



## MENNONITE IMMIGRANTS TO LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AND WESTERN MARYLAND

Andrew Hershey (1702 – 1792) & Mary Catherine Schnabley  
(1703 – 1759) / Christian Stauffer (c. 1711 – 1759) &  
Barbara Fellman (? – ?) / Frederick Rohrer (c. 1696 – aft. 1762) &  
Anna (? – ?)

— *Bradley Rymph*

One of the major ancestral components of the Rymph family genealogy is our “Pennsylvania Dutch” roots, from our ancestors who originally settled in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania “Dutch” were not actually Dutch; rather, they were “Deutsch” (i.e., German-speaking). Most, like our immigrant Hershey, Stauffer, and (probably) Rohrer ancestors, were devout Mennonites. Not all settlers in

Lancaster County were Mennonites, however. Some, including some Rohrer families, were

Visit to Heidelberg, Germany

**September 2004 (with José Baquiran)**

Visits to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania

**June 28–30, 1996 (with José Baquiran, Albert and Edna Mae Rymph)**

**May 28–30, 2011 (with José Baquiran)**

Visit to Washington County, Maryland

**October 30, 2010 (with José Baquiran)**

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*Bradley Rymph and José Baquiran visiting Hershey Farm Inn in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania / June 1996.*

German Reformed (i.e., Calvinist) in their religious beliefs. Both groups immigrated to Pennsylvania from Switzerland, Germany, and adjoining areas of France to escape the anti-Protestant persecution that was then rampant in Europe.

### ANDREW HERSHEY and MARY CATHERINE SCHNABLEY

In 1719, **Andrew** and Benjamin **Hershey** arrived in the American colonies with their father Hans and settled in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. A third brother, Christian (also a Mennonite minister), had been obligated to remain behind in obligation to the German Court at Friedensheim. In 1739, Christian joined his brothers in Lancaster County.

This Hershey family (like an earlier Hershey clan, also Mennonite ministers, that had immigrated to Lancaster County in 1709) stemmed from Appenzell, Innesholden, Switzerland. Andrew had been born in Appenzell in 1702.

Hershey family historian Scott F. Hershey proposed in his 1913 family genealogy that the Hersheys had migrated to Switzerland from Italy in the 16th century to escape Roman persecution for their non-papal religious views. At some point, they became devoted adherents of the theology of Menno Sims, founder of the Mennonite branch of Christianity. Mennonites believed that taking oaths, holding office, serving in war, and going to law were all contrary to the Gospel.

In the 17th century, these convictions put the Mennonites in conflict with both Catholic and Protestant religious and political leaders in Switzerland, as well as adjoining France and Germany. According to Scott Hershey, "They were put in prison, their homes were burned, their property was confiscated, they were shackled by the feet, and sold for service in the Swiss mercenary army, while some were put to death." As a result, many Mennonites fled Switzerland — some to Germany, some to Holland, some to England, some to Ireland.

At some point, Hans Hershey moved his family to Friedensheim in Germany. From



## THE TYPICAL PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN FARM

**Farmers Were Kept Poor.** — The Pennsylvania German farmers were good farmers by practically all standards. They were descended through thirty generations of tillers of the soil. All things being equal in their Old World haunts they would have been on the average well-to-do. But the wars kept them poor, or, if they were on the wrong side of the political or religious “fence” they again were likely to be mulct of what they had....

**Fine Soil Ready in Pennsylvania.** — It has been pointed out that the situation greeting the newcomers was pretty nearly made to order. There was little barrenness; fertilization was not necessary in the same degree that it was in Germany, where tilling for many years required more attention....

**“Swiss Barns” Erected.** — The early pioneers first cleared sufficient land to get a start on farming; then came an immense barn, well built of the “Swiss” type. The first barns were built of logs. Later there were some of stone, then frame or brick. Interesting features of some of the barns included the stars on the sides and ends; also the ventilator designs obtained by omissions of bricks which formed the designs, or cut-outs in the odd shapes of hearts, diamonds, quarter-moons, clubs, etc. Most barns were double-deckers, and allowed for threshing-floors, mows and lofts for storing hay. The complete barns had a granary on the upper floor, a cellar under the drive-way, in addition to the usual stall for horses and cattle. They ranged from 50 to 60 feet wide, and 60 to 120 feet long, with an overhang of 8 to 10 feet beyond the stable doors....



