the Brethren in Christ (the name adopted by the River Brethren), and there is a sincere movement to reunite the two churches, as their worship, doctrine and customs are identical. There are many straws in the wind to prove that much is being accomplished along this line. For instance, the United Zion delegates attend the conferences of the Brethren in Christ, who in turn list them in the proceedings of their Year Book. Rev. John S. Brinser, a United Zion Bishop, of Elizabethtown, Pa., who retains much of the oratorical gift of his grandfather, the Rev. Matthias Brinser, is often invited to preach at special meetings of the Brethren in Christ; so we can assume that in a short time another religious breach will be healed, which is in keeping with the present trend of Protestant churches throughout the nation.

## **The Brethren in Christ**

The change of the name of River Brethren (termed by many as Dunkards) to Brethren in Christ came about at a convention held in Lancaster in 1861 as a result of the Civil War, when all religious denominations were compelled to register with the United States Department of War. Heretofore, they had little reason to choose a formal title or name and the term River Brethren had stuck; now it became necessary for the Federal Government to recognize the denomination to which Magdalena Engle had once referred as the "Congregation of the Persuasion." The delegates to the Lancaster convention in 1861 decided that since their church had assumed national proportions it was hardly fitting to continue under the name of River Brethren, and, instead, they chose the name of Brethren in Christ.

It might be well here to try to correct the confusion in the minds of the uninformed public regarding the Brethren in Christ and the Church of the Brethren. As stated before, the mode of worship of the Brethren in Christ was patterned after the Church of the Brethren, but there is no denominational connection whatsoever, and to-day the Church of the Brethren is very modern and progressive according to its location. In the Church of the Brethren, many churches have organs with trained choirs, the women are not compelled to wear caps except in service and sometimes the American Flag stands opposite the church flag at the pulpit. The Brethren in Christ shrink from these modern views, and advance more slowly, although they subscribe to all the modern conveniences of the present day.

The Brethren in Christ church has established itself in a large part of the world. They operate a large publishing house in Napanee, Indiana, and from its presses comes the monthly magazine "Evangelical Visitor," which was founded in 1887.

### **General Eisenhower's Ancestry**

In the annals of American public life quite a volume is devoted to men whose genealogical lines of descent run down direct from the Pennsylvania Germans of simple religious faith.

The Brethren in Christ stand high on the list of distinction on that score, and can boast that their faith sired no less a man than the American General Dwight Eisenhower, whose father,

David Eisenhower, lived in Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, in 1870, according to Census Records of Washington Township, page 284.

According to the Pennsylvania Archives, Second Series, vol. 17, p. 222, Hans Nichl Joshower (Eisenhauer), aged 50 years, arrived at Philadelphia, November 17, 1741. With him were John Joshower, aged 28 years, Hans Peter Josshower, aged 25, and Johannes Josshower, aged 16 years. We can assume these to be the sons of the above Nicholas Eisenhauer. They arrived on the ship *Europa*, commanded by Captain Lumnsdaine, from Rotterdam.

According to the New York Genealogical and Biographical Record, vol. 76, April, 1945, Hans Peter Eisenhower was the ancestor of General Dwight Eisenhower. He (Hans) married Elizabeth Groff, a daughter of Hans Groff.

His second wife was possibly Anna Maria Fischer, and his third wife was Anna Dissinger, whom he married in January 1777. Peter's will recorded in Will Book B 117, of Dauphin County, was dated 1795 and probated July 7, 1802, listing the following children :

- |              |               |
|--------------|---------------|
| 1. Michael   | 8. Jacob      |
| 2. Samuel    | 9. Catarina   |
| 3. Elizabeth | 10. Ann       |
| 4. Nicholas  | 11. Christina |
| 5. Barbara   | 12. Margaret  |
| 6. Magdalena | 13. Peter     |
| 7. John      | 14. Frederick |

Frederick Eisenhower, a son of Hans Peter and Anna Dissinger was born July 15, 1794, and was baptized a Lutheran, which appears to have been the faith of the Eisenhowers.

Frederick married Barbara Miller, born May 27, 1789, a daughter of John Miller and Susanna Raysor. Barbara Miller was of the River Brethren faith and, after marriage, Frederick left the Lutherans and joined the River Brethren. He was later ordained a minister of the River Brethren (Brethren in Christ) thus becoming the Rev. Frederick Eisenhower. He died on March 13, 1884, at Abilene, Kansas. His wife, Barbara, died January 1, 1862, before he left Pennsylvania, and is buried in Keefer's graveyard in upper Dauphin County, Pa.

Children of the Rev. Frederick and Barbara Eisenhower :

1. John D. Eisenhower, 1821-1840
2. Amy Eisenhower married Jacob Nivinger
3. Jacob Frederick Eisenhower married Rebecca Matter.

