

Annals of the Oley Valley

IN BERKS COUNTY, PA.

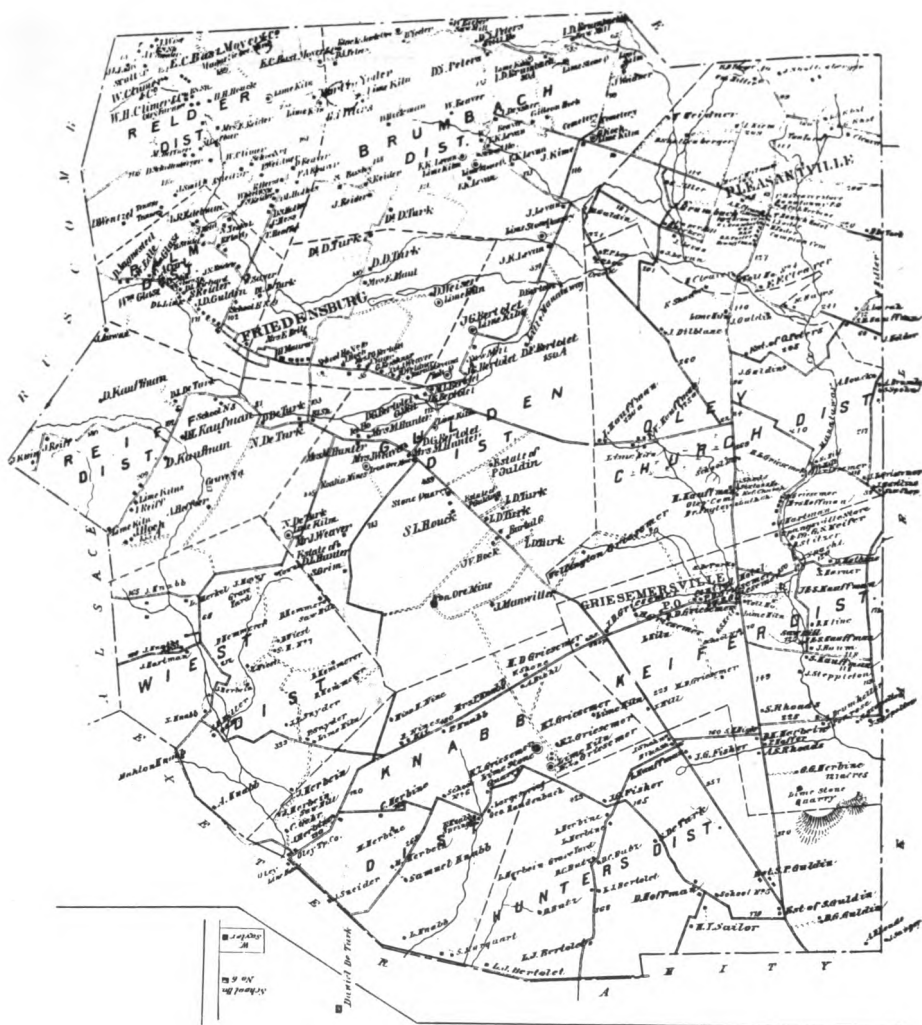
Over Two Hundred Years
of Local History of An
American Canaan

By

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Womelsdorf, Pa.

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Chapter I.

Causes That Led to the Huguenot, Swiss and Palatinate German
Emigration to America, at the Beginning of the
Eighteenth CenturyGENERAL REMARKS ON THE
OLEY VALLEY

By the late Dr. Peter G. Bertolet

The Valley of Oley comprises an area of about thirty square miles, and is situated in the central portion of the County of Berks—five miles east of Reading. It is almost entirely surrounded by hills, as it were, with the rest of the world shut out. The Indians thought it resembled a kettle, and named it *Oleka*, which, according to their dialect, is the name of this implement, and hence the name Oley was contracted. The Germans construed it *Olich*, signifying oil, considering it an appropriate appellation from the superior fertility of the soil. The name Oley has been applied to the township, comprising the greater part of the valley.