Lumber could be obtained on the spot; likewise good building stone might be found nearby, needing but the blows of the stone mason to dress them for use. But it might be a decade or two until they got around to the building of a substantial house.

Houses built by the pioneers were generally of logs, if the builder was pioneering some miles away from centers of population. These could be built in a few days after a clearing was made.

— Excepted from Aurand, A. Monroe, Jr. *Early Life of the Pennsylvania Germans.*

*Typical early Pennsylvania German farm, as created at Landis Valley Farm Museum, Lancaster, Pennsylvania.*





*"Short and Sincere Declaration" of Mennonite believers in November 1775 to their fellow colonists explaining why their faith would not allow them to take up arms in the anticipated revolution against Britain. The "Declaration" was written by Benjamin Hershey, brother of ancestor Andrew Hershey.*

A SHORT AND SINCERE  
DECLARATION,  
TO OUR HONORABLE ASSEMBLY, AND ALL OTHERS IN HIGH OR LOW  
STATION OF ADMINISTRATION, AND TO ALL FRIENDS AND IN-  
HABITANTS OF THIS COUNTRY, TO WHOSE SIGHT THIS  
MAY COME, BE THEY ENGLISH OR GERMANS.

In the first Place we acknowledge us indebted to the most high God, who created Heaven and Earth, the only good Being, to thank him for all his great Goodness and manifold Mercies and Love through our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, who is come to save the Souls of Men, having all Power in Heaven and on Earth.

Further we find ourselves indebted to be thankful to our late worthy Assembly, for their giving so good an Advice in these troublesome Times to all Ranks of People in Pennsylvania, particularly in allowing those, who, by the Doctrine of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST, are persuaded in their Consciences to love their Enemies, and not to resist Evil, to enjoy the Liberty of their Conscience, for which, as also for all the good things we enjoyed under their care, we heartily thank that worthy Body of Assembly, and all high and low in Office, who have advised to such a peaceful Measure, hoping and confiding that they, and all others entrusted with Power in this hitherto blessed Province, may be moved by the same Spirit of Grace, which animated the first Founder of this Province, our late worthy Proprietor, William Penn, to grant Liberty of Conscience to all its Inhabitants, that they may in the great and memorable Day of Judgment be put on the right Hand of the just Judge, who judgeth without Respect of Person, and hear of Him these blessed words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you," &c. "What ye have done unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done unto me," among which number (i. e. the least of Christ's brethren), we, by His grace, hope to be ranked; and every Lenity and Favor shown to such tender conscienced, although weak Followers of this our blessed Saviour, will not be forgotten by Him in that great day.

The Advice to those who do not find Freedom of Conscience to take up Arms, that they ought to be helpful to those who are in Need and distressed Circumstances, we receive with Cheerfulness towards all Men of what Station they may be—it being our Principle to feed the Hungry and give the Thirsty Drink;—we have dedicated ourselves to serve all Men in every Thing that can be helpful to the Preservation of Men's Lives, but we find no Freedom in giving, or doing, or assisting in any Thing by which Men's Lives are destroyed or hurt.—We beg the Patience of all those who believe we err in this Point.

We are always ready, according to CHRIST's Command to Peter, to pay the Tribute, that we may offend no Man, and so we are willing to pay Taxes, "and to render unto Caesar those Things that are Caesar's, and to God those Things that are God's," although we think ourselves very weak to give God his due Honor, He being a Spirit and Life, and we only Dust and Ashes.

We are also willing to be subject to the higher Powers, and to give in the manner Paul directs us;—"for he beareth the Sword not in vain, for he is the Minister of God, a Revenger, to execute Wrath upon him that doeth Evil."

This Testimony we lay down before our worthy Assembly, and all other Persons in Government, letting them know, that we are thankful, as above mentioned, and that we are not at Liberty in Conscience to take up Arms to conquer our Enemies, but rather to pray to God, who has Power in Heaven and on Earth, for US and THEM.

