

# Martin Meylin

## A Progenitor of the Pennsylvania Rifle

By HERBERT H. BECK

### The Pennsylvania Rifle

IN THE first half of the eighteenth century there was developed in southeastern Pennsylvania a type of firearm that was new to the world. It revolutionized gunmaking. This firearm soon became known as the Kentucky rifle. It has also been called the American rifle and the Pennsylvania rifle. The last of these names, the most fitting and appropriate, is selected for use in this treatise.

The Pennsylvania rifle was the evolutionary product of guns long used in southwestern Europe. The predecessors of this innovation in riflemaking, known as riffeln—the German verb riffel means to put grooves into a gun-barrel—had been made in that part of Europe since about 1500.<sup>0</sup> These riffeln are recorded as being “short, heavy, clumsy, an inch or so in bore, terrific in recoil, spiraled and deep grooved by guess and not by knowledge of cause and effect, slow to load, more powerful but only a little more accurate than a good smoothbore. The bare lead ball was driven down the barrel by blows of a mallet or a hammer upon an iron ramrod, and after the first shot had fouled the barrel reloading occupied fifteen minutes or more. And the rifles of 1700 were in the same stage of undevelopment as they had been two centuries earlier.”<sup>1</sup> This record is supplemented by another writer who says: “the development of firearms during the centuries was influenced by national characteristics, use and local tendencies. Thus the German type, used at short range and in forests, was heavy, short and elaborate in design. The Swiss rifle, used in mountains, was not so heavy to carry and the design, while retaining some of the German characteristics, was simpler and intended for longer ranges. Some of the German rifles were used like shot-

guns, without sights; but the Swiss had notch and eye sights for more accurate shooting.”<sup>2</sup>

It is highly possible that the elusive *gemsen* (chamois), the favorite game of Alpine hunters, was the main factor in the improvement of the precision of the riffel, as the use of that firearm spread from its birthplace (Vienna) into Switzerland.

Curiously enough, rifled guns, during their period in Europe, were used mostly or entirely by hunters. That is the source of the name “Jaeger” riffel, Jaeger meaning hunter. Jaeger rifles, crude as they were, were the best of their time.<sup>3</sup>

Rifles were not used for military service, to any extent, during the sixteenth, seventeenth and most of the eighteenth centuries. During that period, of many wars, at least up to 1790, the infantry of the European armies carried smoothbore muskets. Discharge was made in volleys by squadrons, with about as much accuracy of fire as grape-shot from a cannon.<sup>4</sup>

The Pennsylvania rifle was a direct descendant of the Jaeger riffel. A typical Jaeger is in the Dillin collection. It is a short, clumsy, heavy flintlock, about .75 caliber, with 25-inch barrel, which is deeply rifled, one-half turn in the length of the barrel, with seven regular and seven narrow grooves. Its date of manufacture is about 1660.

In America the distances a hunter or soldier had to carry his rifle and the ammunition for it, as well as the distance from the base of supplies, all tended to demand the most efficient arm, using the lightest charge, which would kill its deer, wolf or bear, or even stop its enemy, at a considerable distance.

One or more expert gunsmiths, in a small group of early settlers, conceived the design of the rifle which the new conditions of life demanded — the rifle which was to revolutionize gunmaking in the world. This new arm, when it came to its perfection, was strong and fairly light. The barrel was partly or entirely octagonal and 40 to 42 inches long. The early types were longer, usually 50 or more inches. It averaged about .45 caliber. The stock, with a curved butt-plate, gracefully made, usually of curly maple, extended the entire length of the gun. Front and rear sights were well coordinated. Rifling was deep and carefully grooved with a full knowledge of cause and effect. The ball used in this rifle was 3/100 of an inch smaller than the bore. Placed in a greased patch

of rag or leather it was loaded into the barrel with a hickory ramrod. There was usually a patchbox on the right side of the stock-base which had a cheek-piece on the other side.<sup>5</sup>

The new gun shot where it was aimed; it shot with greater precision and at greater distance than any arms the world had known before. It used less ammunition, it was more quickly loaded, it was easier to carry than the Jaeger. It was the Pennsylvania, the so-called Kentucky rifle.

For about a century and a half, until about 1880, when breech-loading rifles came into general use, the Pennsylvania rifle, through its flintlock and percussion-cap periods, in its field, dominated the world.

Among the immigrants into America in the early part of the eighteenth century there were many Germans, mostly from the Palatinate, French Huguenots and Swiss. They came here to avoid compulsory military service, escape from religious persecution, or in a spirit of adventure accepting Penn's widely advertised invitation to settle in his broad domain. These people, though dominantly farmers, included numerous craftsmen, skilled in various trades. Conspicuous among these artisans were gunsmiths. They came from the only part of Europe where rifles were being made to any extent. Some of these gunsmiths were skilled riflemakers.

Further evidence will show that Martin Meylin was one of these.

### **Lancaster County, Birthplace of the Pennsylvania Rifle**

Rifles had been made in America, in a small way, even prior to 1700, but they were only repetitions of guns well-known in Europe during that period. Robert Edward Gardner, in his "Arms Fabricators, Ancient and Modern" (1934), lists eight gunsmiths in Boston and New Amsterdam between 1646 and 1677. Some of these gunsmiths were probably riflemakers. The character of the guns made by these early makers is properly explained by Herman P. Dean, of Huntington, W. Va., one of the greatest collectors of rifles in America and a leading student of that subject, who says: "I know of some good New England rifles properly signed and dated as early as 1652, and from then on through the latter part of the seventeenth century and the first two decades of the eighteenth century, but these guns are quite different in architecture from the true Pennsylvania rifle, commonly known

and erroneously called the Kentucky rifle."

All the literature on the Pennsylvania or Kentucky rifle points to the fact that this gun, the best rifle in the world of its day, had its origin in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Authoritative works on the subject are "The Kentucky Rifle" by J. G. W. Dillin (1924), "Firearms in American History" by Charles Winthrop Sawyer (1910), and "Lancaster Rifles" by H. K. and G. L. Landis (1943). "The So-called Kentucky Rifles as made in Lancaster County," by D. F. Magee, "The American Rifle," by W. U. Hensel, "Lancaster Rifles" by F. R. Diffenderffer, "Henry E. Leman, Riflemaker" by Herbert H. Beck, are all good papers on the subject in the publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society. Horace Kephart, Cora A. Weber Lindsey, Robert Edward Gardner, and many others have written on the subject.

All converge to Lancaster County as the birthplace of the Pennsylvania rifle.

Dillin, who may be looked upon as the leading authority, after elaborate research, covering all the regions of early settlement in America, says: "In view of the data at hand, there would seem to be no doubt that the early smiths of Lancaster gave the world the first Kentucky rifles." Again he says: "While Swiss and German emigrants were steadily pushing westward, a number of them preferred going up the Schuylkill to the Reading district, and still others at the same time were on their way up the Delaware River to the Lehigh region. Later on both of these districts, and others nearby became famous for their rifles, but all known facts point to Lancaster as the great early rifle center, as it was the schooling point for the skilled apprentices who later followed the emigrant trails south to the Carolinas and West to the Ohio River country."

Sawyer says: "Before 1760 Lancaster had practically a monopoly at riflemaking."

National recognition of Lancaster as the home of the rifle is shown in many records during the Revolution, like, "March 30, 1776. The Committee of Safety, in Philadelphia, expressed a need for 300 rifles, and looked to the Gunsmiths of Lancaster County to provide the same." <sup>6</sup>

"Resolved from Hanover Township, Lancaster County, June 4, 1774; That in the event of Great Britain attempting to force unjust laws upon us by the strength of arms, our cause we leave

to heaven and to our rifles." 7

"Supreme Executive Council at Lancaster, February 20, 1778. Ordered, that William Henry, Esq., be directed to supply to the Hon'ble Thos. Uril, Esq'r, with one hundred Rifles." 8

That riflemaking was an essential industry in Lancaster in 1776 is indicated by: "Jan. 29, 1776. We have prevailed upon Capt. Hubley to permit the Gunsmiths' apprentices, whom he had enlisted, to return and work with their masters. . . . The gunsmiths assure us that if their apprentices who are employed in the Business are taken from them, they cannot go on with their work." 9

The King's army was well acquainted with Lancaster and its rifles: Colonel George Hanger, British officer under General Tarleton, writing after the campaign in South Carolina in 1780, says: "I never saw in my life better rifles (or men who shot better) than those made in America; they are chiefly made in Lancaster, or two or three other towns in that vicinity, in Pennsylvania." 10

The Lancaster County rifles were indeed a big factor in the success of Washington's army. William Henry, Joel Ferree and others had contracts to make arms for the Continental Army, and there were many other independent craftsmen in Lancaster County making rifles for the cause under the direction of the Committee of Safety. The Pequea Rangers, Morgan's Riflemen and other special companies went out equipped with Lancaster rifles. Most of these men carried their own rifles, which they had used in hunting deer, turkey and squirrel. They carried good guns and they knew how to shoot them.