The surface of the valley is beautifully undulated, slightly inclining, and the numerous streamlets, which arise from the surrounding Alpine hills, irrigate from all sides, bearing on their silvery surface the fallen foliage of the mountain forest, the steep sloping descent urging on the little streams to impetuous currents—arriving in the bosom of the valley, then lull again into gentle murmurings, and then unload their productive affluvia to mix with the already fertile and productive soil.

It was here that the favorite game of the Indians was found in abundance and so constituted a hunting and fishing area, to which they were especially partial, the sovereignty over which was oft disputed among themselves, giving rise to many strange legends in the days that the Red Men knew not the pale-face.

The valley is watered by tributaries of the river Schuylkill, the Monocacy Creek and a small stream

winding through the western border and the Manatawny, much the larger of the two, is formed by numerous streamlets arising in the range of the hills to the east and north, running through the whole length of the valley on the eastern border, and leaving it in a south-easterly direction. Near the place of the exit of this stream an islet remains which induces some to believe that this was once a lake. (This spot is known by the name of Strong Cave.) It has a fine descent and furnishes many excellent water passes.

There are indeed few sections of country of the same extent so widely supplied with water, clear from the crystal fountain like this, and those fountains having their origin among the surrounding hills, furnish water especially pure.

When the first white men or Europeans came to the place they found it inhabited by Indians. It was one of their favorite hunting grounds, in which abounded the game of their choice, and the corn fields afforded more abundant yields than some of the adjacent neighborhoods.

The first settlements were made towards the close of the seventeenth and the beginning of the last century. There are papers of land-titles in possession of some of the inhabitants dated May 7th, 1682 (O. S.), which was nearly the time William Penn got possession of the province of Pennsylvania. If this shows nothing more, it proves at least that this spot attracted attention this early, while it is highly probable that settlements had been made even prior to this. We must also infer from this that the valley was thoroughly prospected and surveyed, and claims of tracts located, for how else could titles be made out.

preserved enclosures on the farm, both of which are in sight from the house. Among these descendants were men of considerable prominence in our county's history.

HUGUENOTS COME.

By 1710 a number of settlers had come to this Oley section for homes. In 1712 Isaac DeTurck, a brother-in-law of Keim, who had first located at Esopus, N. Y., settled on a tract of 300 acres nearer the present village of Friedensburg, where it was destined some important history would be enacted in the years to come. Abraham Levan came in 1715 and laid the foundations of a homestead and whose family history has endured to the present day. The later Levans, taking root elsewhere in Berks and Lehigh counties have, by their prominence, kept the name on the pages of the chronicler to our day. They, like the DeTurcks, were French or Alsatian Huguenots, who had escaped the storms of persecution.

In 1718, Anthony Lee, an English Quaker, the first to arrive in Oley, settled near where the present village of Pleasantville is located. His name has been perpetuated in this Oley territory to the present day, the last member of this family tree being Charles Lee, of Stonersville, who, as the last adherent to the old faith, is perpetuating the life and history of the Ancient Exeter Meeting of this general section. This pioneer Quaker Lee was soon joined by the Boones and others of the same religious persuasion, so that as early as 1726 they were strong enough to separate themselves from the Philadelphia and Gwynedd Meetings and organize themselves into a separate congregation and build their first church edifice. Jonathan Herbein and Peter Bertolet came in 1720.

In 1725, Rudolph Hoch, ancestor of most of the Berks County Hochs, and Highs, came into Oley and settled on a tract of 500 acres. This land had first been sold by William Penn to one John Snashold, of England, as early as 1682 and the latter now disposed of it to this religious fugitive originally from the hills of France and later from the valley of the Rhine, on the Necker. Jean Bertolet, a brother of Peter and a most interesting character in Oley history, came in 1726. John Yoder, another first ancestor of an important Berks family, arrived in 1728, and David Kauffman, head of all the

numerous Kauffmans, sometime before 1732. It is a noteworthy fact that these original homesteads of Keims, DeTurcks, Levans, Hochs, Yoders and others have remained in the possession of descendants for the 100 years. These may all be found, with their colonial stone houses, within a radius of about five miles. It speaks loudly of the thrift, enterprise and domestic loyalty and sentimentality of these family circles.