We also crave the Patience of all the Inhabitants of this Country,—what they think to see clearer in the Doctrine of the blessed Jesus Christ, we will leave to them and God, finding ourselves very poor; for Faith is to proceed out of the Word of God, which is Life and Spirit, and a Power of God, and our Conscience is to be instructed by the same, therefore we beg for Patience.

Our small Gift, which we have given, we gave to those who have Power over us, that we may not offend them, as Christ taught us by the Tribute Penny.

We heartily pray that God would govern all Hearts of our Rulers, be they high or low, to meditate those good Things which will pertain to OUR and THEIR happiness.

The above Declaration, written by BENJAMIN HERSHEY, minister of the Menonist Church, and signed by a number of Elders and Teachers of the Society of Menonists, and some of the German Baptists, presented to the Honorable House of Assembly on the 7th day of November, 1775, was most graciously received.

there, they later sailed to America, with Hans, Andrew, and Benjamin arriving in America in 1719.

As immigrants that year, Hans Hershey and his sons were part of what is considered the “Second Period” (i.e., 1710–1727) of Pennsylvania German immigration, the period predominantly identified with the arrival of Swiss Mennonites in the colony. At home in Switzerland, these Mennonites had subject to persecution for their “stubborn” refusal to take up arms for the state. The trek from Switzerland, through Germany, to America began in 1710. According to Pennsylvania German historian A. Monroe Aurand, Jr., “On October 23 of that year Hans Herr and Martin Kündig, agents for others, took out a patent for ten thousand acres of land on Pequea Creek, Conestogoe (subsequently Lancaster county, organized 1729).”

In 1725, Andrew Hershey married Mary Catherine Schnabley in Lancaster County. She was the daughter of Johann Jacob and Anna Schnebely, who had both been born in the Alsace region of France. Johann Jacob and Anna had immigrated to Lancaster County sometime after Mary Catherine’s birth in 1703.

Andrew was the progenitor from which the Rymph family’s Hershey ancestors were descended. Andrew was both a Mennonite minister and a successful farmer. His will

indicates that he became quite wealthy. He owned more than 1,100 acres of land in Lancaster and Dauphin Counties in Pennsylvania.

Andrew’s brother Benjamin was likely the author of a “Declaration” that the Mennonites of Pennsylvania presented to their colony’s House of Assembly in November 1775, in anticipation of the Revolutionary War. In that Declaration, the Mennonites explained their faith and why they were “not at Liberty in Conscience to take up Arms to conquer our Enemies, but rather pray to God, who has power in Heaven and on Earth for US and THEM.”

The American Revolution proved a difficult time for the Hersheys and their fellow Mennonites, as Scott Hershey attests in this family history:

“These very conscientious Christians found themselves in a predicament. From 1717 all immigrants had to sign a writing binding themselves to ‘observe and conform to the laws of England.’ This was a solemn covenant for these serious Mennonite people. When the Revolution came, most of them could not see their way clear to conscience to take up arms against England. A great many of the Mennonite Hersheys gave supplies, and nursed the sick and wounded. But some of the most conscientious could not see their way in conscience to render any further assistance than the care of the wounded.”

As a result, the Mennonites were frequently regarded by their fellow American colonialists as Tories — i.e., sympathizers with the British Crown.