The Dauphin County census record of 1870 lists the real estate value of Jacob Eisenhower and wife Rebecca (grandparents of the General) as being \$13,000, with personal property valued at \$6,000. He was forty-four years of age and a farmer by profession, with the following children listed:

1. Susanna, aged 15 years
2. Lydia, aged 12 years
3. Amanda, aged 8 years, married Christian Musser formerly of Lancaster County
4. David, aged 6 years, married Ida Elizabeth Stoeber (parents of the General)
5. Abraham, aged 5 years
6. Ira, aged 3 years.

Christian Musser knew the Eisenhower family prior to their western emigration (about 1877), later following to marry the General's Aunt Amanda. Mr. Musser is a brother of the late Brethren in Christ Bishop, Levi O. Musser, of Mount Joy, Pennsylvania. According to George L. Heiges of Manheim, who visited Mr. Musser recently at his home in Abilene, Kansas, Mr. Christian Musser taught the Brethren in Christ Sunday School of Abilene, and had General Dwight Eisenhower in his Sunday School class as a pupil during the General's boyhood.

David Eisenhower was born at Elizabethville, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, September 6, 1863 and died March, 1942, in Abilene, Kansas.

The General was born at Denison, Texas, October 14, 1890. Thus we see arise in our day one of the greatest military leaders of all time whose parents were "conscientious objectors."

WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON

6 January 1948

Dear Mr. Eshleman:

General Eisenhower received your letter and appreciates the interest which prompted your inquiry.

It is believed that the relative to whom you refer is General Eisenhower's uncle, Mr. C. Musser, who resides in Abilene. We understand that Mr. Musser is a member of the River Brethren Church, which was also the church attended by General Eisenhower's mother and father.

Sincerely yours,

J. H. MICHAELIS  
Lt. Colonel, ADC  
Aide to General Eisenhower

Mr. W. J. Eshleman  
225 Miller Street  
Strasburg, Pennsylvania

WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF STAFF  
WASHINGTON

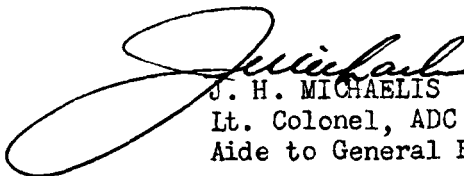
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Lt. Colonel, ADC  
Aide to General Eisenhower

Mr. W. J. Eshleman  
225 Miller Street  
Strasburg, Pennsylvania

(Colonel J. H. Michaelis, Aide to General Eisenhower, was born at the Presidio, San Francisco, California, in 1912, the son of Mrs. Louise H. Michaelis, of Lancaster, and the late Otho E. Michaelis; spent his youth in Lancaster; was graduated from West Point Military Academy, class of 1936.)



## Old Order of River Brethren

It is not our object to be partial to any of the River Brethren denominations and we recognize the Brethren in Christ as the main body founded by the Rev. Jacob Engle, but we cannot close this story of these sincere Protestant followers of this pioneer clergyman of the frontier without relating more about the daily life and customs of the picturesque group of the Old Order of River Brethren.

John K. Miller, in vol. 7, p. 20, of the Pennsylvania German Society publication, says, regarding this York County group, "These York County brethren became a distinct and separate church but it may as well be said now that this wing is really the 'Old Order'," for they preserve to this day the traditions of the early church fathers in the matter of dress, order of service, and place of worship. For it must not be overlooked that Jacob Engle undoubtedly prescribed to a great extent, the "forms" he advocated; for instance the wearing of a full beard was advocated, but the mustache was shaved off.<sup>2</sup>

As a matter of record we would have to give an account of the last division in the Older Order of River Brethren, occurring in 1921 after the death of Bishop Jacob S. Hostetter.

It appears that there was some difficulty in the church between a bishop and a minister in the State of Iowa in 1920; according to custom, a conference of bishops was held in Lancaster County at the home of Amos H. Musser of near Rohrerstown, Pa., to reconcile the opposing parties. The action taken at this council appears to have been unheeded in Iowa, with the result that the minister involved later moved to Lancaster County. It also appears that the bishops of the church agreed later to ignore their decision at this conference with the exception of Bishop Simon H. Musser, of Centerville (near Rohrerstown), Pa., who stood by the original decision of the council because he believed it to be right.

Later attempts at reconciliation did not bring the desired results. Bishop Musser, with a group of members supporting him, now known as the Silver Spring District and at present not connected with the original Old Order, became separated from those

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<sup>2</sup> In Europe in the sixteenth century the mustache was worn by all soldiers as part of the uniform dress. The Anabaptists shaved off the mustache, desiring no part of military significance.

who supported the opposite view and who formed the larger group of the Old Order, in the following territory — Bishop Jacob L. Horst, for Lancaster, York and Montgomery counties, Bishops Christian Meyers, Daniel Meyers and Daniel Hawbaker for Franklin County, Bishop Jacob Etter in Ohio, and Bishop Peter Keller in Iowa. So to-day, while they differ to a degree regarding the authority of leadership, they are fundamentally in accord as to custom and doctrine.