EARLY ASSESSOR'S LIST.

The first preserved assessor's list of Oley dates back to 1734, which reports 61 land owners then in the township. In 1750, the township held 131 tax payers. The first settlers found three Indian encampments in the township limits. They belonged to the Leni-Lenape tribes, "the original people." They were divided into three principal tribes, known as the Turtle, the Turkey and the Wolf tribes. As far as is known no white people of Oley were ever murdered by Indians, though relations were sometimes strained.

There is a letter extant, written by George Boone in 1728, to the deputy governor of the province, requesting troops to be sent for the protection of settlers of this section from the Indians. As there is no recorded evidence that any troops were sent in answer to this appeal, it is altogether likely that all differences were amicably adjusted. After the negotiations with the Indians for all the land lying south of the Blue Ridge, as far west as the Susquehanna River, which took place in September, 1732, and 1742, at which both Benjamin Franklin and Conrad Weiser were parties and witnesses, the Indians of present Berks county gradually withdrew beyond these northern and western barriers. But it is claimed that stragglers among them lingered longer in Oley than in any other part of Berks. For long years one remained in the Bertolet family, when suddenly he disappeared to join his tribal brethren.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY.

Among these settlements there stirred ever a zealous religious activity and missionary ardor. An early leader was a man by the name of Matthias Bauman, who had gained a following to his cult under the name of New Born, who stood out against the more formal and creedal divisions of the Protestant

Chapter XV.

THE KAUFMAN FAMILY

Efficient Farmers and Preachers

There are many Kaufmans in our land today. The name is variously spelled as Kauffmann, Coffman, Coughman, etc., but the first American progenitor, after a brief stay in Germantown, settled in Oley in 1727. From this pioneer have sprung all the Kaufmans of Berks and adjacent counties of Eastern Pennsylvania today, whether their name contains one or two f's or terminates with one or two n's.

This family has the distinction of having continued possession of the ancestral acres of Oley on which their, great, great, grandsire settled and occupied, now lacking but one year of being 200 years ago. Moreover they hold all the legal papers of the original purchase, transfers, deeds and releases from the first Penn warrant to the present day.

The homesteads are adjoining farms—there are two of them covering between 400 and 500 acres and each improved by beautiful colonial houses and outbuildings—covering a history of two centuries of rich rural life, and from six to nine generations of moral, intelligent, progressive and advancing Pennsylvania German folk of the first rank for neighborhood betterment.

The early members of this original stock soon bought more land and as the same household increased and divided into second and third generations, two homesteads were established, and thus two Kaufman farms and households, side by side, came to make history and bless the world with their thrift and enterprise. Thus it comes that we have two colonial Kaufman homesteads of Oley to write about and but one Kaufman family history.

CONCISE FAMILY HISTORY. .

For this history we are indebted to Mrs. Elizabeth K. Kruger of Oley, an intelligent and devoted descendant of the same original Kaufman progenitor. It is so clear and concise that we are disposed to let it stand intact. She says:

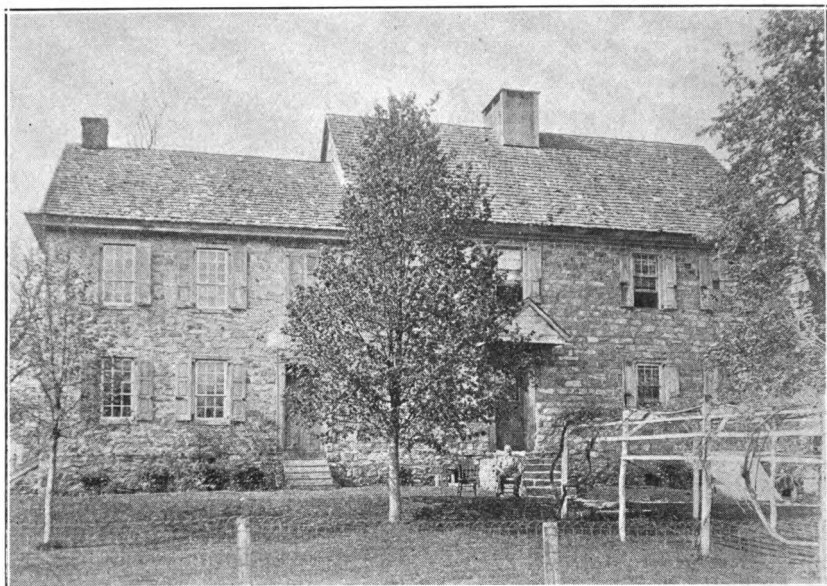
Ann Kaufman, widow, with her two sons, David and Jacob, came to this country sometime after 1720. They settled in Germantown.

Jonathan Herbein (Harben) received a warrant for a grant of 200 acres of land in Oley, Philadelphia county, Jan. 23, 1720. This tract was surveyed March 7 of the same year. David Kaufman (Coffman) purchased the right to this from Jonathan Herbein for 30 pounds. He received a patent for this tract, Nov. 28, 1727, and secured an additional 12 acres for roads and highways.

The original draft of this tract, bounded by lands of Gabriel Boyer, Hans Yoder, Peter Bayley, John Fisher and vacant land to the south, is in the possession of John Kaufman, of Oley, administrator of the estate of his father, the late Ephraim K. Kaufman, who died last December. David's mother, Ann Kaufman, and her son, Jacob, jointly purchased a tract of 50 acres in Germantown, Jan. 7, 1726, from Cornelius Swerts and Sophia, his wife.

The son, Jacob, died in Germantown, in 1732. His mother, being next of kin, was granted letters of administration, by Peter Evans, register general of the Province of Pennsylvania, and the counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex, on the Delaware, Feb. 7, 1732. (These original letters are in our possession.)

David Kaufman became naturalized between 1729 and 1730. He obtained a warrant for a second tract of land, lying south of his first tract, containing 100 acres, from Thomas Penn, Feb. 5, 1733, for which he was to pay the sum of 15 pounds and 10 shillings, current money of this Province, and a yearly quit rent of one half-penny sterling for every acre thereof. (The original warrant is in our possession.) This tract was surveyed Feb. 7, in the same year. David Kaufman (Coffman) received a patent for this tract, with six acres for roads and highways, May 7, 1734. The patent says if the yearly quit rent is not paid within 90 days after it is due, the tract will be re-entered and held until such time as all arrears and expenses are paid. After receiving this patent, he paid a yearly quit rent on 300 acres. There is an original receipt showing that Daniel Kaufman paid at Philadelphia, Dec. 23, 1739, five pounds as part payment of quit rent.



Frank Kaufman's Home.

ACQUIRES MORE LAND.

David Kaufman (Koughman) received a warrant for a third tract of land, lying to the south of his second tract, Feb. 23, 1740, surveyed April 7, containing 54 acres and 144 perches, and an allowance of six acres for highways and roads. He was to pay for this tract 8 pounds and 10 shillings and a yearly quit rent of one half-penny sterling. He received the patent for this tract, Oct. 11, 1740.

David's mother, Ann Kaufman, died September, 1740. In her last will (we have the original copy) she leaves her clock and clock case to her son, David, and the rest of her estate to David's children, Jacob, Mary, Anna, Barbara and Susanna, not mentioning the son, John. She named as her executors, David Kaufman, of Oley; Mathis Adams Hogeremoed and Derick Kizer, both of Germantown.