While the rank and file of the Continental army carried bayoneted muskets—and records show that both smoothbore muskets and bayonets were made in Lancaster 11—the assistance of scattered companies of expert riflemen, using Pennsylvania rifles, was of distinct importance in Washington's final victory. 12

Expansion into the West depended largely on Lancaster rifles. In this Daniel Boone (1735-1820), carrying a rifle of the Lancaster made type, did more than anyone else to establish and spread the fame of that arm and to give it the name Kentucky rifle.

Lancaster County's long list of riflemakers, the majority active in the eighteenth century, confirms the conclusion of outside authorities that this county is the birthplace of the Pennsylvania rifle. 13

There was no similar area in North America of that century with a list one-third as long as that of the Conestoga Valley.

No county in America contributed more to the progressive development of the American colonies and the newly-formed republic than did Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. It gave the New World the Conestoga wagon, the Conestoga horse and the Pennsylvania rifle. Their collective importance can scarcely be equalled.

### **Martin Meylin's Homeland and Ancestry**

Martin Meylin came from the Canton of Zurich in Switzerland. His original name was Meili, Meyli or Meily. Even when he came to America, in 1710, his name was sometimes spelled Meili. Jacob Schneebeli, Swiss Archivist of Obfelden, Switzerland, in a letter to the Lancaster County Historical Society, in 1909, says that anciently the Meilys were originally from Hedingen in the Canton of Zurich, and that there were doctors and professors of that name there in 1909.<sup>14</sup>

According to the "Martyrs Mirror" (Thielem von Bracht, 1660), there were Meilys in the Knonau district of the Canton of Zurich in 1638 and 1639, and that there Hans Meily, a very old man, subjected to religious persecution, was imprisoned and tortured. Later his sons, Hans and Martin, were imprisoned and their children were put out among strangers. This Martin Meily, son of the aged Hans Meily, was the chronicler of the Mennonite persecutions who furnished material for the "Martyrs Mirror." He was evidently a scholar. I. Daniel Rupp, in his History of Lancaster County (1844), says he was a minister above mediocrity. One of the "children put out among strangers," a nephew of the chronicler, Martin, and a son of his brother, Hans, was the Martin Meylin who came to the Pequea Valley in 1710.<sup>15</sup>

Born about 1670, Martin Meylin spent his early life in the Canton of Zurich. H. Frank Eshleman, from his research, concludes that his father, with others, fled westward to Emmenthal, near Berne. Martin Meylin probably lived there for a time. Rupp says that many of the Mennonites fled from Zurich, Berne, Schaffhausen, etc., in Switzerland, to Alsace, above Strasburg, where they remained for sometime before coming to America.

There was a Hans Millan in Germantown prior to 1691, for in that year he was naturalized. (Patent Book A, Folio 275, Recorded Rolls Office, Philadelphia.) He is listed as a resident

there in 1698. (Cassell's History of the Mennonites.) This probably was the father of Martin Meylin. Martin may have resided in Germantown in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Rupp, through Abraham Mylin, "Millwright," says that Martin Meylin transacted much of his fellow-settlers business abroad. It is possible that he left Germantown and returned to Europe to assist in the colonization arrangements. There certainly was a Martin Meili with the immigrant group (who later came to the Pequea Valley) in London, June 27, 1710. (See letter written by that group, Vol. XIV, No. 2, p. 61.)

Soon after Martin Meylin came to America, what seems to have been then the feminine form of his original name Meili, which would be Meilin, became the family name. He is the Martin Milin of the assessment list of 1718. Thereafter it was Meylin, soon and finally Mylin.

The author, in his research, has found the name spelled in fifteen different ways.

### **Settlement in the Pequea Valley**

Martin Meylin was one of the classic group of first settlers in Lancaster County, who came into the Pequea Valley, October, 1710. The others were Jacob Miller, Martin Kendig, Hans Herr, Christian Herr, John Bundely, Wendall Bowman, John Funk and Christopher Franciscus, all with their families. All came from Switzerland and all were Mennonites. Subjected to religious persecution for generations, they fled to a better land.

They had shipped from London on June 29, 1710, on the *Mary Hope*, John Annis, master, and had come up the Delaware to Philadelphia in September.<sup>16</sup>

Collectively they were men of means, for they took out warrants for 6,400 acres for which they paid £500, then a large sum of money. In the value of the pound at that time £500 was \$2,433. That land to-day, with its buildings, is worth more than \$1,000,000. The 6,400 acre tract extends entirely across the West Lampeter Township of to-day, east and west about five miles.<sup>17</sup>

All of this tract was limestone country — Conestoga limestone. There seems to have been agricultural experience shown in its selection. These Mennonites from Switzerland were good farmers.

Of the landowners within this 6,400 acres, Martin Meylin had the smallest tract, 265 acres. Martin Kendig with three tracts

of 1,060, 530 and 265 acres, was the largest landowner.<sup>18</sup>

The Pequea Party must have traveled the sixty miles into its promised land along the Conestoga road, the well established trader's trail from Philadelphia to the Blue Rock Ferry on the Susquehanna. This trail was not difficult to follow. They had an opened, passable road the greater part of their journey, the thirty-eight miles from Philadelphia to Thomas Moore's (now Coatesville), for at least that much of the Conestoga road had been opened in 1705.<sup>19</sup> Then there were twenty-two miles along the trail, through the Gap, to the easternmost extremity of their 6,400 acre tract. (Now Jackson Street in the borough of Strasburg.)

This original trader's trail, the Conestoga road, also called the Long Lane, runs through the 6,400-acre tract past the still famous Big Spring, which was the geological feature and doubtless the most prominent landmark of their region. The Pequea party probably made the journey in four or five days.

Martin Meylin and his group came into the primeval forests of the Pequea Valley. These great forests of Lancaster County were dominantly, in large areas entirely, hardwoods, with scattered conifers.<sup>20</sup> The hardwood growth of the Furnace Hills and the Welsh Mountains, with the hemlock ravines of the River Hills, still show the ancestral characters of these unfarmed parts of Lancaster County.

Deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, occasional bison, wandering elk, unlimited numbers of wild pigeons, and enormously abundant squirrels, then mostly the gray phase of the fox-squirrel,\* helped

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\**Sciurus nigerius neglectus*, the gray phase of the fox squirrel, locally known as stump-ear gray squirrel, seems to have been the most plentiful squirrel of the county prior to about 1860, according to the numbers (7) in the Linnaean Society Collection at Franklin and Marshall College, and tales told by old gunners to Abraham R. Beck (1833-1928). Even as late as 1749 there was a bounty on squirrels in Pennsylvania. ("The Three Earls" F. R. Diffenderffer.)

"Elk driven by stress of weather, beasts of prey and man from its main range in the Pocano Plateau, occasionally came to the lowlands of the Susquehanna and Delaware" (Rhoads, *Mammals of Pennsylvania and New Jersey*, 1903.) There is an Elk River about fifteen miles south of Lancaster County.

"The bison had eastward migrations from the Ohio Valley as far as the Delaware River." (Rhoads.) Early traders along the Susquehanna reported buffalo there. "Buffalo Springs" just north of the Furnace Hills, was probably named for animals seen there by early settlers.



the larder while the lands were being cleared for crops, and cattle and swine were being raised. There was good fishing in Pequea and Mill creeks. The black bear, the timber wolf and the cougar, for some time, were a menace to the hogpen and the sheepfold.