### RIVER BRETHREN CUSTOMS

The Old Order of River Brethren revere Jacob Engle of fond memory and, while they are orthodox in religion and custom, it must not be construed that they are reared from childhood in ignorance. The children receive the same education at the same schools attended by others, including college, if the child desires and the father can afford it. In their homes one can find all the modern conveniences with the exception of the radio and the automobile, unless it belongs to a son or daughter who has not seen fit to join the church of his (or her) own free will.

They do not believe it is sinful to own these things but believe that the ownership of them creates a great temptation to draw away from the straight and narrow path. Then, too, they reason with true Pennsylvania German thrift, that these things are costly and not a necessity. It might be well to remember that no River Brethren were ever in need of public welfare assistance.

The clothing worn by the Old Order of River Brethren is something which people not acquainted with it marvel at and believe them to be Amish, whom they resemble in many respects; however, there is a difference which is recognizable to the Lancaster County native.

First of all, the River Brother of the Old Order is always clean and neat when dressed in his Sunday clothes. His suit, which consists of a swallow tail coat, vest and broadfall trousers, is always tailor-made and fits him properly. His broad-rimmed hat, with a high crown, is never soiled. His long-flowing beard is kept washed clean and he makes a striking appearance — especially in the wintertime, when he wears a long black or gray overcoat with a cape which comes down over his shoulders. This is quite a contrast to the Amish, whose clothes are mostly homemade

and do not fit as well, while their broad-rimmed hat has a very low crown.

The wives of these River Brethren dress in a style accepted by most "Plain" denominations in Lancaster County, with the exception of their bonnet, which they make themselves (as well as their dresses). In contrast to the large broad Amish bonnet, the River Brother's wife wears a long, narrow bonnet, drawn smaller at the crown, with a loose bonnet curtain extending down to the shoulders. In wintertime all the Sisters wear shawls.

Their services are most unique for the twentieth century. A stranger in attendance, although most welcome, finds himself in an atmosphere similar to that of a rather antiquated book on Protestant history, where the characters of the pictures step forth and come to life. Provided he is familiar with the Christian Reformation, he can imagine himself in an Anabaptist service of the seventeenth century — there being one difference, however, that in America one is safe to worship as he pleases, whereas the Anabaptists were hunted down like wild animals.

These Old Order of River Brethren arrive for services by horses and wagons or by bus, or train (or by automobile, if their children who are not members own cars and bring the parents), while others employ a neighbor to take them to church. Many times some brethren who reside a distance from the place where services are to be held, arrive the Saturday night before and stay at the home of the brother who is host to the congregation. If a goodly number arrive on Saturday, a preliminary church service is held that night.

Sometimes the services are held on large barn floors, but more often in the houses, which are arranged for the purpose. Some of the interior walls have removable panels and those that are stationary have large archways. The whole first floor of the farm house is thrown open, furniture is moved to the outer walls, and long benches (which are transported from service to service) are placed in rows, and it thus becomes a house of worship.

Under an archway, if it be near the center of the house, is placed a small table with a pitcher of water, a Holy Bible and a hymn book, with both German and English hymns but minus notes. Above the archway there are wooden pegs which serve as hat racks, whereon the large, black hats are placed. At one end of

the table the bishop sits with his back against the side of the arch. The men sit on one side of the house facing the bishop's table, while the women sit on the opposite side, facing the same table and the men.

The ministers and deacons sit on the front benches next to the table, and their wives sit on the front benches of the opposite side.

On Sunday morning, services start at 9:00 A. M., with what is known as Experience Meeting, which consists of a brother or sister reading a hymn by verses, with the congregation joining in and singing the same, verse by verse. These hymns are mostly in German, unless visitors are present, when they oblige by singing some in English. After the hymn is completed in this manner, the same brother or sister will relate his (or her) difficulties and shortcomings, expressing a sincere desire to be a true Christian and to serve more faithfully his (or her) Maker — sometimes becoming quite emotional.

After about an hour the bishop announces that it is time to open the regular church service; whereupon a minister arises and stands at the end of the table, facing the bishop, as he starts to preach. He may be followed by as many as four or five other ministers whose talks are interspersed by the congregation singing a hymn, which may date back to the Reformation in style of singing as well as title.

The bishop then arises and offers prayer before he preaches a sermon. The time is now approaching 11:30 A. M. and as the aroma of boiling coffee penetrates one's nostrils, the bishop concludes his sermon and dismisses his audience.