David Kaufman died in January, 1762, leaving a widow, Veronica Kaufman, two sons, Jacob and John, three daughters, Mary, wife of Martin Shenkle, of Oley; Barbara, wife of Nicholas Leshner, of Oley, and Anna, wife of Daniel Yoder, of Union. One daughter, Susanna, having died when quite young.

Veronica, the widow, with her daughters and son, John, released the homestead to the eldest son, Jacob Kaufman, Jan. 7, 1763. (We have the original release). The son, John, moved across the hills, as it was called in those days, and settled in the fertile valley of the Maidenecreek—now known as Maidenecreek and Ontelaunee townships. The son,

Jacob, lived on the homestead all his life. He was married to Hannah Hiel, daughter of Jacob Hiel, who owned a large tract of land in District township. Jacob Kaufman served Gen. Washington with beef and cotton.

There is an old tradition handed down that a band of 50 Indians came to Jacob Kaufman's farm one evening and wanted to sleep in the barn. They seemed to realize that Jacob did not trust them, so they asked him to tie their hands—which he finally did. In the morning he gave them all a good breakfast and some whisky. They were so delighted they called him King. It was never known that any Indians ever molested the Kaufmans in Oley.

HAD SIX SONS.

Jacob Kaufman had a family of six sons: Jacob, Peter, John, David, Nicholas and Samuel; two daughters, Kathrine, married to Jacob Seltzer, of Womelsdorf, and Susanna, married to a Mr. Clark.

David and Nicholas settled in Union county, Samuel, in the State of Indiana, and it is thought that Peter and John located in the wilds of Texas, where a county, a town, a post office and a paper bear the family name.

Jacob Kaufman (I) died in 1824. After the death of the widow, Hannah Kaufman, Jacob (II) inherited the homestead.

Jacob Kaufman (II) was born March 10, 1757. In 1777 he took the oath of fidelity (allegiance). He served in the Revolutionary

War and was honorably discharged just before the Battle of Brandywine. There is a story in existence that during the war a very valuable horse was captured from a distinguished British officer. The horse was presented to Gen. Washington. He stationed a squad of soldiers on the premises to guard the horse, which was kept in an old log stable that stood on the Kaufman homestead. This stable has since been burned down, but a new stable was erected on the identical spot and this historical incident associated with it. During the war a company of soldiers was encamped in the old orchard, north of the homestead.

On Sept. 14, 1807, Jacob (II) was married at the age of 50 years, to Susanna Keim, daughter of John and Susanna Weidner Keim, at the age of 24. There is a little romance connected with this part of the family.

Jacob (II) loved Susanna Weidner, but she loved John Keim more, yet she promised if she should ever have a daughter, Jacob might woo her. This is exactly what happened. John Keim had a daughter, Susanna. Jacob Kaufman visited and sometimes rocked her in her cradle. When she was 24 years old she married him. They had four sons, Jacob (III), Isaac, Daniel and David, two daughters, Esther, wife of Daniel Griesemer, Oley, and Hannah, wife of Daniel LeVan, Oley. Jacob (II) died April 27, 1843 aged 86 years. Before his death he had an addition built to the house for his wife to live in after he was gone. His wife, Susanna, died 27 years later, aged 88 years.

INHERITS OLD HOME.

Jacob (III) inherited the part of the estate on which the old home stood. Isaac inherited half of the land to the north. David was born 1810 and died in 1843, aged 24 years. He had been married to Hannah Reiff. There were no children. He was buried in the old grave yard on the premises. Daniel lived at Friedensburg, Oley township, at the mill property. He was married to Cathrine Knabb. They had two sons, Ammon, of Oley, and James, of Reading, and one daughter, Sallie, married to Lewis Schaeffer, of Fleetwood.