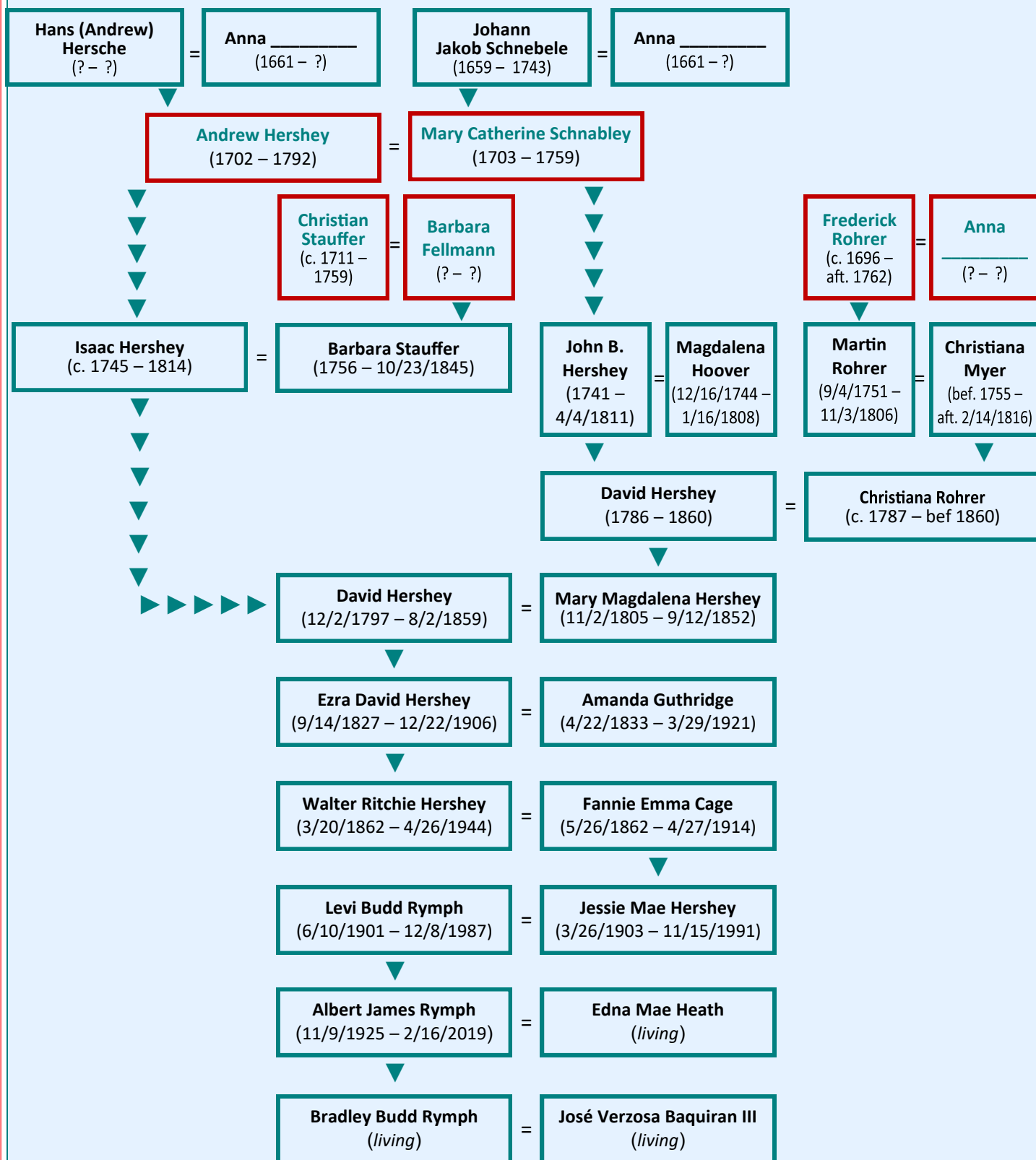
#### Distant “Cousins”

*A notable figure in history who shares descent with Andrew and Mary Catherine Hershey, through their son Jacob (1742 – 1825) is:*

- ♦ Milton Snavely Hershey (1857 – 1945) — Founder of the Hershey Chocolate Company empire.

## HOW WE'RE RELATED

*Andrew and Mary Catherine (Schnabley) Hershey, and Christian and Barbara (Fellman) Stauffer, were my great-great-great-great-great-grandparents — and Frederick Rohrer and his wife Anna were my great-great-great-great-great-great-grandparents — through my father, Albert James Rymph.*





Andrew Hershey died in 1792 at the age of 90. His wife Mary Catherine had died in 1759.

Andrews and Mary Catherine (Schnabley) Hershey had at least 12 children. The Hershey/Cage ancestral line descends through two of their sons — John (1741–1811) and Isaac (c. 1745–1776). John is profiled separately in “Devout ‘Founding Father’ of the United Brethren in Christ” (“Servants of God” section), while Isaac is profiled with subsequent Hershey ancestors in “Westward Ho — A Family’s Movement in Search of Land, Wealth, and a Place in the American Dream” (“Settlers of the Frontiers” section).

