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WHICH CHRISTIAN BECK IS IT?

PART II

BY VAN PITMAN, KRA

In Part I, the Fall 2012 KRA Bulletin, I examined the life of Christian Beck III, or as Kindig called this gunsmith¹, Christian Beck the Later. His career path started with his apprenticeship in Womelsdorf, Pennsylvania, continued as a master gunsmith in

Roxbury, Franklin County, PA, Williamsport, MD, Martinsburg, VA, and finally the Western frontier. His journey did not take him to Jonestown, Dauphin County, Pennsylvania where another Christian Beck is listed as a gunsmith in the 1807 and 1811 Triennial Assessments of Dauphin County².

This article, Part II, will investigate this Christian Beck of Jonestown and the rifles he made then conclude this series by examining Christian Beck Jr., also known as Christian Beck the Earlier³.

THE DISCOVERY

A closer examination of all the Dauphin County (established 1785) tax rolls reveals that Christian Beck of Jonestown was listed continuously from 1807 thru 1813 in the Bethel Township Returns⁴. In 1813 Lebanon County

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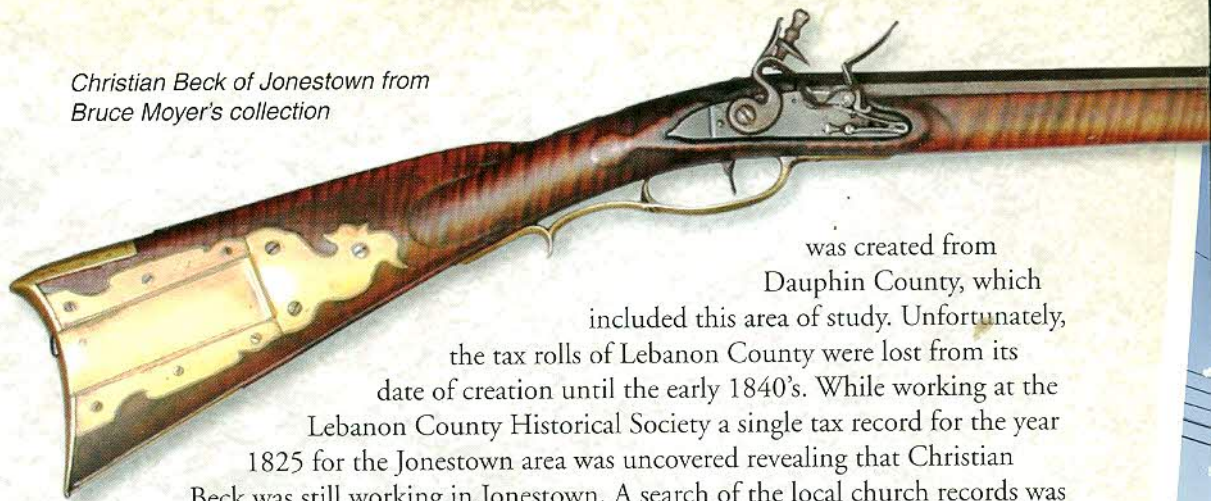
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For Bulletin Comments and
Questions, contact:
kjmcDonald@verizon.net

www.kentuckyrifleassociation.org

The Kentucky Rifle Association
PO Box 97
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*Christian Beck of Jonestown from
Bruce Moyer's collection*



was created from Dauphin County, which included this area of study. Unfortunately, the tax rolls of Lebanon County were lost from its date of creation until the early 1840's. While working at the Lebanon County Historical Society a single tax record for the year 1825 for the Jonestown area was uncovered revealing that Christian Beck was still working in Jonestown. A search of the local church records was initiated to find more evidence of his stay at Jonestown.

The records of the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jonestown did reveal that Christian Beck's wife was Ann (Mason) Beck and they produced eight children whose births were recorded in the church records spanning from 1810 thru 1827⁵. The exciting part of discovering Christian's wife name was that while researching for the first article, Part I, I found in the Salem Lutheran Church of Lebanon records John Philip Beck, the famous gunsmith of Lebanon, Pa, had a son, Christian, who married Anna Mason on July 20th, 1806⁶. This evidence now firmly linked Christian Beck of Jonestown as the son of J. P. Beck.

THE EVIDENCE

Christian Beck of Jonestown's father, John Philip Beck, known as J. P. Beck, is the second son of Johann Christian Beck Sr. a powder maker. J. P. Beck was born in 1751 and died in October, 1811. He worked as a gunsmith in Lebanon, Pa. from the Revolutionary War until his death in 1811. He had eight children by his first wife, Anna Maria (Lauk) of which four were sons. Two of the sons, Samuel and Emanuel, births are recorded in the Salem church records⁷. John Philip Beck Jr., the eldest son, is recorded in the burials section of the church records. Christian is referenced, as stated above, in the marriage records, having John Philip Beck as his witness to Christian's marriage. The family genealogy is provided at the end of the article to help the reader understand the family relationships discussed.

The next reference linking Christian Beck of Jonestown to J. P. Beck can be found in a book written by R. H. Koch, a grandson of Emanuel Beck. In the book Mr. Koch was discussing his interview with Emanuel Beck, J. P. Beck's youngest son, the family lineage and history. During the discussion in 1874 Emanuel stated he had a brother named Christian⁸.

The last family references are after J. P. Beck's death in 1811. In 1813, Leonard Greenawalt and Henry Kelker, executors, filed with the Orphan's Court of Dauphin County the initial settlement of J. P. Beck's estate⁹. The settlement listed those that owed money to the estate. Christian Beck was listed as a debtor for 75 pounds. Perhaps this large sum of money was for helping his son set up his gun shop and for materials used to build rifles, as no explanation for the debt was offered in the filing papers. Then in 1824, Greenawalt, now lone surviving executor, filed with the Orphan's Court the final settlement of J. P. Beck's estate and Christian was listed again as owing an additional 17 pounds, 18 schillings and 5 pence¹⁰.

The final reference will be found when studying the rifles Christian Beck of Jonestown built, to be discussed later in the article.