Isaac Kaufman was married to Lucy Knabb. They occupied a part of the old estate. Their children were Ephraim, Daniel, Jacob, Ellen, wife of James Rothenberger, Oley; Emma, wife of James Snyder, Oley; Rebecca, wife of Anthony Rhoads and Susan Kaufman. Ephraim inherited his father's homestead, a part of the early original tract. He always lived there. He was married to Willi DeTurck, who preceded him in death many years. Their children were Ella, wife of Edwin Sassaman, and John, married to Annie Schaeffer, of Fleetwood. Ephraim Kaufman died Dec. 9, 1925. His son, John, owns the old homestead. Jacob Kaufman (III) was born on a part of the old homestead in 1813. He was a farmer and veterinarian. He was married to Margaret Yoder, daughter of William

Yoder, who lived on an adjoining farm. Jacob (III) died of typhoid fever in 1852, aged 39 years. He had four children, Jacob (IV) and Mary, both of whom died in infancy; Frank Y. and Hiram Y. Kaufman. These two sons inherited their father's estate. Three men were appointed to divide the estate satisfactorily between the two sons. They were six and four years old respectively. Frank Y. Kaufman, the eldest son, received the part on which the old home stood. He was married to Hannah B. Clouser. This is a part of the old original tract and by 1927, next year, this will have been in the family name for 200 years. This is run as the Frank Y. Kaufman Estate, by his children, Sara K. Bertolet, Emily K. Boyer, Elisabeth K. Kruger, all of Oley; Rev. David C. Kaufman, Emaus, Lehigh county, and Rev. Roger C. Kaufman, of Woodstock, Ill. Two daughters, Beckie and Mary Koufman, preceded their father in death. A great many of the family are buried in the old graveyard and on the premises, including Jacob I, II, III and IV.

BUILT ABOUT 1766.

The present house on the premises was built about 1766. The old Swiss barn was erected earlier. Henry Conrad, the tenant on the Frank Y. Kaufman farm, has lived there for 30 years and his father had been the tenant before that time. The portion of the farm that belonged to Hiram Y. Kaufman, deceased, was sold to Mrs. Mary Hartman. Hiram Y. Kaufman was married to Ada Martin, of Jersey City, N. J. They had two daughters, Henrietta, married to James Butler, Philadelphia, and Lillian, married to Edward Coates, Hatboro, Montgomery county. Mrs. James Rothenberger and Mrs. James Snyder are the only survivors of the sixth generation of the Kaufmans in Oley. They are granddaughters of Jacob Kaufman (II).

Elizabeth Geiger, Franklin Barry Whitman and Ruth Elizabeth Kaufman are the ninth generation. Elizabeth Geiger and Franklin Barry Whitman are great-grandchildren of Ephraim Kaufman. Ruth Elizabeth Kaufman is a great-granddaughter of Ammon K. Kaufman.

LIVED 87 YEARS IN SAME HOUSE.

This complete and satisfactory genealogical outline needs no embellishment, nor can it well be improved for clearness and interest. We add only a few comments to show what a rich contribution this family has made to Oley's and all of Berks county's population.

Most readers of this should know of the long and active iron business, which the Leesport branch of the Kaufmans added to the county's wealth and prosperity. The writer knows some of them as long as 50 years ago. Then there is that branch

which settled at Fleetwood, where today Kaufman & Schaeffer, dealers in flour, feed, grain and coal, are doing a prosperous trade. The two Lutheran ministers of Emaus, and of Woodstock, Ill., and other moral and educational leaders have added their influential labors to the moral asset of the family name.

But most of the stock seems to have been to the manor born and has not strayed far from the ancestral spring. The latest specimen of this class, Ephraim K. Kaufman, who died last December 9, never lived anywhere else but in the house in which he was born, more than 87 years before. Why should he? It would have been hard to find more beautiful, genial and profitable home surroundings, with its spacious house of Colonial architecture, surrounded by a setting of ample lawn, trees, shrubbery and flowers.

