

## **II. THE FIRST YEARS IN THE NEW WORLD**

Joh. Martin Kirstätter and his wife Maria Dorothea Frey left for the New World soon after their marriage in Neckarbischofsheim on April 29, 1727.

The couple landed in Philadelphia in the fall of 1727, probably worked as indentured servants for several years, and eventually settled on a farm just north of Cleona, then part of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and now part of Lebanon County.

Dorothea probably died after the birth of her daughter Juliana in 1741. Martin remarried on June 19 or July 19, 1744, and his second wife Magdalena Huckenberger or Kuckenberger was still living at the time of his death in 1759.

From the records that survive, it appears that Martin and Dorothea had seven children and Martin and Magdalena only one. The family belonged to Hill Evangelical Lutheran Church, sometimes known as Quitapohila Hill Church, and lived a short distance northeast of the church.<sup>1</sup>

The following information is taken largely from Hill Church records:

<u>Children</u>	<u>Biographical Information</u> <sup>2</sup>
Sebastian	Married Magdalena Diebler on July 11, 1751 Died in 1787 in what is now Snyder County, Pennsylvania
Margaretha	Married Frantz Caspar Wagner on Oct. 8, 1751 Probably died in 1759
Jon. Michael	Married Maria Dorothea Dietz on June 5, 1753 Probably died about 1777 in what is now Snyder County
Joh. Martin	Born Dec. 9, 1733 Married Elisabetha Bickel on June 1, 1756 Died in 1798 in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania
Elisabetha	Born April 8, 1736 Married Joh. Martin Kimberling (Sept. 25, 1736-1801) on April 4, 1758 Died about 1814 in Wythe County, Virginia
Johannes	Born Sept. 3, 1739 Probably didn't live to adulthood

Juliana                      Born Jan. 25, 1741  
                                    Married Jacob Ziegeler on Jan. 21, 1760

Joh. Leonhardt            Born about 1747  
                                    Married Anna Elisabetha Zehrunge on Nov. 25, 1766  
                                    Died in 1790 in Northumberland County

Martin and Dorothea were among the 300 immigrants who arrived in Philadelphia aboard the ship *Molly* (possibly *Malley* or *Molley*) in September 1727.

By that fall, the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania had become concerned about the number of Germans entering the colony. At a meeting on Sept. 21, it approved the text of an oath to be signed by new arrivals:

We subscribers, natives and late inhabitants of the Palatinate upon the Rhine & places adjacent, having transported ourselves and families into this province of Pensilvania, a colony subject to the Crown of Great Britain, in hopes and expectation of finding a retreat & peaceable settlement therein, do solemnly promise & engage that we will be faithful & bear true allegiance to his present Majesty King George the Second, and his successors Kings of Great Britain, and will be faithfull to the proprietor of this province; and that we will demean ourselves peaceably to all his said Majesties subjects, and strictly observe & conform to the laws of England and of this province, to the utmost of our power and best of our understanding.<sup>3</sup>

Martin swore the oath on Sept. 30 along with about 70 other heads of families.

It is not known exactly when the family settled near Cleona, but it was before the birth of Joh. Martin in December 1733. The gap in the records between 1727 and 1733 suggests Martin spent several years as a bound laborer to work off the cost of coming to Pennsylvania.

Many of the early immigrants bartered their labor for their passage under arrangements known as the redemptioner system. Immigrants were recruited in Germany by agents called “newlanders” who worked for Dutch merchants and shipping companies. The immigrants signed agreements to pay for their passage on arrival, but the debts were actually discharged by buyers in the New World. In return, the newcomers went to work as bound laborers for the buyers for periods of three to six years.<sup>4</sup>

Rev. Henry M. Muehlenberg, in an account written in 1769, described what happened when a ship arrived in Philadelphia. One or more merchants got an accounting of the money owed by the immigrants, announcements were published in the newspapers stating how many new arrivals were to be sold, and the ship was turned into a marketplace.