The harmony which follows is as interesting to observe as their mode of worship. Some of the brothers move the benches aside, trestles are set in a row the full length of the house, with boards placed on top to serve as a table. Tablecloths of the finest linen cover the boards, and the sisters are seen carrying in food in large quantities, and soon the table appears like the ones pictured during the Thanksgiving celebration of the Puritans at Plymouth Rock!

The food is simple but very delicious, and may consist of stewed fruit, potatoes in the form of chips or salad, cold meat, cheese, bread or rolls, with baskets of delicious home-made cookies

of all varieties, for which the Pennsylvania German housewife is nationally famous. This food is served in some of the rarest of antique dishes, which have been handed down through generations. It would not be rash to assume that the Rev. Jacob Engle might have eaten from some of these same dishes, which, needless to say, many collectors would give no small sum of money to possess.

Those seated at the first table are the bishop, ministers, deacons and older members. Upon being seated one of the brethren will lead off with a hymn, followed by prayer offered by the same brother. Everyone at the table is welcome to eat as much as he or she can. After the meal the same procedure concerning a hymn and prayer is repeated, after which the diners depart, and preparations are made for the next table.

As fast as one group has eaten, clean dishes replace the used ones, and the table is refilled with food until the whole congregation has been fed.

Services are rarely held at the home of a brother more than once each year, but when it falls to his lot to be host to the church, he also provides the necessary food at his own expense, as was customary in the days of the Rev. Jacob Engle (before there was a phrase termed "the high cost of living").

After all persons in attendance have eaten, there is friendly conversation concerning the church, or perhaps the crops of the field as the men discuss ways and means of living closer to their concept of a Christian life; or perhaps how to raise more potatoes, corn or tobacco per acre; while the women appear to enjoy the whole situation in general, as huge stacks of used dishes are washed and everything is restored to everyday order.

As the afternoon wears on the congregation begins to dwindle, returning back to their respective homes by the same means of transportation that they used in arriving.

And, thus, as one departs from such a scene, the lid of the book of yesterday suddenly closes, and one is startled by a sudden reversion into the twentieth century, where mass production vices have supplanted the "Golden Rule," which governed our fathers who laid the foundation of America; but we realize anew that we are in America, where religious freedom is the cornerstone of our National Heritage. Where else in the world would it be possible to attend such a religious service?



Home of Jacob Engle.  
(On the right)

Bishop Jacob Engle's home is the ivy-covered stone house on the right, the origin of which is obscured by antiquity. The half of the house on the right is of brick, of later construction than the other half, which is of stone, with a stone arch beneath as a cellar. This is known as the Magdalena House because it remained the home of Magdalena Engle, a spinster daughter of Bishop Engle, until her death in 1864.

The large brick house on the left, according to Michael Hoffman of Maytown, a former owner, was built in 1868 on the arched cellar foundation of a previous building, which was perhaps the weaving mill of Bishop Jacob Engle at the time of his marriage in 1764, and later. We are told that the doors of this building were in two parts, such as stable doors are to-day. This type of door remained popular in mills until recently.

The present owner is Guy S. Hoffman.

In conclusion, I am giving an Engle genealogical record, as nearly correct as it is possible to do, of the first four generations who founded and strengthened the River Brethren Church.

## Will of Jacob Engle

### TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGINAL GERMAN WILL

Jacob Engel)  
Decd. )

I Jacob Engle in Donegal Township Lancaster County State of Pennsylvania healthy in body and mind and understanding considering the uncertainty of this transitory life undertake to make my last will and testament Now after my death it shall be held First it is my will that all my just debts shall be paid as soon as can be of my estate

Firther this is my will that my two daughters Elizabeth and Feronica shall have their yearly support out of the land which I now own what they need To this I order my sons John and Henry Engle Guardians and trustees of my 2 daughters and over the land to rent it and to provide for their support.

Firther I give my daughter Magdalena first of all my House clock, room stove, Kitchen and clothes cupboard, Kitchen furniture and beds as many as she will have for herself and the other two daughters Further this is my will that if my daughter Magdalena is willing to occupy my land that I own in Derry Township Dauphin County then my hereafter named Executors shall take five impartial men and let it be valued for a reasonable price and give her the title over it but if my daughter should not be willing to occupy this land and my children agree to sell this land they shall have the right Yet out of the value of the money my two daughters shall be supported as long as they live and also I impower my hereafter mentioned executors to give deeds or deed with as full title as I now possess it

Further this is my will that my five children Jacob John Daniel Henry and Magdalena Engel shall share or inherit alike what they receive and what shall remain to be divided if same die without bodily heirs then those remaining shall equally divide the estate left among them and I order my sons Jacob and John Engel to execute this my last will as executors according to the right of our land both living in Donegal Township Lancaster County State of Pennsylvania and also I acknowledge this to be my last will and testament and no other by me in uprightness made and regularly signed and sealed with my own hand before witnesses present dated the first March one thousand eight hundred and twenty five

John Engle Jacob Engle Jacob Engel (seal)  
(Will Book X, vol. 2, p. 145. Probated March 12, 1833.)

