



Plains Church
(Between Timberville and New Market) Bishop John Geil's Home Church -

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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GEIL EXPERIENCES DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Showalter

Thanks to Eunice Geil ~~Smith~~ we have extensive genealogy on the Geil Family that begins on page two. On this cover page we begin with some information from Norman R. Wenger and David S. Rodes from the six-volume invaluable set *Unionists and the Civil War Experience in the Shenandoah Valley*, Vol. II, Greenmount, Edom, and Linville, Rockingham County, Virginia, printed by Penobscot Press and published for The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center and The Valley Research Associates, 2004.

Number 23 presents the Jacob Geil, Claim No. 21844 from the National Archives, Washington, D C. Some years after the Civil War various people presented claims for property lost during the war. As do many other claims, this claim has testimonies from a number of people. These bolster the claim made by Jacob Geil to the Federal government for the losses endured. Beside the testimony given by claimant Jacob Geil, there are eight others who testified that they knew of losses Geil experienced. Thus we learn a good bit of what neighbors and relatives knew regarding the losses experienced by this Geil family.

First a bit of genealogy. Jacob was born Aug. 31, 1828 and died Oct. 16, 1909. Mary was born May 21, 1833. He was a son of Mennonite bishop John Geil, Sr. and grandson of Abraham Geil, who was a son of Jacob Geil, whose father C. Conrad Geil migrated from Alsace, Germany.

Jacob and Mary Geil claimed losses totaling \$761 that was taken by the U. S. army during the time when General Sheridan troops came through and caused tremendous losses from Virginia citizens.

In the claim Jacob, aged 47, testified that he was glad to always do what he could for Union men. He did admit that during the war they harbored Union men and assisted some to escape from the Confederacy. As did many Mennonites and Brethren, Jacob stayed out of the army. He did it by several ways. One time he paid \$600 for a substitute who came home when his term was up. Geil then purchased the Edom Post Office until the former postmaster came home, then Geil paid the exemption tax of \$500.

Jacob Geil was a church deacon who helped collect money to provide funds and pay the fines of poor members. One time a party of secessionists came to "capture him or worse." The visitors claimed to be refugees. However, Geil and his father-in-law "were not fooled" and quickly got out of the house to hide in the barn before the secessionists got there.

In Search of Geil, Gile, Coil, Kile, Kyle, Coyle, Guile and Galley Family History

By Eunice Geil ~~Smith~~ ^{Showalter}

European roots for the Geil family are obscure. Tradition indicates that the progenitor was born in Alsace, Germany and immigrated through Amsterdam to Philadelphia, PA in the 1750's. Two immigration options are recorded. The other one says Johann Conrad Geil arrived on 7 November 1754 with son Jacob, age 8, on the ship "John and Elizabeth."¹ Jacob Galley arrived 14 September 1751 on the "Duke of Bedford."²

Jacob Geil (b. 1746-d. after 27 April 1795) and Anna Clymer (daughter of Henrich Clymer/Clemmer and Maria) married c. 1760.

In a deed dated 18 Apr. 1763, "William Crook conveyed to him by name 'Jacob Choel' of Philadelphia County" two parcels totaling 220 1/2 acres in Springfield Township, Bucks County, PA.³

On 1 Apr. 1768, Jacob Geil and wife Anna conveyed the Springfield farm to Conrad Jacoby. Anna and Jacob signed the deed.⁴ On 8 Apr. 1768, Samuel Barnhill and wife sold to Jacob Guile 153 acres near New Galena in New Britain Township in Bucks Co., PA.⁵ They spent Revolutionary War times in PA.

"Tax List for County of Bucks, New Britain Twp. PA" tells us that in 1778 Jacob Koil paid five pounds in tax. For the year 1779 Jacob Coyle has 15- acres, three horses, seven cattle, and in 1781, 154 acres, three horses, and five cattle.

On 14th and 28th Mar., 1786, Jacob Geil and wife Mary sold to Jacob Holdeman⁶ and William Godshalk⁷ two parcels totaling 153 acres.

Jacob signed an indenture dated 17 Feb. 1791, to settle the estate of first wife's father Henry Clemmer. Jacob Geil of Chester Co., PA was named to receive Anna's share as she was deceased.⁸

On 20 June 1792, Jacob Coil of Chester Co., PA, purchased 150 acres "being on a branch of Cedar Run" in Rockingham Co., VA.⁹ Evidence that on 27 Apr. 1795, a deed between David Brenneman and Jacob Coyle Sr. for 500 acres on Linville Creek exists. This transaction is referenced after the death of Jacob Geil, Sr. in multiple deeds of sale by his eleven heirs.