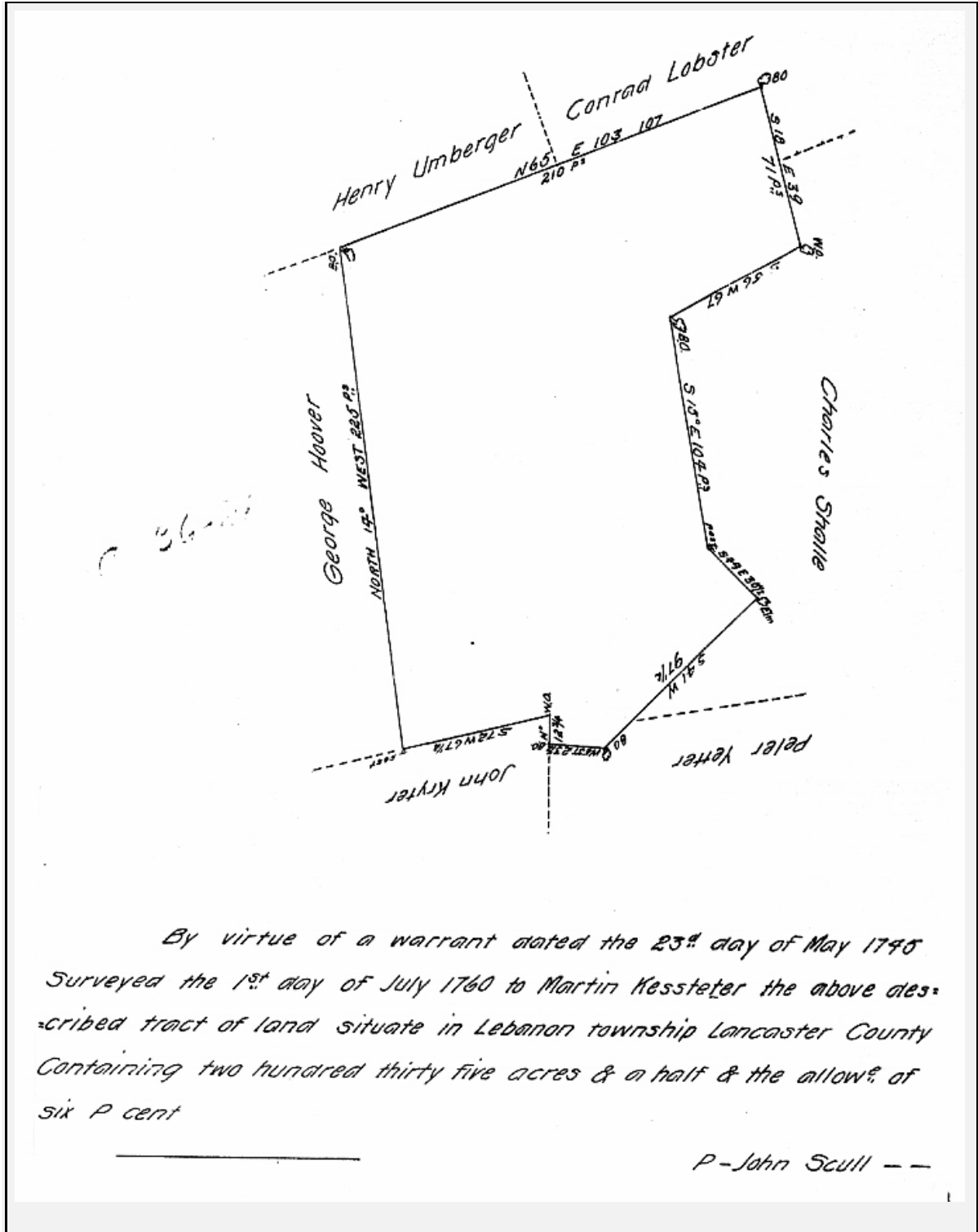
The buyers make their choice among the arrivals and bargain with them for a certain number of years and days. They then take them to the merchant, pay their passage and their other debts and receive from the government authorities a written document which makes the newcomers their property for a definite period.<sup>5</sup>