### CHRISTIAN STAUFFER and BARBARA FELLMAN

**Isaac Hershey**, Andrew and Mary Catherine’s son, married **Barbara Stauffer** (1756–1845). She was the daughter of **Christian Stauffer** (c. 1711–1759) and his second wife **Barbara Fellman** (probable last name) (?–?), another Mennonite couple whose families had

migrated from Switzerland, via Germany, to Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

Christian was probably born near Ellerstadt, Bergen, Germany. His great-grandfather, **Christian Stauffer** (1615–?) had emigrated from Switzerland to Germany with his wife and children, including **Daniel** (c. 1657–1721), the younger Christian’s grandfather.

At some point in his young life, the eventual immigrant Christian moved from Ellerstadt, Germany, to Alsheim, Germany, where he was listed on three censuses in 1738.

In Germany, he first married a Maria Fellman. In 1738, the couple apparently moved from Alsheim to Heidelberg, Germany, to help care for Maria’s widowed mother. Maria died on March 12, 1741, at the age of 21. Within the next two years, Christian remarried, this time to a woman named **Barbara**, who likely was his first wife’s sister.

In 1743, Christian was listed in that year’s Mennonite census along with his wife and one son, plus the widow of Johann Fellman

*Heidelberg, Germany,  
as seen from  
Heidelberg Castle. In 1738,  
Christian Stauffer moved with  
his first wife, Maria Fellman,  
to the Heidelberg area. After  
Maria’s death, Christian  
remarried, probably to  
Maria’s sister Barbara.*



## JONATHAN HAGER HOUSE / Hagerstown, Washington County, Maryland



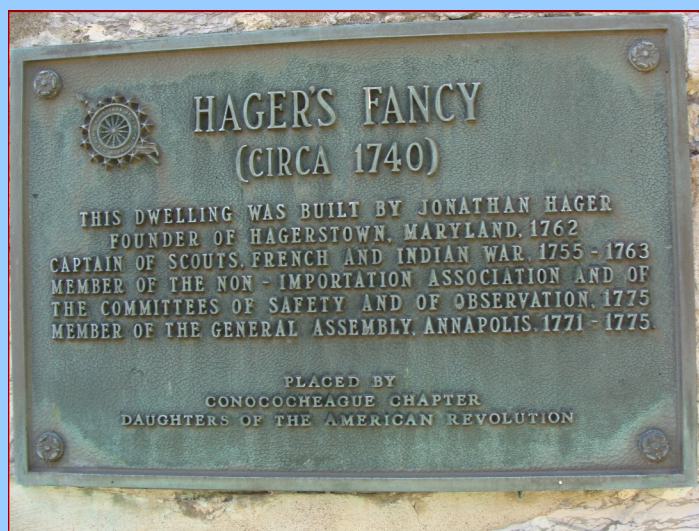
German immigrant Jonathan Hager purchased 200 acres of land in Washington County, Maryland, on June 5, 1739, three years after he had arrived in America. He dubbed the land "Hager's Fancy" and began construction of a home, and in 1740 presented his new bride with the house. He also opened a trading post on the property.

According to a historical marker at the house site, "Hager House's 22" stone

walls offered protection from attack and the elements. Rye straw and mud filler between floors and partitions provided insulation. Two cool springs under the house made the basement a pleasant retreat on hot summer days."

A few years after building the house, on May 8, 1745, Hager sold "Hager's Fancy" to a Jacob Rohrer (not necessarily the Jacob who was the brother of the immigrant Frederick Rohrer profiled here) for 200 pounds. When that Jacob Rohrer died, he apparently left the property to his son, also named Frederick. In 1813, that Frederick sold the House and land to Michael Hammond, the husband of Catherine Rohrer. She was the grand-daughter of the Frederick Rohrer profiled here, the daughter of my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather Martin Rohrer, and the sister of my great-great-great-great-grandmother Christiana Rohrer Hershey. The house and surrounding lands remained in the Rohrer family until 1944, when they sold it to the Washington County Historical Society.