In 1710 the Shawanese Indians, locally called Piquaws or Pequeas, lived at Pequehan, one and one-half miles up the Conestoga from its confluence with the Susquehanna; and a few years later they had villages at the Blue Rock Ferry (now Washington Boro) and at Decanoga (now Columbia), all within a radius of fifteen miles from the Big Spring. The Ganowese (Conoys) were just across the river at Conejohela (now Long Level), about fifteen miles away. Conestoga Indiantown, where the Conestogas, the racially-mixed descendants of the great Susquehannocks, had entertained William Penn nine years before (1701), was along a tributary of the Conestoga (in what is now Manor Township), eight miles from the Big Spring. There were scattered bands of Delawares coming through the region. By 1721 the Nanticokes had a village along Indian Creek — in what is now Clay Township — twenty miles north of the Big Spring. There is no record that any of these local Indians ever lived in any other than good neighbor policy with these early settlers of the Pequea Valley. Mylin family traditions say that they came to Martin Meylin's gunshop to trade. Later, as at the time of Pontiac's uprising in 1763, there were Indian troubles thirty miles to the north; but the Pequea Party knew the red men only as friends.<sup>21</sup>

In 1712 Daniel Ferree, eldest son of a leader of a group of Huguenots, Madame Ferree, and her son-in-law, Isaac Lefevre, took out a patent for 1,200 acres in what is now Strasburg and Paradise townships. This tract was immediately to the east of the Pequea Party.<sup>22</sup>

Soon numbers of Germans, mostly from the Palatinate, and Swiss took out lands now in Lancaster County. They occupied most of central and northern Lancaster County and outnumbered other nationalities. South of the Pequea, against what later was to become the Mason and Dixon line, and in western Lancaster County, Donegal, there was heavy Scotch-Irish settlement. More Huguenots came into the Ferree tract and adjoining lands. Welsh came into the eastern tip of the county, now Caernarvon Township. English, never in as great numbers as the German-Swiss and

Scotch-Irish groups, were scattered chiefly about Hickorytown, in 1730 to become Lancaster; and Decanoga, in 1730 to become Wright's Ferry, later Columbia.

The assessment list of 1726 showed 384 taxables, the equivalent of about 2300 people, within what is now Lancaster County. By the time the county was erected from Chester, 1729, and named Lancaster, by Quaker John Wright, of Lancashire, this number had increased to about 3500. <sup>23</sup>

### **Martin Meylin, Lancaster County's First Riflemaker**

In a region, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, which all authorities call the birthplace of the Pennsylvania or Kentucky rifle, Martin Meylin was the first riflemaker.

Rupp, in his "History of Lancaster County" (1844), says: "Martin Meylin, son of Hans Meylin, was the first gunsmith within the limits of Lancaster County; as early as 1719 he erected a boring mill on what is known as Mylin's run, on the farm now owned by Martin Mylin, West Lampeter Township. He was esteemed one of the most skillful workmen in iron of his day. He was an active, useful member of the new colony, and transacted much of their business abroad." \*

Rupp had obtained his facts from Abraham Mylin "Millwright" (1771-1854), who was a great-grandson of Martin Meylin. That this was Rupp's source of information is evidenced by his statement: "We here present a few copies of many papers in the possession of Abraham Mylin, Millwright, a grandson of Martin Meylin, . . ." Rupp must have visited Abraham Mylin to have

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\*Among these papers are two indicating Meylin's useful activity in the new colony. In 1729 an act was passed to naturalize many of the Swiss and German settlers.

April 30 1730—Received of Martin Meylin £14 4s 6d for the naturalization of seven persons.

Samuel Blunston.

In 1729 the fears of the government were excited because the German-speaking people adhered to each other, and used their language exclusively; their emigration to this country was to be discouraged by passing an act to lay a duty of forty shillings per head on all aliens.

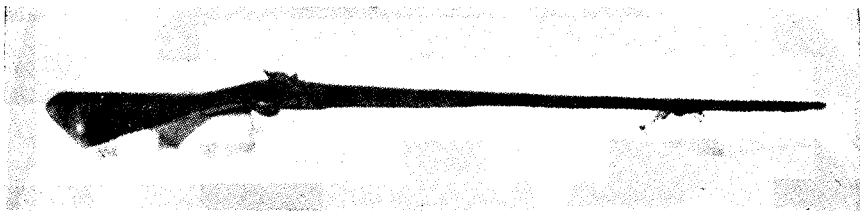
Received, September 29, 1731, of Martin Meylin, £8 11s 8d for passage and head money of John Eschellman.

Thomas Lawrence.

Rupp, History of Lancaster County.

had access to these papers. Abraham Mylin, Millwright, must have shown the "boring mill" to Rupp. The gunshop was only about five hundred yards from where the Millwright lived, at what is now Mylin's Corner.

Abraham Mylin had undoubtedly got his information from his father, Hans Mylin (1739-1823), who as a ten-year-old boy personally knew the original Martin Meylin, who died in 1749. He must have seen his grandfather working in his gunshop. A man who was born in 1739 would know or know of all the important gunmakers of the early period in Lancaster County. He would also have definite records of the dates of that period.



MARTIN MEYLIN RIFLE  
Made Probably Prior to 1735

Coming into the Pequea Valley in 1710, it is unlikely that Martin Meylin would have started his trade as a gunsmith before 1718 or 19. The first years of settlement meant prolonged work in clearing the forest lands and in building.

Nor is it likely that he, then 49 years old, would have delayed starting what was prospectively a lucrative business to a later date. 1719 would be the logical year.

A "boring mill" is a shop where gun-barrels are bored or rifled. In these gunshops the barrel was made from a flat bar of soft iron, of the proper length, which, after being heated, was forged around an iron rod or mandrel. It was then closed or welded into barrel form. This hammering process was done with a trip-hammer lifted by water-power; though sometimes, with greater effort on the part of the smith, it was done by hand. The rough interior of the barrel now had to be smoothed off, and this was done by a boring tool usually driven by hand, though sometimes by water-power. If a rifle was to be made, the smoothed

interior of the barrel was straight or spirally grooved, always by hand, using a rifling-bench tool.<sup>24</sup>

While all gunsmiths are not riflemakers, evidence points strongly to the fact that Martin Meylin rifled his gun-barrels in the shop which Abraham Mylin, Millwright, showed to Rupp, and which is still standing along Mylin's Run, probably as early as 1719.

Martin Meylin, in 1719, about forty-nine years old, had evidently come to America as an experienced craftsman in gunmaking. He was in the Pequea Valley a month after he landed at Philadelphia. He brought his trade with him. He had come from a region where skilled craftsmanship was highly developed and where rifling gun-barrels was in active practice. The local demand was for a rifled gun which would kill its big game or its Indian at a considerable distance. Furthermore, the inventory of material in this gunshop, along Mylin's Run, taken in 1751, shows distinctly riflemaking tools.

When Martin Meylin died in 1749 he bequeathed "Unto my loving son Martin Mylin (1715-1751) all those my three tracts of land in West Lampeter Township containing together seven hundred acres or thereabouts with all buildings and improvements thereon; viz: the plantation and tract of land whereon I now live and that whereon my said son now lives, and the tract adjoining, etc."<sup>25</sup>

The son mentioned, Martin Mylin, died two years later intestate. The court appointed three men to appraise the personal possessions of this second Martin Mylin. There is no record that Martin Mylin (1715-1751) was a gunsmith. The first Martin Meylin, gunsmith, probably followed his trade into his last years. It is most likely that an apprentice or two had carried on the work. It is evident that the inventory of his son's belongings, made two years after the father's death in 1749, as applied to gunshop material, included most of the gunmaking tools and stock which had accumulated in the stone workshop since it was started in 1719. This inventory, still in the Lancaster courthouse, in its original spelling, reads:

#### INVENTORY OF MARTIN MYLIN

(Register of Wills 27 1751)

A True & perfect Inventory of all the Goods & Chattels of Martin Mylin of Lampiter in the County of Lancaster, Late deseased,