## Engle Genealogy

Children of Ulrich Engle and Anna Breckbill (immigrants):

1. Catharina Engle married Peter Witmer
2. Anna Engle, 1731-1805, married Henry Grove

Ich Jacob Engel in Sonngast Lincen hantw. in der Herr  
 bewilligt Maria gesind am lieb gedunden und beschand übertracht. In jüngst  
 mit dem Hergänglichen lobend wann wir vor meinem lebten Willen und  
 Testament zu machen die ab nach meinem Tod sollte geschehen. Darin nichtlich  
 ist das meine Wille das alle meine recht Mächtig sein sollen darob und das so  
 halt so sein. Von meinem kinder lasen schaff unter dem das mein Wille das  
 meine zu dem Tochter Elisabeth und Francis sollen in der für mich so halt haben  
 auf dem Land wo ich jetzt eigentl. was sie beschaffen das zu ordnen in meinem  
 sonne gesind und hantw. Engel gerdin und vor Walter meiner 2 Tochter  
 und über das Land ab zu der Frau und vor dem und so halt zu ordnen. Und  
 gebillt meines Tochter magdalenen zu dem vor mich sein. So soll sie haben so  
 und Kinder schaff. So ich gesind und hat so viel sie will für sich und die andere  
 zu dem Tochter das vor mich in meinem Tochter Wille ist das meine Wille. Das  
 meine Tochter magdalenen Wille ist meine Land zu besitzgen. Wo ich eigentl. in dem  
 Lincen so soll man nach gemachte executor sein. Und  
 ich meinet nament und ab schätzen. Lasen vor mich bezeugen. So soll ich  
 recht darüber geben soll über mein Tochter mit Wille. In dem Land zu besitzgen  
 und meine Kinder sind nicht das Land zu der Frau. So sollen sie sein. So  
 auf dem Wille. Mein Wille soll man zu dem Tochter. Und so soll man  
 und also beschmäftigen in meinem verordneten executor zu geben. So  
 brief der Frau brief mit so Wille. So soll ich ab jetzt besitzgen. So soll man  
 Wille das meine Kind Kinder Jacob gesind. Daniel James und Magdalenen  
 Engel sollen gleich. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 dem übrig ist. Wille. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 beschaffen gleich. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 gesind. Engel. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 sollen. In dem Land. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 ty. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 und Testament. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 stätigt gesind. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu  
 zigen. So soll man über das was sie anfangen. Und was noch zu

Ich  
 Jacob Engel

Jacob Engel



3. Ulrich Engle, 1743-1799, married Magdalena Bixler
4. (Deacon) John Engle, 1745-1826, married Elizabeth Schock
5. Barbara Engle, 1748-1783, married Dr. Benjamin Musser
6. Christiana Engle, 1750-1805, married Jacob Musser
7. (Bishop) Jacob Engle, 1753-1832, married Veronica Schock

Children of Ulrich Engle, Jr. (No. 3) and Magdalena Bixler:

(Lancaster Registrar's Office G-504)

8. Ann Engle, 1765-1795, married Christian Shelly
9. Barbara Engle married Henry Forry
10. Christiana Engle married John Wissler
11. Magdalena Engle, 1778-1832, married Abraham Stauffer
12. Mary Engle
13. Susanna Engle married Jacob Greider

Children of Deacon John B. Engle (No. 4) and Elizabeth Schock:

(Biographical Annals of Lancaster County)

14. Rev. Jacob Schock Engle, 1773-1841, married Magdalena Strickler
15. Anna Engle, 1771-1843, married John Heisey, 1768-1842
16. Elizabeth Engle married Deacon John Gish, Sr., 1775-1847
17. Feronica Engle, 1779-1846, married John Hoffman
18. John Schock Engle, 1775-1836, married Esther Long, 1780-1836

Children of Rev. Jacob Schock Engle (No. 14) and Magdalena Strickler:

(Lancaster Recorder's Office U-6-521)

19. Elizabeth Engle, 1801-1853, married Rev. Rudolph Good
20. John Strickler Engle, 1804-1831, married Catherine Nissley
21. Henry Strickler Engle, 1806-1894, married Nancy Brubaker
22. Rev. Jacob Strickler Engle, 1808-1894, married Barbara Wolgemuth
23. Martha Engle, 1811-1831,
24. Veronica Engle, 1813-1898, married Rev. Jacob N. Graybill
25. Susanna Engle, 1817-1822, married Rev. John P. Graybill
26. Rev. David Strickler Engle, 1820-1897, married Mary Hamaker

NOTE: According to York Co. Recorder's Office 3-U-172

Rev. Jacob Schock Engle was guardian of Children of Henry Schock of Hellam Township, York County, 1847.