However they began their lives in Pennsylvania, Martin and his family eventually settled near Cleona. Martin was an active member of the Hill Church congregation. When the church became a Lutheran and Reformed Church in 1744, Martin was one of 26 Lutherans to sign the “union” agreement.<sup>6</sup>

The family homestead was located northeast of Hill Church, separated from the church property by the land of Hans Ring. A land warrant, somewhat akin to an option to purchase land, was issued to Martin on May 23, 1745, for 235½ acres of land. Another warrant for 203½ acres was issued on May 11, 1753, to his oldest son Sebastian.<sup>7</sup> The exact location of Sebastian’s land isn’t known for sure, but from the names of neighbors listed on a later survey it was probably in the same general area.

Martin was on the assessment list for Lebanon Township in Lancaster County in 1750 and 1755, and his homestead was assessed seven shillings and sixpence in 1759, the year of his death. Sebastian was on the assessment list for the same township in 1758.<sup>8</sup>

THE FIRST FAMILY HOMESTEAD IN PENNSYLVANIA



Martin wrote his will on April 30, 1759, and it was filed at the Lancaster County courthouse on May 15. The original will was probably written in German, but it could not be found during a visit to the courthouse in 1982.<sup>9</sup> The English text of the will recorded in the county will book reads as follows:

IN THE NAME OF GOD AMEN, the 30 day of April in the year of our Lord 1759, I Martin Kirstetter senior in the Township of Lebanon in the County of Lancaster & province of Pennsylvania farmer; being very sick & weake in body but of perfect & sound mind, & memory and not knowing what hour the Lord will be pleased to call me out of this world; & leaving some worldly goods behind me; do make & ordain this my last will and testamt. THAT is to say principally I recommend my soul in the hands of God who gave it, and for my body if I depart hence, it is my desire that it may be buried into the ground, after a Christian like and decent manner; such as possible, hoping to receive the same again at the general resurrection by the mighty power of God, & to be united with my soul to inherit everlasting salvation AND as touching my worldly estate I leave behind me, I give devise and dispose, of the same in the following manner & form that after all my just debts are paid and satisfied I give and bequeath (1) unto my well beloved wife Magdalene eighty pound in Pennsylvania lawful Cunt. [Continental?] money to be paid unto her as followeth, ten pounds thereof in six months after my decease ten pounds more in twelve months time, after my departure twenty pounds thereof in two years time after my death twenty pound more in three years time after the day of my decease & the last twenty pounds in four years time after the day of my departure a feather bed below and above; five pillows two sheets, besides the sundry bases about each of them pieces or parcells mentioned; the curtains and bed stead thereto belonging likewise a new walnut chest with all her cloaths, her spinning wheel a new Balselex Bible; a good meal bag, a copper pot; & a small brass kettle; & a pail and ladle, a baton, two pewter plates & two spoons, & a good milk cow, instead of her full dower; third part and proportion of both real and personal estate which other ways she hath or might hath a right to claim by the law, which parcels or parts as above mentioned, shall be exhibited & paid unto her by my exrs appointed & no more (2) I give and bequeath to my eldest Sesbastian Kirstetter the sum of ten pounds in the above currency, before hand as being heir at law & no more (3) I will and order that all my both real and personal estate, shall by my exes be sold in the best and profitable manner, as posseble, except as before excepted, and after my wifes legacey, & and eldest sons gift & just debts, are paid & thereof substracted, the remainder is to be equally divided among all my children seven in number four sons & three daughters; (4) I ordain, appoint & constitute for exes of this my last will and testament my eldest son Sebastian Kirstetter & my beloved friend & neighbor Conrad Brown AND hereby I utterly disallow revoke and annull all other former testaments, wills and legaceys, before this named willed bequeathed, ratifying & confirming this & no other to be my last will and testament, WITNESS whereof I have hereto set my hand & seal the day & year above mentioned.