When he died intestate, Jacob Sr. was buried on his Linville Creek farm. On 28 Dec. 1795, a Bond for estate of Jacob Kile for \$2000 was signed by Jacob Gile, Jacob Rife, Peter Sites, Peter Johnson, and Jacob Bowman.¹⁰ "Jacob Kyle and Jacob Rife adm. of the Estate of Jacob Kyle Deceased is granted them (the widow relicc of the Decedent having from under her own hand waived her wright of admin.) with Le... entered into Bond made each thereto as the Law directs."¹¹

¹ Geil History, by Joseph H. Wenger, 1914.

² *Clymer/Klemmer History* by Abram Lapp Clemmer, 1992.

³ Bucks County PA Deed Book 19, p. 322-23.

⁴ Bucks County PA Deed Book 19, p. 323-24.

⁵ Bucks County PA Deed Book 12, p. 158.

⁶ Bucks County PA Deed Book 25, p. 303-04.

⁷ Bucks County PA Deed Book 23, p. 1-7-10

⁸ *Clymer/Klemmer History*, Appendix No. IV, p. 72-74.

⁹ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book O, p. 505.

¹⁰ Rockingham County Administrators Bond Book, p. 128.

¹¹ Rockingham County Minutes Book #3, Jan. 26, 1795-Feb. 28, 1797, p. 83.

Jacob Sr. and Anna (Clymer) Geil's children, born in Bucks Co., PA, are the following:

1. Mary (born c. 1763 – died before 1802¹²). Married Samuel Godshalk (b. 1756-d. 1831). Children: Nancy, Abraham, Jacob, and Agnes inherited Mary's share of estate.
2. Catherine (b. 5 Jan. 1765-d. 18 Dec. 1830. Aged 65y 11m 13d). Married Christian Kratz/Crotz. No issue. Buried in row beside her brother Abraham Gile at Doylestown Mennonite Church. Catherine sold her share of estate to Christian Funk, a brother-in-law, on 26 Oct. 1801, in the same deed as her brothers John and Abraham.^{13 14}
3. Abraham (b. 25 May 1769-09¹⁵ Feb. 1830) Buried at Doylestown Mennonite Church, in Bucks Co., PA. His son John returned to Virginia.
4. Jacob Jr. (b. 16 April 1771-d. 21 May 1844). Married Elizabeth Beery. Living in Rockingham Co. when he sold his share of estate to Joseph Bowman on 8 May 1801.¹⁶ Moved to Ohio. Administrator of father's estate,
5. Susanna (b. 1773-d. 14 Dec. 1859, "died in 87th year"). Married to Christian Funk. They are buried in row beside the Trissel family at Trissels Mennonite Church. Susanna and "Christley Funk" recorded the sale of two tracts of land to Joseph

Bowman in Rockingham December Court 1801. Both signed names in German.¹⁷

6. Nancy (b. Apr. 1775-d, 9 Nov. 1850). Married Jacob Beery. He was living in Rockingham County, VA when he requested Jacob Rife to act as "my true and lawful attorney" to sell share to Christian Funk "on or before 20th day of October next ensuing." Signed on 4 Feb. 1801.¹⁸ Nancy did not sign document. Moved to Ohio.
7. John (b. 9 Apr. 1778-16 Jan. 1866). Married Elizabeth Fretz. Served for 55 years as a minister at Line Lexington Mennonite Church in Bucks Co. PA and is buried there.

Jacob's second wife is Agnes Kraut. On 8 Mar. 1786 "Agnes (Intermarried with Jacob Geil and is lately deceased.)" was named as an heir to her father Henry Kraut Sr. of Bedminster Twp., Bucks Co., PA. Jacob Geil signed an indenture with other Kraus siblings selling her share to brother Jacob Kraut.¹⁹

8. Barbara (b. 14 March 1783-d. 29 March 1849). Married Samuel Swartz in 15 October 1801. According to the 1850 Hamburg District, Shenandoah Co., VA census, Samuel, born PA, was 69 years. and living with his son. He died at age 81.

Jacob remarried and had three children with a third wife (nee Fly). Wife signed deed in 1786 as Mary. Made her (X) mark.²⁰ Married in PA.

¹² Bucks County Pa Orphans Court-File #1418

¹³ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 00, p. 536.

¹⁴ Catherine signed with her (X) mark. Christian Cratz and Mary Wenger Gile, wife of Abraham, signed in German, Abraham signed in English.

¹⁵ Date from tombstone.

¹⁶ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 00, p. 470.

¹⁷ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 00, p. 532.

¹⁸ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 00, p. 546.

¹⁹ Bucks County Deed Book #22, p. 286-290.

²⁰ Bucks County Deed Book 23, p. 107-10.