NOTE: Rev. Jacob N. Graybill was the first River Brethren (Brethren in Christ) minister to preach in English.

Children of John Schock Engle (No. 18) and Esther Long:

(Lancaster Recorder's Office 6-K-60 and Engle History, p. 33)

27. John L. Engle, 1803-1874, married Maria Stern by whom there were six children. He then married his first cousin (widow) Catherine Nissley Engle, who had one daughter, Elizabeth Engle, by her first marriage to John Strickler Engle. Elizabeth married Rev. Rudolph Good and according to Lancaster Registrar's Office B-2-275 both were dead by 1874.
28. Christian L. Engle, 1804-1887, married Martha Schock
29. Jacob L. Engle, 1807-1889, married Mary Long
30. Elizabeth Engle, 1812-1848, married Benjamin Hershey

31. Esther Engle, 1813-1898, married Nicholas Peck
  32. Joseph Engle, 1821-1872, married Barbara Brenneman
- Children of Bishop Jacob Engle (No. 7) and Veronica Schock:  
 (According to Engle History and Will)
33. Elizabeth Engle, 1774-1837,
  34. Veronica Engle, 1776-1833,
  35. Jacob Engle, Jr., 1778-1842, married Magdalena Heisey in 1800 and Barbara M. Kauffman in 1824
  36. John Engle, 1779-1862, married Elizabeth Moyer
  37. Magdalena Engle, 1783-1864, unmarried
  38. Rev. Daniel Engle, 1788-1881, married Maria Landis and Leah Seiders
  39. Rev. Henry Engle, 1789-1853, married Hannah Myers

NOTE: According to Engle History, p. 64, Elizabeth (No. 33) and Veronica (No. 34) Engle had the misfortune of eating seeds of Stamonium Weeds in childhood which affected their mental faculties for life.

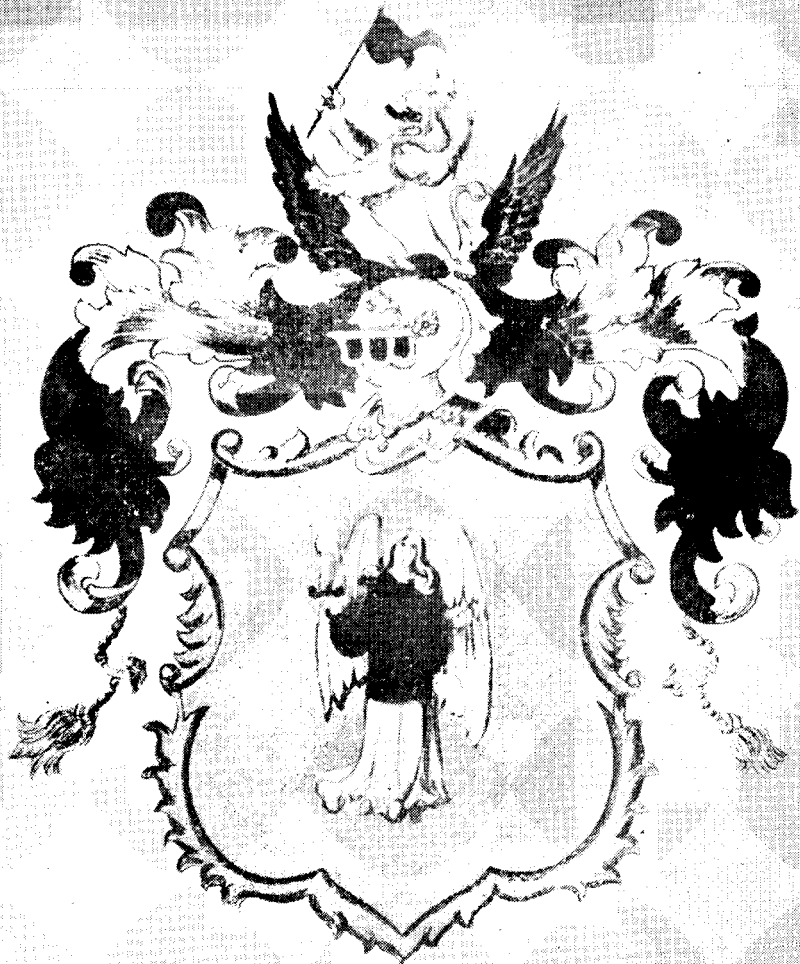
Magdalena (No. 37) never married and lived on the old homestead until her death, and the old house, now owned in 1948 by Frances Hoffman, is still known as the Magdalena House.