Praised by the Subscribers the 27th day of August, 1751,

|  | £   | s  | d |
|--|-----|----|---|
| To Money Cash at.....  | 35  | 10 | 6 |
| To Bonds and Notes at.....                                       | 638 | 12 | 9 |
| To 8 gunnt Lockes at.....  | 14  | 0  | 0 |
| To 2 ½ lbs Powder at 2/0 lb.....                                 |     | 5  | 0 |
| To 2 Stills & Worm Tups.....                                     | 30  | 0  | 0 |
| To ½ Tunn of Iron at.....  | 14  | 0  | 0 |
| To Hammers and Pincers at.....                                   | 3   | 10 | 0 |
| To Auger and Anwell at.....                                      | 1   | 5  | 0 |
| To Old Iron at.....  | 4   | 0  | 0 |
| To 2 Pares of Stilgarts, files &<br>Sundry Sort of Tools at..... | 3   | 0  | 0 |
| To Sundry Sort of Tools at.....                                  |     | 8  | 0 |
| To a GrineStone.....   |     | 5  | 0 |
| To Sundry Sort of Riffels Tools.....                             | 10  | 0  | 0 |
| To 8 gunn Lockes at.....   | 2   | 0  | 0 |
| To 2 Bick Iron at.....   | 5   | 0  | 0 |
| To Prass Riffel at.....  | 6   | 0  | 0 |
| To 90 Gunne Stockes at.....                                      | 3   | 15 | 0 |
| To Boplar Boards & Boards for Gunn-Stockes.....                  | 1   | 10 | 0 |
| To Sum Casting Mowles.....                                       |     | 8  | 0 |
| To Two Anwells at.....   | 14  | 0  | 0 |
| To one vice at.....  | 2   | 0  | 0 |
| To Sundry new files at.....                                      |     | 10 | 0 |
| To Hoghot of Liquare at.....                                     | 10  | 0  | 0 |

(Also farm and household supplies, horses, cattle, etc.)\*

Praised by us the Subscribers

Christian Haer  
Adam Brenemann  
Hans Rohrer

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\*Among the animals in this inventory the highest-priced one is a stallion at £18. Could this have been one of the progenitors of the Conestoga horse, which for a century was the best draft horse in America? It well might have been. The year, 1751, and the region, Lampeter Township, are in accord with the record of the Conestoga horse as evolved in Lancaster County. See "The Conestoga Horse," Herbert H. Beck, Vol. XLIV, No. 5.

In this inventory the high priced items are gunlocks (£16), iron (£14) and rifle tools (£10). The latter doubtless included one or more rifle-benches, with their guides, boring and rifling tools, etc. The half-ton of iron at £28 a ton, must have been bar iron,<sup>26</sup> which, though it might have been imported, was probably first obtained at Rutter's Forge (1716), along the Manatawny Creek (now in Berks County), later at Pine, Pool or McCall's Forges (1725) along the same creek. With little doubt, after 1726, the bar iron came from its nearest possible source, the Kurtz (bloomery) Forge, along the Octoraro Creek, fifteen miles from the gunshop.<sup>26b</sup>

The Bick iron (£5) was probably rifle iron, Bichse, in Pennsylvania-German, meaning rifle (not gun). The appraisers had difficulty enough even to speak English, let alone write it. It is likely that the "2 at £5" were rifled barrels.

Gunpowder was valued at 2 shillings a pound.

Brass rifle, (£6), is most likely brass, rifle or rifle brass — metal for stock-butts, trigger-guards, etc.

There were no finished rifles in stock. With the enormous demand they must have been sold as quickly as they were made.

Scattered through the general material, minor parts, as with "Sundry sorts of tools," there must have been some hammer-flints. These probably came from their main source, the Dover Cliffs, along the English Channel. Some of these flints from England came to America long before 1700. They are found among the trader articles in the Indian graves in Lancaster County.

The "mowles" were probably bullet moulds.

The stills, worm and tubs (high at £30) and the hogshead of liquor, (£10), were not unusual, even among the Mennonites. Many of the early farms in Lancaster County had stills to use up the excess grain.

Three anvils, many hammers, 16 gunlocks, half a ton of bar iron — enough to make a hundred and twenty-five gun barrels — 90 gunstocks, indicate a considerable amount of business in the shop. Boards for gunstocks prove that the stocks were made in the shop, not brought in from another shop, as was sometimes done. Together with the other items of the inventory this would prove that finished rifles were assembled in this shop.

Martin Meylin was more than a blacksmith gun-barrel maker. He was a riflemaker.\*

With apprentice assistance Martin Meylin might have made 2500-3000 rifles during his thirty year career in this gunshop.

Only one of Martin Meylin's rifles from this shop along Mylin's Run is known to-day. It belongs to Martin B. Mylin, a son of the late "Squire" Samuel M. Mylin, who lives in Pequea Township, about four miles south of the gunshop. This gun has always been in the family, handed down from father to son. The barrel is marked M M, evidently with a chisel. It is a smooth bore probably with its original rifling bored out. Its original flintlock has been replaced by a percussion nipple and hammer. The lock-plate of this replacement, which shows by its imperfect fit into the stock that it is probably not the original, is marked "Ketland & Co." † The barrel which is round throughout, is 50" long and 11/16" in diameter. The front sight, 1/2" long, is brass. The rear sight, iron, is welded on the barrel at the hammer. It is a V groove, 1 1/4" long and 1/8" deep. Aligned with the front sight it tends to a delicate aim. The slim single trigger has its toe curled back. The stock, which is the length of the gun, is made of curly maple. Stock-butt, trigger-guard, which is rather broad, and the four ramrod guide-rings are brass. The stock has simple decorative carvings near the lock. It has a 2 1/2" drop. There is no patch-box or cheek-piece. The entire length of the piece is 65". It is well-balanced, not muzzle-heavy, and it is easy to carry and to aim. It weighs 7 1/2 pounds.

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\* That Martin Meylin was a good craftsman in wood as well as iron is evidenced by a stoutly built, arch-back chair, traditionally made by him, now in the possession of Martin B. Mylin. Like the Martin Meylin rifle, it had come down from father to son.

† It is likely that this rifle was changed into a percussion gun before 1850. Henry E. Leman, great Lancaster gunsmith, was certainly making flintlock rifles in 1835 but soon after he changed to percussions. About that time too many rifled guns were bored smooth. The big game was gone from Lancaster County by that time, and a smoothbore shotgun was of much greater use than a rifle for the small game available hereabouts. Leman's flintlock and percussion rifles went mostly into the expanding West. During that period, 1835-1850, and of course later, large numbers of early flintlock rifles underwent this change to percussion shotguns. There were plenty of local gunsmiths to make the change.

Records indicate that Ketland & Co. of Birmingham, England, made many gun-parts for the American trade.

See "Henry E. Leman, Riflemaker," by Herbert H. Beck, Vol. XL, No. 3. L. C. H. S.

While it is possible that the first rifles Martin Meylin made in his new shop were of the Jaeger type, the kind he had probably learned to make in Switzerland, the character of this gun of Martin B. Mylin's proves definitely that for at least a considerable part of his career as a gunsmith he made a greatly improved American form, for this trim gun is an early phase of the true Pennsylvania rifle.\*

Certainly made before 1749, it probably came from the gunshop along Mylin's Run some years earlier, possibly before 1735. Judged by its primitive, though efficient, rear sight it was probably one of Martin Meylin's earlier rifles.†

### Martin Meylin's Gunshop

The converging records of the Mylin family agree that the old shop along Mylin's Run, on the Harry H. Snavely farm, is the original gunshop of Martin Meylin, Lancaster County's first gun-

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\* Dr. W. Hess Lefevre, a descendant of Philip Lefevre, early local gunsmith, and a collector of old guns well versed in their technique and lore, studied this rifle with the author at the home of Martin B. Mylin. He agrees with the author that it is an early phase of the true Pennsylvania rifle. He does not doubt its authenticity as a Martin Meylin piece.

† Major William G. Renwick, of Tucson, Arizona, has a rifle with "Martin Meillan Germantoun 1705" inscribed on the barrel. In a letter to the author he describes the piece as follows: "Weight 7 lb. 7 oz.; length overall 61 $\frac{3}{4}$ "; caliber .64; external diameter of barrel at breech, 2.4"; thickness of barrel at muzzle, .075"; rifling 8 grooves, twist to right, mid depth with wide lands. Its stock is of German style characteristic of the period, with a cheek-piece, full fore-stock and comparatively thick hind-stock. The barrel is semi-octagonal and its forward part is not much thicker than the average fowling-piece. Fortunately the piece has not been refinished and retains its original patina, for which reason I am convinced of its authenticity. I am most interested in your account of the converted rifle marked M M, which from your description must be a more advanced Kentucky design."

It is the belief of the author that this piece of Major Renwick's was actually made by the Martin Meylin, of this treatise, during his probable residence in Germantown. While admittedly the historical records of the Mylin family during that early period are not complete, evidence would indicate that the Hans Millan who was in Germantown in 1697 was the brother of the chronicler of the Mennonite persecutions in the Martyrs Mirror, the father of the "children who were put out among strangers." One of these children was the Martin Meylin who came into the Pequea Valley in 1710.