9. Elizabeth (b. about 1786/7) was living in Rockingham Co., VA in 1808, when she sold her share of the estate.²¹ She married David Allebaugh c. 1810. According to the 1850 census of Thorn Twp. Perry Co. Ohio, David was born in VA. Elizabeth was born in PA and 63 yrs. Her son Samuel was 39 yrs.
10. Philip (over 14 on 22 August 1802²², born before 1788). He married Elizabeth Gargas, sister to Mary Gargas, wife of Abraham Geil. He returned to Bucks Co., PA after the death of his father, to live with his guardian Uncle Abraham Gile. By 26 November 1808 he signed a deed of sale for his share of estate to Jacob Urner.²³
11. Margaret (under 14 on 22 Aug. 1802²⁴; b. after 1788). Married John Schroger. She returned to Bucks Co., PA after the death of her father, to live with her guardian Christian Kratz/Crotz and wife, Aunt Catherine.

22 August 1802 "petitioners are the children of Mary Godshalk, late wife of Samuel Godshalk, daughter of Jacob Gile who died lately in the county of Rockingham in the state of Virginia possessed of a considerable personal estate." Jacob Godshalk "in his own behalf" chose his father Samuel as his guardian. By petition of Anna and Abraham "by their next friends", Abraham Gile and Christian Crotz, Samuel was appointed guardian during their minority. Abraham Gile was chosen guardian by his brother Philip Gile. Christian Crotz was appointed guardian for his sister-in-law Margaret Gile during her minority.^{25 26}

Jacob's fourth wife (Trissel) had no children. The letter written by Joseph H. Wenger was found in the Grace Showalter papers at the EMU Historical Library. (He visited the Trissels graveyard and saw Anna Geil was buried among the Trissel family. He noted what he got from "Father's memory.")²⁷

On 26 Nov. 1808, Margaret and husband John Schroger, her brother Philip, sold their share of John Geil Sr. estate. Mary (Geil) Godshalk's two children Jacob Godshalk and Agnes (Godshalk) Overholt with husband David Overholt sold their share on the same deed.²⁸

* * * * *

John Geil (son of Abraham and Mary (Gargas) Geil of Doylestown, PA, had seven siblings, whose names we omit. John (b. 22 Jan. 1799-d. 19 Oct. 1889) returned to the Shenandoah Valley in 1820. He worked in the Christian Funk blacksmith shop until 1827. He married Mary Driver on 24 Aug. 1822.

They built near the home farm of Mary's parents, Ludwig Treiber (Lewis Driver) and Barbara (Sprinkle) Driver in the "Marsh Country" four miles west of New Market, VA. All their children were born there.

John Geil became a minister in 1840, serving at the Plains Mennonite Church (1826) in the New Market area. (See windowless Plains building on the masthead of this issue of *SMH*). Geil was most fluent preaching in German, but in his era Virginia Mennonites were turning to English. He preached some in English. In 1859

²⁶ Signed by Jacob Godshalk (his hand), "for Anna Godshalk" by Abraham Gile (his hand) and by Christian Crotz (German).

²⁷ Geil History refers to this trip in No. 47 Jacob Geil entry, p. 29.

²⁸ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 000, p. 500.

²¹ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 000, p. 500

²² Bucks County Pa Orphans Court File #1418.

²³ Rockingham Burnt Deed Book 000, p. 500.

²⁴ Bucks County Pa Orphans Court File #1418.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

he drew the lot to become a Northern District bishop. He served during the Civil War, and lived to be 90 years old. He and his wife are buried at the Rife-Driver Cemetery on the Driver farm.²⁹

Minister/bishop John Geil and wife (Mary Driver) had the following children:

1. Sarah (b. 12 June 1823-d. 3 Feb. 1892), married to Abraham Wenger on 6 Apr. 1848.
2. Abraham Geil (b. 19 Oct. 1824-d. 30 May 1909). Married Elizabeth Wenger on 30 Nov. 1848.
3. Elizabeth (b. 13 Sept. 1826-d. 15 May 1904). Became 3rd wife of John Heatwole.
4. Jacob (b. 31 Aug. 1828-d. 2 Sept 1917).
5. John (b. 27 Feb. 1830-d. 28 July 1900). Married Catherine Beery on 8 Apr. 1852. Ordained 5 Sept. 1875. Buried at Brennemens Mennonite Cemetery.
6. Henry (b. 1 Dec. 1831-d. 19 Nov. 1904). Married Mary Wenger (1858). 2nd Marriage to Rebecca Brenneman (1869).
7. Mary (b. 25 Jan. 1834-d. 17 July 1884). Married Solomon Beery on 5 Oct. 1854.
8. Priscilla (b. 15 Jan. 1837. Married Jacob Wenger.
9. Catharine (15 Oct. 1838). Married Daniel Good (1875). 2nd marriage to Peter Wenger (1881).
10. Anna (18 Oct. 1840-14 Feb. 1879). Married Peter Wenger.
11. Susanna (20 Oct. 1842). Unmarried.
12. Lydia (6 Mar. 1845-3 Aug. 1912). Married Noah Holsinger on 14 Jan. 1869,
13. Rebecca (13 June 1847). Married Solomon F. Burkholder (1873). 2nd marriage to Sol Rhodes (1887).