The house is now operated as a historical museum by the City of Hagerstown, outfitted with authentic furnishings of the 1700s.



and four of her children. Ten years later, the Mennonite census of 1753 noted that in 1744 a Jakob Fellman had assumed the lease of his brother-in-law Christian Stauffer because the latter had emigrated to the "New Land."

Christian and Barbara immigrated to America as part of a party of eight. The other six were, presumably, their own two children, plus Christian's brother Hans, his wife, and their two children. They arrived on December 22, 1744, aboard the ship "Muscliffe Galley."



Four years later, on March 7, 1749, Christian bought land in Donegal Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Land records indicate he acquired additional acreage on May 17, 1750, and May 8, 1751.

Christian wrote his will on March 25, 1759, and it was executed on June 12, 1759. His widow Barbara was co-executor of the will. She remarried c. 1768 to Martin Nisley of Donegal Township.

### FREDERICK ROHRER and ANNA

Another Mennonite ancestral line in the Hershey/Cage ancestry is that of the Rohrer family. Multiple Rohrers emigrated from Germany to Pennsylvania in the 1700s, and it is difficult to trace my Rohrer ancestral lines with absolute certainty.

The Hershey/Cage ancestral line is through a **Christiana Rohrer** (c. 1784–1857), who was the wife of **David Hershey** (1786–1860), son of the above-mentioned John Hershey. Many family historians have asserted that she was the grand-daughter of Johannes Jacob Rohrer (1696–1771), and my previous renditions of this profile were based on this lineage.

However, a later Mennonite family historian, Richard W. Davis, has persuasively argued against this linkage. He instead believes that Christiana's immigrant grandfather was another, likely-unrelated Rohrer immigrant, **Frederick Rohrer** (c. 1696–aft. 1762). I have chosen to rewrite this profile to reflect this line of descent.

Frederick Rohrer was likely born in or near Ohnenheim, a community in the Alsace — a region of France that in the 1600s and 1700s

was home to a large number of persons of German and Swiss heritage. Frederick's likely parents, **Hans and Margaretha (Mürri) Rohrer**, had migrated from their family homes in Basel, Switzerland, at least by 1689, when Hans Rohrer bought a mill in Ohnenheim. At some point before 1731, Frederick Rohrer and his wife **Anna** moved to Baden, Germany. In that year, they were listed among the members of the Streichenberg Mennonite congregation in Baden.

Frederick Rohrer sailed from Germany to America in 1747, arriving in Philadelphia on October 9 on the ship "Restauration." Also on the ship's manifest were his son Samuel, who would have been around 19 years old, and several other Mennonites. Frederick's two other sons, John and **Martin** (my ancestor), would have been about 12 and 9 at the time of this voyage. Could they have been aboard the "Restauration" but not listed on the manifest because of their age? Or might they have sailed to America on a later date?

By around 1750, he had settled in western Maryland in an area where members of several other Rohrer clans also settled.

On March 29, 1750, Frederick and a Jacob Rohrer (possibly his younger brother) were two of the three executors of the will of a Godfred Mong of Frederick County, Maryland.

On October 21, 1752, Frederick Rohrer bought two plots of land in Washington County, Maryland from Jacob Rohrer — 100 acres called the "Defiance" and 10 acres called "Jacob's Welfare." This Jacob Rohrer died around January 1758 near Hagerstown

in Washington County. In Jacob's will, he makes reference to his "brother Frederick," and the next year Frederick Rohrer also acquired additional tracts of land in Washington County, including on November 15, 1757, land called "Mill Wheel" and part of a 150-acre area called "George's Mistake, George's Venture, and Barrence," and on June 1, 1761, 112 acres called "Amazon," a part of "Locust Bottom."

As he aged, Frederick Jacob Rohrer sold off some of his land, including on February 12, 1762, 112 acres in "George's Mistake, George's Venture" and on March 17, 1762, his land in "Jacob's Welfare" and "Defiance," also to a John Rohrer.

After these and at least one other 1762 record, Frederick Rohrer apparently is not noted in subsequent Washington County deeds or other records. Thus, his date or year of death is not confirmed.

## TO LEARN MORE

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