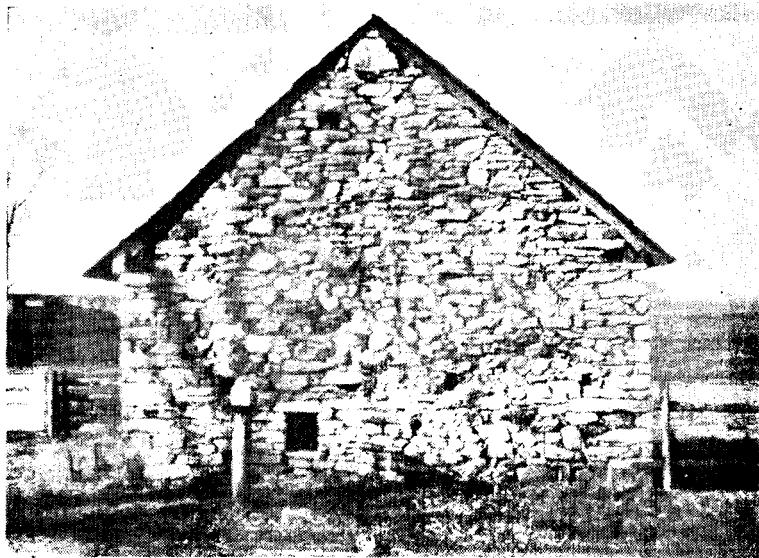
Granting the authenticity of Major Renwick's rifle, it is highly unlikely that there were two riflemakers of the same name in the same period. In 1705 the Martin Meylin who came into Lancaster County was about thirty-five years old — at his prime as a riflemaker.

The Martin Meillan rifle at Tucson, Arizona, with its .64 caliber and its thick hind-stock, seems to be an advance on the Swiss-Jaeger type with the beginnings of the Pennsylvania rifle grade. It well might be considered one of the earliest phases of the type of gun which within a few decades was developed into the true Pennsylvania rifle.



smith — the same shop that Rupp called a “boring mill” when it was pointed out to him by Abraham Mylin, “Millwright,” in 1842.

Miss Barbara K. Mylin took the writer to the old shop and said: “My father told me that this is the gunshop where Martin Meylin bored the first gun-barrel in Lancaster County.” Her father was the late State Senator Amos H. Mylin (1837-1926).



MARTIN MEYLIN'S GUNSHOP, 1719

Showing Chimney Hole Above and Power-shaft Entrance Below

He was a scholar and an historian. He had lived half-a-mile east of the old gunshop and he was well versed in the family records.

Martin Haverstick said of the old shop: “My father-in-law, the late ‘Squire’ Samuel M. Mylin (1849-1920), always told me that this was Martin Meylin’s original gunshop of 1719.” The “Squire” had inherited Martin Meylin’s original papers, which Rupp mentions, from Abraham Mylin, “Millwright.”

When Martin Meylin in 1710 came on his 265 acres (Patent of 1711), that tract was against the Long Lane at its south. A few years after 1712 a tract of 700 acres (Survey of 1714, Patent of 1717) was taken out by Hans Meylin.<sup>27</sup> According to family traditions (Barbara K. Mylin), he was a brother of Martin Meylin,

one of the children who had been "put out among strangers" in the persecution in Switzerland. He died in 1727.

The Harry H. Snavely farm of to-day, and the wheel-house site, adjoining this farm to the north, were parts of the 700 acres of Hans Meylin's.

In 1718 Martin Meylin acquired 46½ acres of his brother's land, which included the meadow where the gunshop stands.<sup>28</sup> In 1722 he purchased another 100 acres from his brother, and soon after the latter died, in 1727, Martin Meylin got 300 more of the original Hans Meylin tract.<sup>29</sup> Collectively, with his original 265 acres, this made the 700 acres "or thereabouts," which Martin Meylin, in his will of 1747, left to his only son, as already noted.

Since the second Martin Mylin (1715-1751) died intestate, the court turned over to the eldest son, Hans (1739-1823) the entire 700 acres with the provision that proper payments be made to his brothers and sisters.<sup>30</sup> Hans willed the gunshop farm to his son, Martin Mylin (1765-1845), who was known as "Smith" Martin.<sup>31</sup> This was the Martin Mylin mentioned by Rupp as owning the gunshop property in 1842. "Smith" Martin, doubtless so-called because he used the gunshop for blacksmithing, willed the farm to his brother, Jacob (1774-1857),<sup>32</sup> who in turn willed it, through the court, to his grandson, Martin K. Mylin (1839-1918); his son "Valley" John having died a few months before the will was written.<sup>33</sup> Martin K. sold the farm to John B. Mylin (1810-1899),<sup>34</sup> who sold it at public sale to Benjamin Snavely, the father of Harry H. Snavely.<sup>35</sup> Harry H. took over the farm in 1897, worked it for his father for ten years, and then came into possession. He has lived there ever since — a prosperous Lancaster County farmer.

The gunshop is 19'2" x 23'3"; walls to the eaves 8'8", to the ridge-pole 17'4". The ridge-pole runs almost east and west (west 10° north). The pitch of the roof is 45°. The walls are 18" thick. It is built of Conestoga limestone, which evidently was quarried at an outcrop 100 yards to the northwest. With the limestone there are many boulders of milky quartz, scattered through the walls. This quartz is common in the mantle rock of the region. It evidently was easily found supplementary building material for Martin Meylin, who probably built the shop himself. In the foundation there are a few blocks of the same sandstone of which

the Christian Herr house is built. This classic house with "17CH HR19" on the lintel of its door, is three-fourths of a mile to the southeast of the gunshop. It stands on an outcrop of sandstone, of which it is built entirely. The former "Palace of Sandstone,"\* about 350 yards south of the gunshop, was built of the same material.

The buff-colored mortar in the walls of the shop is a mixture of lime and this same sandstone, which was easily broken and ground into sand.

The chimney and forge-block were against the eastern wall. Outlines of the chimney, about 20" wide, extending from the chimney hole down to the position of the forge-block, which was about 3' high, are still visible in the mortar. The chimney hole, through the wall, which shows on the picture of the building (see page 49), was not unusual in early structures of a similar type.<sup>36</sup> The inside chimney and forge-block, which probably were stone, were removed about fifty years ago to make room for farm implements, which are still being stored in the gunshop to-day. The white oak window-frame on the north side, and the frame of the large door on the south, are evidently originals. The roof, probably the third or fourth covering the old shop has carried, is of shingles.

In the eastern wall, 14" above the ground, there is a rectangular opening 18" high and 14" wide. This was probably for the

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\*The Palace of Sandstone, built of the same local sandstone as the Christian Herr house (1719), was erected by Martin Mylin (1715-1751) in 1740 or a little later. One of the few pictures in Rupp's History of Lancaster County shows this building. Rupp says of it: "Martin Mylin, grandfather of Martin, Jacob, John and Abraham Mylin, all, at present residing in West Lampeter Township, built what was then called the Palace of Sandstone. It was, in 1842, one of the most stately mansions in the country, and as the Mennonites were plain people, and Martin Mylin an active member, the house was not only considered too palace-like, but the appearance of it might, as they reasoned, strengthen their enemies in prejudicing the government against them—they had been virtually charged with disloyalty—determined not to obey the lawful authority of the Government—that they were disposed to organize a government of their own." However, in spite of the criticisms which fell upon Martin Mylin from his neighbors for the worldly appearance of his mansion, it was not torn down until 1902, when it was replaced by a brick building on the same site, built by Amos Haverstick. It stood on a rise about fifty yards west of Mylin's Run, and about one hundred yards below its springhead, within sight of the home of Rupp's consultant, Abraham Mylin, "Millwright."

entrance of a power-shaft, possibly to lift a trip-hammer, revolve a grindstone or work a bellows. From the stone construction, this opening was part of the plan when the wall was built.

Ross Wiggins remembers a frame shed, about 10' x 10', aside of the door on the south side of the shop. Rafter holes of this adjunct still show in the walls. He also remembers another shed, about 15' x 15', adjoining the building against its west wall. Evidence of this also is there. During Wiggins' youth a large bellows, about 6' long, was still there.

Built, according to Rupp, the same year as the Herr house (1719), the gunshop shows evidence of extreme age; but except for a few loose stones at the base of the northeast corner, which can easily be reset, its walls are as firm as when a Meylin stonemason laid them.