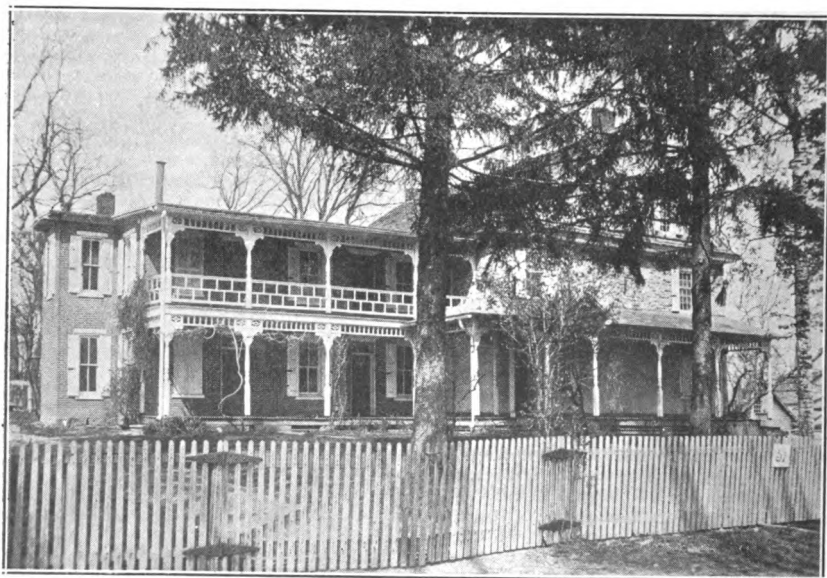
That he had an appreciative historic sentiment is attested by the two-ton weighted cannon which decorate the front lawn. He owned a large farm in Warwick township, Chester county, in the shadow of the old Warwick furnace of Revolutionary days, which Gen. Washington visited in September, 1777, just

after the battle of Brandywine and from whence he issued a dispatch with orders to Gen. Anthony Wayne. Mr. Kaufman's men in 1904 dug up this cannon from the meadow, where it had been hidden since the days of the Revolution and he had it removed and set up at his residence in Oley. He has carefully preserved here two grandfather clocks, which came into the family from the Weiser and Levan households.

Nor was this home-lover indifferent to outside affairs of county or community concern for he was an officer for years in his church (Oley Reformed) and since 1883, to his death, a director of the Keystone National Bank of Reading, besides having been active in other organizations.

The Kauffman Homestead of Maiden Creek township, erected in 1771, has this fine date-stone in its front elevation:

o		o
Alle die in diesem		Johannes
Haus gehn aus und		Kauffmann
ein. Lass dir O		und Susanna
Gott, befohlen		Kauffmanin
Seyn.		1771.
o		o



The Late Ephraim Kaufman's Home.

A PROGRESSIVE FAMILY.

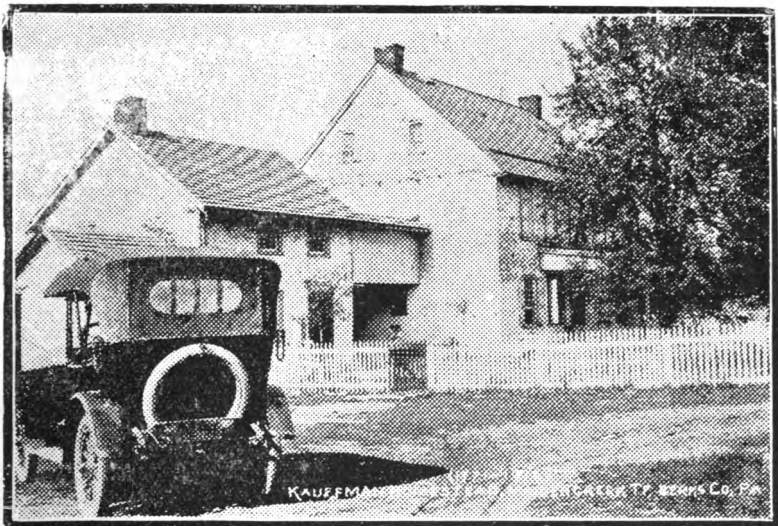
The family has always been progressive and connubially and collaterally connected with the best and most prominent families of Oley as we have seen—the Keims, Yoders, Levans, DeTurcks, Griesemers, Leshers, Clousers, Knabbs and Bertolets.