Children of Jacob Engle, Jr., (No. 35) and Magdalena Heisey (1776-1820):  
 (Lancaster Recorder's Office T-1-86)

40. Elizabeth Engle, 1801-1875, married Martin E. Heisey (1795-1884) and moved to Ohio
41. Jacob Engle, III, 1803-1872, married Nancy Moyer and moved to Ohio after 1845
42. Frances Engle married . . . . Brubaker
43. Barbara Engle, 1810-1892, married Jacob Hershey and Peter Leichty
44. Susanna Engle, 1813-1850, married David Shelly
45. Mary Engle, 1816-1876, married Jacob Cassel and moved to Milton, Ohio

Children of Rev. Henry Engle (No. 39) and Hannah Myers:  
 (Lancaster Registrar's Office V-1-478)

46. Jacob M. Engle, 1818-1818
47. Henry M. Engle, 1819-1897, married Eliza Breneman, Elizabeth Musser and Fanny Nissley
48. Magdalena Engle, 1827-1904, married John K. Stauffer
49. Abraham M. Engle, 1831-1913, married Barbara Nissley and moved to Moonlight, Kansas
50. John M. Engle, 1832-1909, married Martha Shelly
51. Anna Engle, 1837, married John B. Musser
52. Rev. Jesse Engle, 1838-1900, married Elizabeth Nissley  
 Moved to Kansas and was one of the first Brethren in Christ missionaries to South Africa, where he established the Bulawaga Mission, and at which place he died.



Engle

The Engle Coat of Arms.

## Musser Genealogy Appendix

It is interesting to note that the name of Musser is quite prominent in River Brethren History, as well as in that of the Reformed Mennonite, whose origins are quite similar, occurring near the same time (see vol. 49, no. 4, Lancaster County Historical Society pamphlet).

According to an age-old Musser family record in possession of the Rev. Henry Musser of Rohrerstown, Pennsylvania (Reformed Mennonite), John Musser purchased the old Musser homestead at Turkey Hill in Manor Township, Lancaster County, in 1744, from John Wistler who had secured a patent for it in 1741. In 1752, Jacob Musser, a son of John, purchased the home on Turkey Hill. He was the father of the following:

1. John Musser
2. Jacob Musser who married Christiana Engle, 1750-1805
3. Dr. Benjamin Musser who married Barbara Engle, 1748-1783
4. Anna Musser

Dr. Benjamin Musser purchased the homestead in 1773, and operated what was perhaps the first private hospital in Lancaster County in the old stone house, which is still standing (1948).

Dr. Benjamin Musser and Barbara Engle had the following six children:

1. Jacob Musser—born 1771, died 1848,  
married in 1798 to Catherine Whisler
2. Anna Musser—born 1772, died 1857,  
married in 1792 to Henry Brennehan
3. Maria Musser—born 1774, died 1833,  
married in 1795 to Jacob Souder
4. Dr. John Musser—born 1777, died 1826,  
married Elizabeth Neff
5. Henry Musser—born 1779, died 1822,  
married in 1801 to Susan Neff, and moved to Cumberland County, Pa.
6. Christian Musser—born 1781, died 1835,  
married in 1802 to Barbara Neff.

The above Henry was the father of Dr. Daniel Musser, the great Reformed Mennonite bishop, author and physician.

The above Christian was the father of the Rev. Christian Musser, born 1803, and becoming one of the leaders of the Old Order of River Brethren.

Barbara Engle Musser died on December 21, 1783, and Dr. Benjamin then married Magdalena Bossler on March 23, 1784, by whom there were eleven more children:

- 7-8. Twins born and died October 12, 1784,
9. Benjamin Musser—born 1786, died 1787,
10. Dr. Joseph Musser—born 1787,  
married in 1811 to Anna Hershey.

11. Barbara Musser—born 1789,  
married in 1816 to Michel Kauffman.
  12. Benjamin Musser—born 1790, died 1865,  
married Maria Nissley.
- The above Benjamin was the grandfather of the Rev. Henry Musser of Rohrerstown.
13. Dr. Martin Musser—born March 15, 1793, died 1849,  
married Anna Hostetter.
  14. Magdalena Musser—born March 15, 1793 (twin to Martin)  
married in 1812 to John Hess.
  15. Daniel Musser—born 1796, died 1811,
  16. Elizabeth Musser—born 1797,
  17. Susannah Musser—born 1800, died 1800.