According to Ross Wiggins, the trip-hammer shaft in the gunshop was revolved by the power of a water-wheel 300 yards to the north. Mylin's Run at that place turns sharply to the east, crossing the "Old Factory Road." With a drop of about 20', it enters a flat ravine with low hills, about 100' apart, on either side. With a proper drop and suitable side embankments, it was the first part of Mylin's Run naturally fitted for a dam. To-day there is an old dam-breast there (see page 53).\*

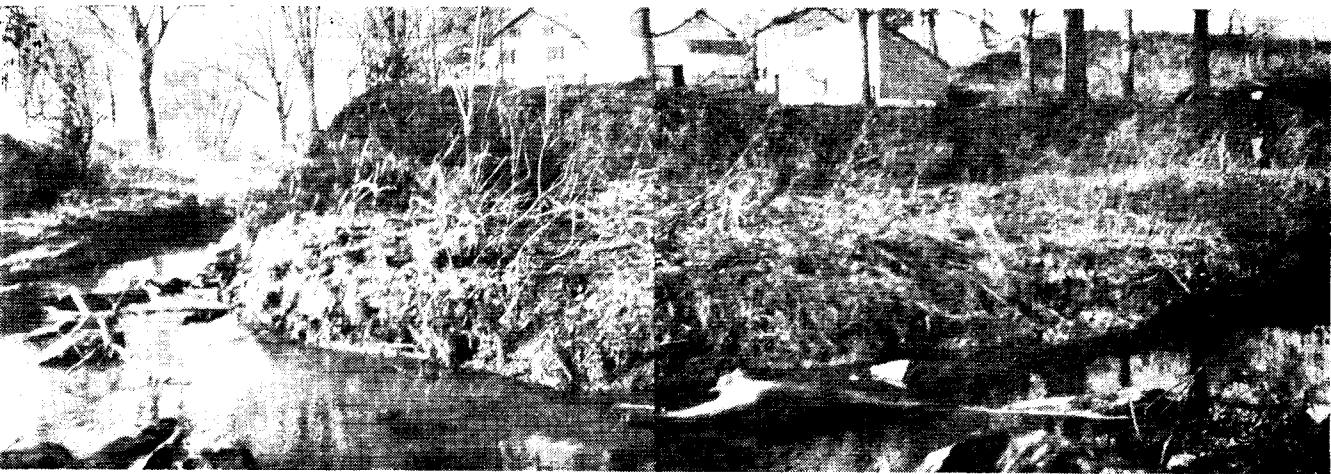
Ross B. Wiggins (born 1890), between the years 1901 and 1906, lived in the house, now occupied by William E. Cash, at this dam-breast. He furnished these facts of the place: When he lived there Mylin's Run was a ford at the Old Factory Road. The dam-breast, still about 6' high on its down-stream side, while now com-

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\* Mylin's run was evidently a much stronger stream, probably by more than 50 per cent, in the 18th century than it is to-day. Several tributary springs of the run above the dam-breast, which were pointed out to the author by old residents as having been there 50 years ago, are gone entirely. What must have been a strong spring, just across the run at the gunshop, now has only a weak flow. This spring had been covered by a stone arch, a remnant of which is still there. This must have been the source of drinking water for Martin Meylin and his apprentices. Ross Wiggins remembered an old date stone — alas now gone — on this arch which was marked "17 something."

Records of the region indicate that the water table — the surface below which the soils and rocks are saturated with water — has lowered at least 3 feet within the last century. Many dug wells in Lancaster County, which formerly were kept watered by this table, are now always dry.

But even in the 18th century Mylin's run would not have been selected by the early settlers of Lampeter Township for a grist or saw mill. Larger nearby streams, like Pequea and Mill creeks, were used to furnish the water-power for these heavier and then important industries.



DAM-BREAST ON MYLIN'S RUN  
The Wheel-house Stood Immediately to the Left

pletely covered with earth, has a limestone foundation. It extended from hill to hill, impounding the waters into a pond. A few feet below the south end of the dam, against the hillside, there was the remnant of a small stone building. One-third of the crumbling walls was still there. Its square foundation was about 10' x 10'. All of these building stones have since been removed, probably by the road-builder who elevated the road and bridged Mylin's Run, though there is still a cavity where they stood. Old Johnnie Meck had called this ruin the wheel-house. The original water-wheel had been taken into an old building on the property. It was an overshot wheel about 12' in diameter. It had been made in sections which originally must have been bolted together. The buckets on the wheel were hand-hewn. (As is the staircase in the Christian Herr house.)

John F. Meck (1816-1905),<sup>37</sup> who lived on the farm adjoining, and who with and after "Smith" Martin used the old gunshop for blacksmithing, told Ross Wiggins much traditional lore about Martin Meylin, gunsmith, and the technique of his gunshop. From what Johnnie Meck told him, and from what he found there himself, Wiggins describes something of the power connection between the wheel-house and the gunshop. Attached to a series of trees running directly from wheel-house to gunshop there had been a chain connection. (The eastern side of the gunshop is directly in line with the site of the wheel-house.) Three of these trees were still standing when Ross helped his father cut them down; 10 to 15 feet from the ground, about 2 feet apart, there were on each tree two iron bands, about 2 inches wide, each one holding a 3 inch iron ring. One or more of these rings held old chain parts. These bands, shaped like horseshoes, had evidently been placed when the trees were about a foot in diameter. The expanding trunks had grown around them, so that when the youth, then about fifteen, and his father cut them out the bands and chain parts were imbedded in the wood about three inches under the bark. Johnnie Meck told him that these bands were parts of the chain connection between wheel-house and gunshop, though Ross did not think that they had been in use during old Johnnie's lifetime.

This evidence from Ross Wiggins, supported by a power-shaft-opening in the wall of the old shop, would indicate that Martin Meylin had used a trip-hammer motivated by water-power from

the nearby dam. He was probably applying his trade with the assistance of flowing water as he had learned it in mountainous Switzerland.

### The Probable Progenitors of the Pennsylvania Rifle

The author has searched the available life records of some of the local gunsmiths, who were active prior to 1745, with the idea of forming a list of those who planned and made the first Pennsylvania or Kentucky type of rifle. Records indicate that this rifle was evolved by a small group in Lancaster County, and this must have been done in the period between 1720 and 1745. Unfortunately most of the early rifles were unmarked or lost, as are the life records of some of the makers. The first authentically dated rifle of the true Pennsylvania type, with the maker's name on it, that the author knows of, is in the collection of T. W. Damarest\* of Onancock, Virginia, marked "Matthias Roeser 1749."<sup>39</sup> Quoting Herman P. Dean on this, "I have collected and studied Pennsylvania rifles for many years and the earliest authen-

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\* Mr. Damarest thus describes this rifle: Smoothbore flintlock with rifle front and rear sights. Barrel probably originally rifled, 56", with rear 15" octagonal, remaining forward end cylindrical. Caliber .50; outside diameter at muzzle  $\frac{3}{4}$ ". Total length, 71"; weight  $9\frac{3}{4}$  lbs. Stock, full length, curly maple apparently originally finished with lamp black and oil; breech end with an excessive Roman nose turn, heavy drop; patchbox and cheek-piece. Carving: bust of an English Lion, done in high relief, and extending from the top of the rear end of the cheek-piece diagonally downward to the toe of the stock. Inlays: silver oval on top of wrist, 8 point star on cheek-piece. Lock: lock-plate marked Ketland & Co.; hammer, goose-neck; single trigger, relatively narrow, with toe curled back; trigger-guard, relatively light. Marked on barrel. M Roeser 1749.

A comparison of this Roeser 1749 with the Martin Meylin rifle is significant. The Roeser piece shows seven improvements on the apparently earlier Meylin. Its barrel is partly octagonal; its rear sight is on the octagonal part of the barrel, not in its rear, at the hammer, as is Meylin's; its stock-base is arched, not straight, as is Meylin's; it has a patchbox and a cheek-piece, which Meylin's does not have; it is elaborately carved; it is decorated with inlays. Both have Ketland & Co. lockplates. The Roeser piece seems to be a more advanced phase of Meylin's earlier Pennsylvania rifle. It is doubtful if Martin Meylin, a Mennonite, ever went in for "worldly" decorations of his pieces. But Meylin's 65",  $7\frac{1}{2}$  lb. gun is easier to carry and to aim than is Roeser's at 71" and  $9\frac{3}{4}$  lbs.