When they married outside of the township, they associated themselves with good families, as for instance, when Katharine Kaufman married Jacob Seltzer, of Womelsdorf. The Seltzers were enterprising folk of the Tulpehocken region. The first building to go up in the newly laid out town-plot of John Womelsdorf, in 1762, was the hostelry of Jacob

distinguished horseback travelers and visitors elected to put up for the night.

I have just come from the old cemetery here at Womelsdorf and copied the epitaphs on these inn-keepers' graves of long ago and this is what they contain:

SACRED
to the memory of
JACOB SELTZER
born Sept. 5th, 1764
and
departed this life
January 5, 1823.
Aged 58 years, 4 months
28 days.



Johannes Kauffman Homestead in Maiden Creek.

Seltzer, sr., and into this public house doubtless the son by the same name led his bride of Oley, to become for years the hostess to the traveling public, the managing cook for that horde of wagoners that later, before the Union canal came, used this highway to transport their grain to the Philadelphia market, or furnace teams hauling their ores from Cornwall to Charming Forge.

It should be interesting to all the Kaufmans of Berks and beyond to know that it fell to the honor of Katharine Kaufman Seltzer, most likely in all her queenliest manner (a woman of 27 years) to wait upon President George Washington and his illustrious party from Philadelphia, on Nov. 13, 1793, as the junior mistress and hostess of the Seltzer House of Womelsdorf, where these

SACRED
to the memory of
CATHARINE SELTZER
She was born a Kaufman
on the 5th day of September
1764
and departed this life
October 25, 1842
Aged 76 years, 1 month
and 20 days.

The elder Seltzers are buried in the same row and from their epitaphs one learns that Jacob Seltzer, sr., and his wife were getting aged when the presidential party were guests here. Maria Catharine, the wife of the senior Jacob Seltzer was born in 1735 and died 1817 and was 58 years old at the time of the President's visit. So we will believe this Oley daughter-in-law did the honors of probably waiting at the

table and further entertaining this illustrious group consisting of President Washington, Robert Morris, financier of the Revolution; David Rittenhouse, astronomer and engineer; William Smith, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and Tench Francis, the land-agent of the Penns' Estate.

When the new Seltzer House was built—still standing and in use—about the beginning of the 19th century, we can imagine Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Seltzer, jr. took charge as proprietors, to be succeeded after their demise by their son, the late Michael Seltzer. This was probably about the year 1823, when he died, though she lived nearly 20 years longer. Her sepulture here links our town cemetery by this Kaufman grave, with the private burial plot of the Kaufmans on the homestead premises and the Oley Church cemetery nearby.

PORT HOLE IN OLD HOUSE.

The house on the original Kaufman tract in Oley stands next to the Ephraim, now John Kaufman place, a little to the east, towards the Oley churches. It was built in the long ago, is a fine specimen of colonial stone architecture, and has a few

features that single it out as interesting to antiquarians and the historically curious. In the front bedroom is a small opening through the south wall near the ceiling, which was undoubtedly left as a port hole for defense against Indian depredators by the builder.

Another feature is the condition of the lime or sandstone threshold of the front door of this home. It is so worn that a concavity of about half the stone has been made by the constant usage of many years.

It reminds the writer of what he heard his father relate of a certain acquaintance who was building a house for himself and when they placed an eight-inch limestone threshold he remarked: "Oh! How I wish that I might live until I had worn this stone through by walking over it barefooted!" Surely this man was longing for immortality; and yet according to the measure of it by the Kaufman homestead of Oley, even a stone threshold is not as sure a measure of longevity as that life which our elder Brother, who brought life and immortality to light, has revealed unto us. Blessed is he, who by faith can lay hold of that immortality, which will not only outlive stone steps and earthly homesteads, but the very suns and stars of the firmament!