

**Subject: Digging Up Your Ancestors, Part II!****Date:** Sun, 17 Nov 1996 00:27:03 GMT**From:** "Vee L. Housman" <housman@macronet.com>**To:** "Penna-Dutch genealogy discussion list" <PENNA-DUTCH@rmgate.pop.indiana.edu>

By popular demand--OK, it was just the four of you!--I'll continue to tell you about my exciting adventures in researching my family. Hopefully, you'll appreciate the thrill of the most-unusual adventure along with me.

It all started on November 1, 1989, when my sister Norma and I set out for York County. The drive was a pleasant one that started out gray and drizzly in New York but as we travelled south, the clouds disappeared and brilliant autumn leaves were still to be seen in the rolling hills of central Pennsylvania and along the Susquehanna River. I was sitting back, enjoying a quiet moment, when my mind suddenly snapped to attention. A very unusual thought had popped into my head. It was the feeling that we would find information which would be "totally unexpected." The thought itself, was totally unexpected and I pondered over the strangeness of it. I mentioned it to my sister and she agreed that it didn't quite make sense. What would we find in our research which would be "totally unexpected?" Although we HOPED to find information about our ancestors, certainly it wouldn't have been all that UNEXPECTED if we did find something. It seemed that "something was afoot!"

We eventually arrived in York, settled ourselves into our motel room and the next day was:

**THE FIRST DAY -- THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

We parked in front of the Historical Society on East Market Street and felt that Norma's special license plates on her car announced our purpose. Her plates read "GNEALOGY." Filled with the thrill of anticipation, we lugged our heavy briefcases through the front doors. Sunshine poured through the skylight high overhead in the Great Hall, and as we walked over the checkerboard black and white marble floor toward the library, there loomed a huge Connestoga wagon on display. It brought to us the reality of the historical significance of York County and of our ancestors' place in it.

We were pleasantly greeted by a member of the library staff and given a brief overview of the different types of information the library contained and where to look for various sources of information. We felt like children in a candy store where all the candy was free for the asking!

Wasting no time, I headed straight for the Roth's Reformed Church records in Paradise Township (York Co.) in which I hoped to find a record of Michael Fishel and his parents, as one of Michael's daughters had been christened in that church. Finding nothing of consequence there, I located the extensive Fishel file in which I found abstracts of wills. I picked up a file card showing information contained in a will of 1796 of a John Fishell. I checked his children named in the will, hoping to find a son Michael, but none by that name. Then my eye caught the mention of one of his daughters, "Mary, intermarried with Leonard Eppley." Puzzled at the notation, I paused for a moment at the words, as our LANCASTER County Fishels on our father's side of the family had nothing in common with our ADAMS County Eppleys on our mother's side of the family. But still, the name Leonard Eppley is a unique one and he was our ancestor. The fact that his wife in the Fishell will was Mary seemed somehow to connect. I handed the card to Norma and asked her, "What do you think of this?" She read it and slowly it dawned on her as it was still



dawning on me. What we were looking at was that it appeared that our Leonard Eppley, whose wife was listed as "An. Mar." in a church record of the christening of one of their children, was now named as the husband of Mary Fishel, daughter of John and Margaret Fishel. We looked at each other in astonishment.

Still, I thought, if it were a coincidence, it was an amazing one; yet we had no proof that the two Leonards were the same person. After all, I assumed that these were records of York County and our Leonard's family was from Adams County. However, it seemed to be a significant find and I showed the card to the woman who had been helping us find records. As I was sharing our possible discovery with her, I noticed the final "nailing down" of the proof. The card indicated that John Fishel was from Huntington Township in what is now Adams County. That was it! Not only did I know the Eppleys were from Huntington Township, but I could even picture in my mind Fishel graves in the cemetery at the Upper Bermudian Church where the Eppleys worshipped. "It's really him!" I called to my sister.

After wiping away the tears that important discoveries of that sort bring, I realized that the phrase I had just used had a familiar ring to it. I had said the exact same thing to her in 1983 at the extremely emotional moment when we found the entry in the christening records which positively identified our ancestor as Carl Christian Haussmann when we were in the church office in Nurtlingen, Germany. The thought also returned to mind the feeling I had on our drive down there that we would find information that would be "totally unexpected." What could have been more unexpected than that? -- searching for Fishel ancestors of our father's and finding instead, two Fishel ancestors of our mother's. They were our great-great-great-great (great-times-4) grandparents. I looked at the clock on the wall. It was 9:40. We had been there only forty minutes!

We continued our search on other branches of the family and Norma had great success. In checking the Houdeshell file, she came upon the exact date of death of Emanuel Houdeshell, our great-times-3 grandfather, and the approximate date of his birth, 1776. It also noted that he was buried in St. John's Cemetery in Franklin Township, York County. All along I had thought that the Franklin Township that I knew he was from was in Adams County. York County never occurred to me. In addition, she found information about his wife Mary as to the date of her birth and date of her death and that she was buried in the Holtzschwamm Cemetery in Paradise Township. Who would have thought about Paradise Township in connection with our Houdeshell family? We were excited about the new information.

Then, while browsing through old church records, Norma found the baptismal entries for the children of our ancestors, Caspar and Magdalena (Meckler) Schoenabruch. Under the entry for Caspar's and Magdalena's son Andrew, who is also our ancestor, she found Andrew's date of birth listed. Another piece of new information! But even more exciting, was when she noticed that one of the sponsors at the christening of another of their children was an Elizabeth Meckler, and after her name it read, "the child's grandmother." Another generation heard from! Our long lost great-times-5 grandmother. What fantastic finds! If we had had to leave at that moment to go home, we would have felt the trip was a successful one. In less than a day we had found three new ancestors. Unheard of!

The entire day was one of excitement. We never knew when

the next turn of the page would bring a new discovery and we gathered as much miscellaneous information as we could on the Fishels, Houdeshells, Schoenabruchs and any other family names we came across in the records. When we left the Historical Society that day, our heads were in the clouds.

As I recall, we spent the evening in our motel room going over the records of the day and, generally, just babbling to each other over the excitement of it!

Tomorrow will be Part III. You ain't seen nothing yet!!

Vee