Dillin, in his list of riflemakers (2d Edition of "The Kentucky Rifle"), records a rifle of the true Kentucky type marked "J. Metzgar 1728." The author has traced this rifle to the collection of Herman P. Dean, Huntington, W. Va. Mr. Dean says: "This rifle by Metzgar is definitely 1798. \*\*\*Someone down through the years has apparently put a tail on the figure 9 which makes it appear as a 2."

This is an important correction for the purposes of the author's research.

tic true type of Pennsylvania rifle that I have encountered is one made by Matthias Roeser, which definitely falls in the period of about 1745." This date is authenticated by the fact that Roeser had a well-established gunshop in Lancaster for at least several years before 1745, for in 1744 William Henry came into that shop as an apprentice. (See the "Life of William Henry", by Francis Jordon, Jr., 1910.)

On the assumption that the authorities are correct in naming Lancaster County as the birthplace of the Pennsylvania rifle, it would seem that a small group of gunsmiths working here prior to 1745 were the progenitors of that arm.

Now who were the riflemakers of Lancaster County prior to 1745? This can never be answered entirely but several names stand out clearly as having definite place on the list. They are Martin Meylin, Peter Leman, Philip Lefevre, Matthias Roeser, Peter Ganter, Joshua Baker, and possibly John Burt and Henry Hawkins. A few that doubtless belong on the list are not authentically recorded. By the time William Henry (1729-1786) started his riflemaking trade in 1750 the new type of rifle was well established; but that ingenious youth, even at the age of fifteen, might have been making constructive suggestions to his boss, Matthias Roeser, in 1744 or soon after. With little doubt, the inventive William Henry did much to improve the arm in his gunshop after 1750.\* He was, without doubt, Lancaster's most famous riflemaker.

In the 1750-1800 period the Pennsylvania rifle was made in great numbers in Lancaster County. It was also during this period that gunsmiths who had learned their trade in Lancaster County branched out into other localities, such as nearby Berks, York, Cumberland and Lehigh counties and elsewhere. But there could not have been many gunsmiths active in Lancaster County before 1745. The entire population of the borough of Lancaster in 1742

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\*After his return from England, in 1761, where he had conferred with Watt and Boulton, William Henry attempted to apply the steam engine of his English friends to navigation. His experiments on the Conestoga were successful. He never lived to commercialize his discovery; but a person who was born in 1765 in southern Lancaster County, moved to Lancaster in 1766, and then for fifteen years lived across Penn Square from William Henry, got good fruit from his neighbor's vineyard. The name of this youth, who doubtless learned much from his neighbor, William Henry, was Robert Fulton.



was only 1100. The gunsmiths, before 1745, over the entire county were few indeed.

A partial list of the potential Progenitors of the Pennsylvania Rifle is:

Martin Meylin (1670-1749). He made rifles probably from 1719, and certainly soon after that, to near his last year, 1749. The gun from his local shop is an early phase of the true Pennsylvania rifle.

Peter Leman (1670?-1741) is listed by Dillin as being a gunsmith. He says: "It seems to be a well-authenticated fact that Peter Leman was making rifles as early as 1721." James C. Leman, son of the famous riflemaker, Henry E. Leman, told the writer that several of his early ancestors were gunsmiths in lower Lancaster County. If Dillin's records are correct — and he must have had some good source of information — this was the Peter Leman who took out 300 acres in 1717. It was the fourth tract of land east of John Bundely's, of the Pequea Party. His will of 1741 records him as living in "Lampeter Township." His oldest son, of a large family, was named Peter. His inventory is brief; one gun is recorded. The family tree is, for want of data partly hypothetical, approximately thus:

Peter Leman, 1670?-1741

Peter or other brothers 1715?-1790?

Jacob Leman, of the Pequea Rangers in the Continental Army; later a brewer at Lancaster, 1757-1835

Henry E. Leman, 1812-1887.

Peter Leman was of Huguenot descent, according to James C. Leman. Like Martin Meylin, he probably came to America an experienced gunsmith.

Philip Lefevre (1710-1766), French, was the son of Isaac Lefevre, who, acting with his brother-in-law, Daniel Ferree, took out 1200 acres immediately south of Peter Leman's tract. Philip Lefevre is listed by Rupp and by his family records as being a gunsmith, starting his trade in 1731 "near the Big Spring." Philip Lefevre must have learned his trade with Martin Meylin, possibly with Peter Leman. He lived within a mile or two of both. Where

else nearby could he have served the usual five-year apprenticeship? Doubtless he started his trade when he came of age.

Matthias Roeser (1708-1771), generally recognized as an expert riflemaker, is buried in the Lancaster Moravian graveyard. He came to Lancaster before 1740, for in that year he took out lot #425,<sup>40</sup> now the northeast corner of West King and Concord streets. William Henry was apprenticed to him in 1744. Both were members of the Moravian Church.\* As a man who definitely made a true type of Pennsylvania rifle in 1745 — probably the earliest authentic record of that new type of gun in America — Matthias Roeser is a notable figure in history. He was probably of German or Swiss descent.

Joshua (sometimes called John) Baker in his will of 1753 probated 1754,<sup>41</sup> is recorded as a "Gunsmith of the Borough of Lancaster." The will is written in German, which would indicate that he was of German or Swiss descent, and that his original name was probably Becker. William Henry was one of the witnesses of the will. Joshua Baker's daughter, Mary, is recorded in the same will as being married to the Rev. John Elder. He was the man who led the "Paxton Boys" into the Lancaster jail-yard in 1763 to massacre the last of the Conestoga Indians. Joshua Baker took out lot #125 (now 12 East King Street), in 1745. That he was in Lancaster prior to 1742 is attested by a courthouse record of that year. "Road from Matthew Atkinson's Mill to the road at Joshua Bakers leading from Lancaster." The location of this land is shown when it was sold: "Joshua Baker, Jr., Gunsmith of Lampeter Township, to Henry Good, of Conestoga Township,

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\*In the graveyard records of the Lancaster Moravian Congregation, (1744-1821), several gunsmiths mentioned are called riflemakers, which is significant. An entry of interest, bearing the name of one of Lancaster's best-known gunsmiths, reads: "1806 8th February. Anna Maria Lewelln, born October 6, 1766. Her parents are Jacob Dickert, resident riflemaker, and Johnette, born Hoeffler." This graveyard formerly occupied the southern part of the lots at the southeast corner of West Chestnut and North Prince streets. In 1917 the United States Government paid the trustees of the congregation \$35,000 for this graveyard tract on part of which the post office building was erected. The remains of the burials were removed to Greenwood Cemetery. With Matthias Roeser, Peter Ganter, William Henry and many other riflemakers buried there, the original Moravian graveyard was a classic spot in the history of the American rifle.

June 13, 1754, 153 acres by Conestoga Creek to Mill Creek. Witnesses: [Dr.] Robert Thompson, Justice of the Peace, and Jno. Ross. Recorded May 14, 1756."

That land was less than two miles from Martin Meylin's gunshop. Baker probably had a gunshop along either of the streams mentioned. His will of 1754 would indicate that he was born a decade or more before 1700. He evidently was an important man in early riflemaking, quite possibly before 1735. He certainly was well acquainted with Martin Meylin and the work he was doing.

Peter Ganter, listed by Magee as an early gunmaker, is buried in the Lancaster Moravian graveyard, the records of which show his life-span, 1711-1768. In 1740 he took out lot #167, now the southwest corner of North Queen and Orange streets. From his life-span, and coming to Lancaster before 1740, he might have been making guns sometime before that year. His son Peter (1751-1818) is recorded in his will as a gunsmith.

John Burt and Henry Hawkins seem to have been among the local gunmakers prior to 1745, for in November, 1724, Henry Hawkins petitioned the court—then in Chester County—for redress against John Burt to whom he had apprenticed himself for five years to learn the trade of a gunsmith. The records seem to indicate that both of these men were in Donegal region.<sup>42</sup> Assuming that both of these men were riflemakers, as they probably were at that period, they belong on the list. Henry Hawkins was probably an ancestor of the Hawkins who later made the famous Hawkins rifle at St. Louis, Missouri.