The will was witnessed by Anastasius Uhler, Valentine Keller and Johannes Martin Kimmerlin. Kimmerlin was no doubt the Kimberling who married Martin's daughter Elisabetha.

It is not known where Martin, his first wife Maria Dorothea or most other members of the immediate family are buried. The family lived quite near Hill Church, but the early tombstones in the churchyard were carved very lightly and have been unreadable for years. There are no surviving records of any Kerstetter burials there.<sup>10</sup>

Martin's second wife Magdalena married Johannes Muller in Lancaster on May 19, 1760.<sup>11</sup>

### ENDNOTES

1. The original church was replaced by another building on the same site in 1837. The church can be reached by going north from the traffic light off Route 422 in Cleona and then turning left on Hill Church Road. Among those buried at the church is John Caspar Stoeber, the first Lutheran pastor in Pennsylvania, who organized the Hill Church congregation in 1733. The date explains why there were no birth records for the three oldest children.

2. Margaretha's death in 1759 is suggested by a Hill Church record that shows the marriage of Frantz Casper Wagner (widower) to Elisabetha Wirtz on Feb. 26, 1760.

Elisabetha Kirstätter's birth and baptism at the First Reformed Church in Lancaster is recorded in Vol. 4 of the Pennsylvania German Society *Proceedings and Addresses*. Her marriage to Joh. Martin Kimberling is in Hill Church records. Previous editions of this family history stated incorrectly that Elisabetha died young and Kimberling remarried.

Johannes probably died as a child because there is no further record of him after his baptism. Martin's will said he had four sons.

There are no further verifiable records about Juliana and her husband.

Hill Church records list Leonhardt's marriage, but not his birth or baptism. The most direct evidence linking him to the rest of the family is the record of the baptism of Joh. Leonhardt Kirstätter, son of Sebastian and Magdalena, in 1756. The sponsors of the child were Joh. Leonhardt and sister Elisabetha.

3. The spelling and punctuation follow the original minutes (for better or worse), but the capitalization has been changed to bring it into line with modern practice.
4. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Atlantic Migration, 1607-1860*, and Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration*.
5. Muehlenberg's account is quoted in *Pennsylvania German Pioneers*.

6. *Sestercentennial History of Hill Lutheran Church, 1733-1983*. Martin's last name was transcribed as Riestatter.
7. The two land warrants were searched in 1982 by Shirley G. McQuillis of Ligonier, Pennsylvania. The author was able to establish the approximate location of Martin's land with a bit of luck in 1983. The land belonging to George Hoover shown in the map in this chapter is listed as the land of Hans Ring on the adjacent survey A36, page 81. The history of Hill Church lists a John Ringer (presumably Hans Ring) immediately northeast of the church. A Johannes Ring was on the passenger list for the ship *Molly*, the same ship that carried Martin and Dorothea to Philadelphia in 1727.

Martin and Sebastian never completed their purchases, so neither is listed in the early grantor and grantee indexes of Lancaster County. Martin's land passed into the hands of the Kreider family. Sebastian's land became the property of Henry Beashore in 1788.

Martin's land was apparently along the Union Canal from Middletown to Reading when the canal was dug in later years. The canal followed the Swatara and Tulpehocken creeks. However, neither creek is shown in the original survey of Martin's land.

8. William Henry Egle, *History of the Counties of Dauphin and Lebanon*. Lebanon Township was more or less the same as Lebanon County today.
9. No other Kerstetter wills or letters of administration were found during a search of indexes under the letters C, G and K. There were no Kerstetter listings in the intestate indexes or indexes to orphan's court records under the letter K.
10. Neither Hill Church tombstone inscriptions compiled by the Lebanon County Historical Society nor tombstone inscriptions for Lebanon County compiled by the Daughters of the American Revolution contain any references to Kerstetters or to Martin's daughters and their husbands.
11. Pennsylvania Archives, 6th Series, Vol. 6, pages 233 and 243. International Genealogical Index (IGI) for Pennsylvania.