Jacob Geil (b. 31 Aug. 1828) was a son of Bishop John and Mary (Driver) Geil, and grandson of Abraham and Mary (Garges) Geil. He married Mary (Wenger) (b. 21 May 1833-d. 16 Oct. 1909), the daughter of Joseph and Barbara (Beery) Wenger. He was ordained as a Mennonite deacon on 24 July 1860.

During the Civil War, he was responsible for collecting and paying the fines for poor church members as required by the Union Government. He successfully petitioned the Southern

Claims Commission after the war for repayment of supplies and animals confiscated by Union troops during the war. He received \$480 for his claim of \$761. Testimony revealed the role Jacob played in moving men seeking to evade Confederate conscription toward safety in the North. Wife and daughter Catherine testified.³⁰ Jacob and Mary Geil were both buried at Lindale Mennonite Cemetery.

The 1860 Rockingham County VA Census shows Joseph Wenger as the head of the household. His wife was Barbara. Their son was Joseph H., future author of the *Geil History*. They lived at the Wenger home farm near Linville/Edom, VA.

Joseph Wenger Geil (son of Jacob and Mary (Wenger) Geil) married Annie Rebecca Beery. He was ordained a Mennonite minister in 1896. He and Annie were buried at Lindale. They had six children, one of them being Noah Wilmer Geil who was ordained a Mennonite minister in 1922. Joseph and Mary (Wenger) Geil's daughter Mary Kate "Kitty" was married to Samuel A. Shank, Mennonite minister.

Joseph
W
Annie
Geil
Kitty
Shank
Geil

Noah Wilmer and sister Mary Kate "Kitty" had a brother, Arthur Daniel, the grandfather of the author of this article, Eunice Geil Smith.

If you have questions or additions, contact Eunice at eshowalter@rockingham.k12.va.us or Eunice Geil Showalter, 355 S. Sunset Dr., Broadway, VA 22815. She is an excellent and careful genealogist, as is obvious. She also includes a page full of "unanswered questions," "unanswerable questions" and seven "Generalizations/Comments."

³⁰ Norman R. Wenger and David S. Rodes, *Unionists and the Civil War Experience*, Vol. II of the six-volume set.

²⁹ Harry A. Brunk, *History of Mennonites in Virginia 1727-1900*, Vol. 1, p. 253-54.

BOOK REVIEW

Norman R. Wenger and David S. Rodes, *Unionists and the Civil War Experiences in the Shenandoah Valley* (Harrisonburg, Lacey Spring, Melrose and Tenth Legion). Vol. VI. Harrisonburg: The Valley Research Associates and The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center, 2012. 1026 pages, illustrated. \$49.95.

Finally, this enormous ten-year project has been completed with this sixth volume. This entire set adds invaluable Civil War information. We owe a tremendous debt to Wenger and Rodes, who compiled and transcribed the nearly 300 claims from the Southern Claims Commission Records in the National Archives, as well as editor, Emmert F. Bittinger, for their labor of love in this magnificent set of volumes that greatly enlarges our understanding of the Civil War.

The whole set involves nearly ten thousand pages of documentary material and numerous testimonies of what the war meant to many Rockingham County citizens. It is in this set we learn of the well-organized Unionist Underground Railroad that thrived to help conscientious objectors and others who wanted to avoid conscription into the Confederacy. (This railroad is not to be confused with the Underground Railroad normally covered by American historians for many decades.)

This last volume includes 49 claims and a number of helpful appendices, a few of which provide summaries. Mennonites and Brethren were very active in this clandestine Unionist Railroad that included over 30 depots or terminals. Thus many were enabled to escape northward or westward. Included is an appendix of the entire list of claimants. Helpful also is the listed names of the 70 plus men apprehended near Petersburg, Virginia (now West Virginia) who were sent to Richmond and imprisoned in Thunder Castle. Most of the men in that group were Brethren or Mennonite.

NEWS

We happily announce that Elwood Yoder (elyoder@gmail.com) has agreed to become editor of *Shenandoah Mennonite Historian*, beginning with the summer 2013 issue. He sees the editing of *SMH* as dovetailing with his ongoing writing and interest in congregational history and student work at EMHS. Readers will recall that Jim Lehman had earlier announced his resignation as editor of *SMH* and that he would be happy to assist as needed in making a smooth transition.

Readers and others are welcome to submit ideas for the furtherance of writing and editing Virginia Mennonite history and genealogy.

Shenandoah Mennonite Historian

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