Who, of these men, the potential progenitors of the Pennsylvania rifle, conceived the idea of improving the Swiss-Jaeger rifle by lengthening the barrel, reducing the bore and loading with a ball, smaller than the caliber, driven home in a greased patch by a hickory ramrod? The men named, and a few others, must have been among the originators of this notable improvement in riflemaking. One of these may have been the originator of the idea. They might have arrived at the plan jointly, their shops, with the possible exception of those of Burt and Hawkins, being only a few miles apart. It is certain that Martin Meylin (1670-1749), Philip Lefevre (1710-1766), Joshua Baker (    -1754) and Peter Ganter (1711-1768) were well acquainted with the new type of rifle as made by Matthias Roeser. Peter Leman (1670?-1741)



most probably knew of it, too. Martin Meylin certainly would not long continue making crude rifles when the greatly improved Pennsylvania types were being made at his backdoor. Matthias Roeser might even have got the idea from him. The Martin Meylin rifle still in existence confirms the probability of this. Martin Meylin was evidently making rifles in Lancaster County long before Matthias Roeser, born in 1708, had learned his trade.

From data at hand it would seem that the Pennsylvania rifle was born in that part of Lancaster County within a radius of six miles from the confluence of the Conestoga and Mill creeks. Most probably it was evolved by a group of progenitors in steps of gradual improvement, each gunmaker learning something from the other, largely within this area.

Martin Meylin, experienced gunsmith of Switzerland, a source of Jaeger rifles, evidence indicates was the first riflemaker in Lancaster County, the birthplace of the Pennsylvania rifle. Working in a small group of riflemakers, he must have been one of the earliest — quite possibly the earliest — of the progenitors of that arm which turned the trend of gunmaking in the world.

Martin Meylin's gunshop, at least as the only one among those of other possible originators of that arm which is still in existence, — and where, apparently, the earliest known new type of gun was made — may fittingly be called the Birthplace of the Pennsylvania, or so-called Kentucky, Rifle.

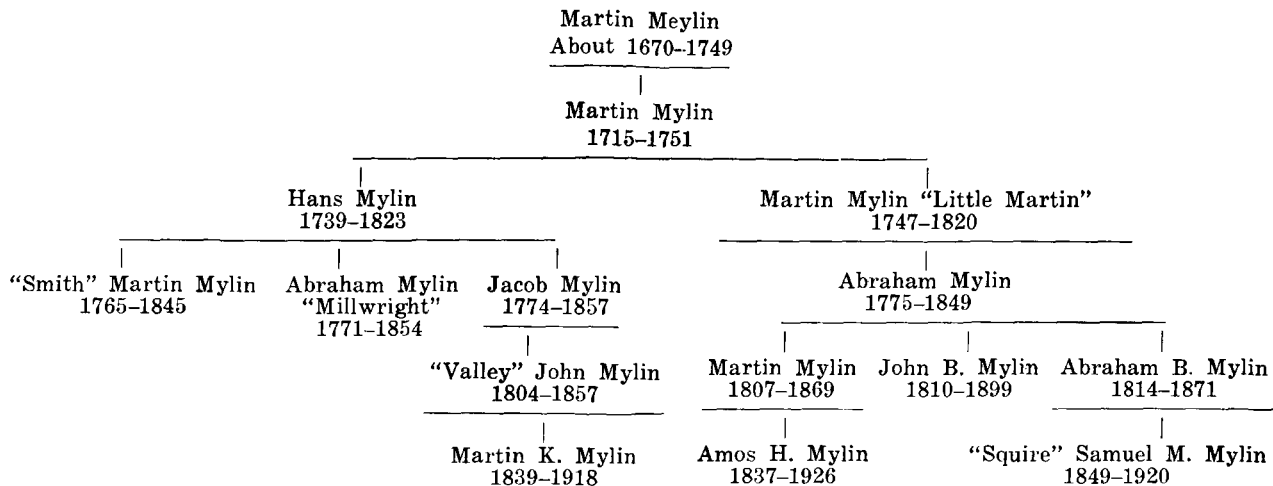
#### CITATIONS.

0. "The rifle was invented in the 15th century by Caspar Zöllner, a gunsmith in Vienna, Austria." (Feldhaus F. M. *Die Technik der Verzeit, der Gesichtlichen Zeit und der Naturvölker*; Leipzig; 1914, p. 429.) Felix Reichman in *Historical Review of Berks County*. July, 1910.
1. Sawyer.
2. H. K. and G. L. Landis in "Lancaster Rifles," 1943.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Felix Reichman.
5. J. G. W. Dillin.
6. Colonial Records.
7. Pennsylvania Archives.
8. Colonial Records.
9. Pennsylvania Archives.
10. "Rifles and Riflemen at the Battle of Kings Mountain." National Park Service.
11. Pennsylvania Archives. 2d Series. p. 299

12. (Omitted.)
13. Lists of Dillin and Magee.
14. L. C. H. S., Vol. XIV, No. 2. H. Frank Eshleman.
15. Ibid
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid. Contains chart of land grants of the Pequea Party.
19. Vol XII. "The Great Conestoga Road." H. Frank Eshleman.
20. Pennsylvania Trees. Illick.
21. Vols. XXIII, XXVIII, and XXXVII, by D. H. Landis; and XXX by H. E. Bender.
22. Land Grant Office, Harrisburg.
23. Vol. XX, No. 7. H. Frank Eshleman.
24. "Lancaster Rifles." H. K. and G. L. Landis.
25. Register of Wills. Courthouse.
26. In 1750 bar iron Sold in "Philadelphia for £27 a ton; pig iron for £7." Pennsylvania Iron Manufacture in the Eighteenth Century. Arthur C. Bining.
- 26b. Ibid
27. From chart and records. Land Grant Office, Harrisburg.
28. Recorder's Office Deed Book. U U 20, dated 1-21-1741.
29. Records found by Martin Brackbill at Land Grant Office.
30. Records in Courthouse. Barbara K. Mylin.
31. The will of John Mylin of Lampeter Twp. (Will Book O-Vol. I, p. 22, probated 9-19-1823) reads:  
 To son Martin, parcel of land now in his possession, being a part of my plantation whereon I now reside in Lampeter Twp., adjoining lands of Christian Forrer, Martin Forrer, John Rohrer and lands belonging to my son Jacob. Value \$10000, 100 acres.  
 This was the Harry H. Snavelly farm of to-day.
32. Will Book T-I-556 (dated—1845).
33. Book F-8-104, 3-31-1860.
34. Deed Book Z-9-275.
35. Harry H. Snavelly.
36. H. K. Landis.
37. Brick Church Graveyard.
38. H. K. Landis.
39. J. G. W. Dillin.
40. This and other town lot records are taken from chart in Vol. XLVI, Nos. 2 and 3. "The Borough Fathers," by M. Luther Heisey.
41. Will Book B-Vol. I-p. 57.
42. "Donegal in 1726," by Samuel Evans. L. C. H. S. Scrap Book #81, p. 110. This was copied, apparently from court documents, by Samuel Evans, one of Lancaster County's greatest historians, about 1880.

The author is especially indebted to Miss Barbara K. Mylin, of the Seventh Generation, and to M. Luther Heisey, Editor of the publications of the Lancaster County Historical Society, for their research assistance.

## Partial Family Tree of the Mylins Mentioned



Compiled from Wills in the Register's Office, Court-house, and from graveyard records by Miss Barbara K. Mylin, daughter of Amos H. Mylin (1837-1926).

Arthur P. Mylin, one of the vice-presidents of the Lancaster County Historical Society, is a grandson of Martin K. Mylin (1839-1918).

Martin Meylin was buried in 1749 in the Tschantz graveyard, about two and one-half miles southeast of the Big Spring. He lies apparently in an unmarked grave, aside of one originally marked:

Hir licht begraben/ Barbara Meillin das/ Alten Martin Meillin/ sein Ehe Weib mit Hm/ in der Ehe gelebt/ 24 iahr sie ist ee—/ storben von diser Welt/ in

den 11 Abrill 1742/ Hr ganzes Alte war 70 jar  
This means: Born, 1672; died, 1742, married to Martin Meylin, 1718. This Barbara Meylin evidently was a second wife, for Martin Meylin had a three-year-old son in 1718. From the 1672, Martin Meylin's year of birth has been estimated at 1670.

To-day Tschantz graveyard is a rectangular weed-patch within the remnants of a stone wall. Jacob Miller, of the Pequea Party, on whose 1000 acres the graveyard was laid out, still has a legible stone there, but practically all of the others are gone. See Tschantz Graveyard, H. F. Eshleman. Vol. XIV, 1910.