## Brethren In Christ Ministers and Bishops

### *Donegal District*

	<i>Residence</i>	<i>Born</i>	<i>Ordained</i>	<i>Died</i>
1. Jacob Engle (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....		1753	1778	1833
2. Christian Rupp, York Co. ....				
3. Jacob Strickler (Bishop) York Co. ....		1765		1841
4. Christian Musser, Lanc. Co. ....		1803		1892
(Founder of Old Order)				
5. Jacob Strickler, Jr., York Co. ....				
(Founder of Old Order)				
6. John Gish (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....		1800		1875
7. Jacob Hostetter (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....		1799		1888
8. Matthias Brinser (Bishop) Dauphin Co. ....		1795	1829	1889
(Founded United Zions Children)				
9. Henry Engle, Lanc. Co. ....		1789		1853
10. Jacob S. Engle, Lanc. Co. ....		1773		1841
11. Rudolph Good, York Co. ....				
(Founder of Old Order)				
12. David S. Engle, Lanc. Co. ....		1820		1897
13. Isaac Detwiler ....		1828	left the church	
14. Benjamin Gish, Lanc. Co. ....			1870	
(Moved to Kansas)				
15. John Wolgemuth, Lanc. Co. ....		1828	1870	1912
16. Jacob S. Engle (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....		1808	1873	1894
17. John Longenecker ....				
(Became affiliated with United Zion)				
18. George Arnold, York Co. ....			1880	1900
19. Jacob N. Martin, Lanc. Co. ....		1847	1884	1939
20. Henry S. Hoffman, Lanc. Co. ....		1853		1893
21. Aaron H. Martin (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....		1894	1901	1914
22. Abraham Z. Hess, Lanc. Co. ....		1859	1894	
23. Jonas N. Mumma, Lanc. Co. ....		1863	1898	1906

24.	Andrew Lehman, York Co. ....		1901	1921
25.	Abner H. Martin, Lanc. Co. ....	1875	1905	1944
26.	Levi O. Musser (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....	1874	1906	1942
27.	Irwin W. Musser (Bishop) Lanc. Co. ....	1881	1915	
28.	John R. Lehman, York Co. ....	1893		
29.	Harry L. Brubaker, Lanc. Co. ....	1894	1928	
30.	John E. Lebo ....	1884	1919	1947
31.	Samuel O. Brubaker, Lanc. Co. ....	1904	1937	
32.	Benjamin E. Thuma, Lanc. Co. ....	1908	1942	
33.	Paul W. McBeth, Lanc. Co. ....	1908	1943	
34.	Walter Reighard, Lanc. Co. ....	1889	1946	
35.	J. Earl Musser, Lanc. Co. ....	1919	1947	

*Rapho District*  
*Lancaster County*

		<i>Born</i>	<i>Ordained</i>	<i>Died</i>
1.	Christian Brubaker .....	1772		1852
2.	Jacob Thuma .....	1799		1878
3.	Henry Brubaker .....	1802	1845	1879
4.	Abraham Brubaker .....	1806	1845	1879
5.	Benjamin Shelley .....		1873	1935
6.	John Gible .....	1825		1887
7.	Isaac Detweiler .....	1828	1880	1904
8.	Abraham Hostetter .....	1826	1880	1917
9.	Daniel Wolgemuth .....	1844	1879	1917
10.	David Wolgemuth .....	1835	1879	1917
11.	Henry B. Hoffer (Bishop) .....	1859	1892	1935
12.	Amos Sheetz .....	1856	1895	1928
13.	Abraham Shelley .....	1868	1904	1904
14.	Henry O. Musser .....	1870	1907	1946
15.	Christian Lehman .....	1866	1907	1910
16.	Allen B. Brubaker .....	1864	1910	1938
17.	Christian H. Moyer .....	1894	1926	
18.	Graybill Wolgemuth .....	1892	1932	
19.	Monroe Dourte .....	1888	1936	
20.	Henry A. Ginder (Bishop) .....	1911	1938	
21.	Arthur H. Brubaker .....	1915	1946	

*Manor-Pequea District*  
*Lancaster County*

		<i>Born</i>	<i>Ordained</i>	<i>Died</i>
1.	Jacob N. Graybill (Bishop) .....	1811		1892
2.	David Rush .....			1884
3.	John Breneman .....	1810		1897
4.	Christian Keepert .....			1875

5.	George Sides .....			1908
6.	Henry L. Heisey (Bishop) .....	1844		1912
7.	Simon Graybill .....			1898
8.	Christian Miller .....			1906
9.	Jonas Hoffman .....	1840		1898
10.	Eli Engle .....		1898	
11.	Noah Z. Hess .....		1898	
12.	Jacob L. Heisey .....	1868	1907	1943
13.	C. N. Hostetter (Bishop) .....		1907	
14.	C. N. Hostetter, Jr. ....		1920	
15.	J. H. Martin .....		1921	
16.	Henry N. Hostetter (Bishop) .....		1929	
17.	Cyrus Lutz .....		1934	
18.	Frederick Frey .....		1939	
19.	J. Z. Hess .....		1946	

Bishop Levi O. Musser (Donegal), Minister Henry O. Musser (Rapho), and Christian O. Musser (Abilene, Kansas), were sons of Henry Musser, whose sister, Martha (Mrs. Daniel S. Heisey) was the grandmother of Deacon Daniel M. Heisey, of the Old Order of River Brethren.