

## **THE SCHELL FAMILY**

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In presenting the following historical and genealogical data of the Schell family, the writer deems it of sufficient importance, as well as interesting, to record some items herewith; not because he has any knowledge of their being in any way directly connected with his ancestry, but that he has the intuitive feeling based upon family tradition, a striking similarity, of family baptismal names, and the fact that no trace has yet been found of the arrival of his lineal ancestor in Pennsylvania, that the missing links may yet be found, and the chain established between the Empire and the Keystone State branches.

It is certain that this can only be accomplished by presenting and preserving our particular ancestral line in connection with what we know of the other families bearing the same patronymic.

Proceeding, it may be of service to state, that no reliance is to be placed upon the spelling of surnames. The names of the most prominent men of history have been spelled in several ways. This is strikingly true of all foreign names during the Colonial period in America. In Pennsylvania the law required all foreigners, upon acquiring property, to anglicize their names. As a result, many people would not recognize their original name if they saw it. The writer's paternal patronymic is a pertinent illustration - the original German was Munch; now Minnich; and yet the transition is natural and easy, phonetically. So the original name Schell or Schelle is at different periods, and under varying circumstances, found spelled Shell, Sholl, Shall, Schall, Shelly, Schelly, etc., according to the knowledge, ear, idea, or personal prejudices of the writer. The personality of the individual possessing the name passes into the shade in the presence of the majesty of the law. What's your name? Schell-pronounced in German. Spell it! Ess-tsayhah-ay-ell-ell (S-c-h-e-l-l). And down it goes on record, Shell, Shall, or Sholl, according to the ear or understanding of the clerk, and is pronounced in accordance with the same rule. The German "e" pronounced "ay," finding its equivalent in the English

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"a" or "o," in accordance with the tongue and taste of the interpreter. We use in all instances, the spelling as found, whether correctly given or not.

The word signifies a little bell, such as used to decorate the harness of horses in ye olden time, and created the sweet tinkling, musical sounds that delighted the hearers in the good old days of our ancestors. The first Schell may have been a musical messenger of sweet tidings. As a matter of fact, the family has been musical, and has produced some musicians of more than local celebrity.

The earliest mention of the name in America is by the Rev. Giles Henry Mandeville, of New York, who, in a centennial address delivered at Pompton Plains, N. J., May 30, 1888, says, that Hendrick, son of Gillis Jansen de Mandeville, "married first Annitje, daughter of Peter Schell, of Hempstead, July 18, 1680."

## **AN INCIDENT OF THE NEW YORK FAMILY**

The overthrow of the Schell settlement occurred August 6, 1781. John Christian Schell with his wife and six sons lived about one hour northeast of Fort Dayton, in Schellsbusch, named after him.

He concluded to defy the storm; trusting in his own judgment and strong arm; he remained on his farm, while his neighbors fled and took their property to the fort as a place of security. Schell's blockhouse was strongly built and was suitable as a defense against the Indians and other enemies. The lower story had no other opening but the entrance, which was guarded by a massive door, and portholes through which the besieged could fire at their assailants. The veranda of the upper story extended over the lower part of the building and had portholes in the floor that afforded a means of defense, and prevention against those attempting to force an entrance or fire the house. Schell had arms and ammunition enough to stand a siege. At the time the enemy arrived he and his sons were in the field at work. His two youngest, twins of eight years could not keep up with their father and elder brothers and were caught and shortly after taken to Canada.

About two o'clock in the afternoon the enemy arrived at the well-guarded house. There were about forty-eight Indians and sixteen Tories, in all sixty-four

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men, under the leadership of Donald McDonald, piloted by two traitors from the valley, Enspich and Casselman.

While Schell and his four sons were shooting, Mrs. Schell loaded the guns. Almost every shot was effective. And the well protected could hold the enemy at bay. They made several attempts to reach the house but were obliged to retire. Finally McDonald reached the door and tried to force an entrance but was shot in the leg, and swift as the wind Schell unbolted the door and dragged the wounded leader into the house. This result not only saved the house from being set on fire, but also brought the besieged ammunition, which was much needed, as the Schells had only a few rounds left. When the enemy found their leader in the hands of their antagonists they were surprised for a short time and retreated to the bushes, but soon came back and tried to take the house by storm.

It was toward evening, and the setting sun illuminated with its last rays the solitary battleground in the woods.

The brave little band that defended their home were fagged out by the unaccustomed bloody work, but were not discouraged nor afraid. While the father and sons were putting their guns in order, resting and expecting an attack every moment, the mother started to sing:

*"A mighty fortress is our God,"*

in which the men joined. The inspiring words of the Protestant Battle Hymn sounded strangely but solemnly to the wild foe.

*"Though devils all the world should fill,*

*All watching to devour us,*

*We tremble not, we fear no ill,*

*They cannot overpower us."*

The sound of the melody had hardly died away, when the enemy suddenly rushed toward the house and thrust their guns through the portholes at the besieged, but the courageous Mrs. Schell could not be frightened, and taking an axe, she with a few well directed blows, bent five of the deadly weapons. Thus the men gained time, and with a few well-aimed shots, drove the enemy back. Again there was a short pause, and this time the brave Schell deceived the

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enemy by strategy. As it grew dark the besieged uttered a cry of joy, as if reinforcements were coming from Fort Dayton, and as it was impossible for the assailants to see over the woods, and being discouraged by the loss of their leader, they quickly retreated taking the two youngest sons of Schell with them.

McDonald was brought to the fort the next day, and his leg amputated.

Messengers were sent to Schell to state that his two captured sons should receive careful attention in return for care to McDonald. None of the besieged received any injury, but the assailants lost eleven killed and twelve wounded, nine of whom died on the way to Canada, as the Schell boys reported on their arrival home.

One year after the above-narrated conflict, as Schell was at work in the field with two of his sons, he was attacked by Indians in ambush and was wounded. The two sons defended themselves bravely; one fell and the other was severely wounded, but they drove the Indians back. John Christian Schell died shortly after from his wound. (Translated from "Germans in New York during the 18th Century.")

At a council held at Philadelphia the 29th of September, 1709, the governor acquainted the board, that the speaker attended with several members of the House, brought him the bill for naturalizing the Germans, which he desired passed, etc. Among the number were Johannes Scholl and Peter Scholl. Rupp as also gives these as among the first settlers of Germantown, 1683-1710. Prior to 1734, the same author states, Hans Schelly paid quit rent on 25 acres in Cresheim Township, late part of Germantown. There is good reason to suspect that this is the forenamed Johannes Scholl. Time does not permit nor is this the place to attempt to follow this Germantown family, but it is important to know that they are more likely to prove upon thorough investigation Schells than Scholls. It is certain the old records of the Lutheran church of Germantown record frequent marriages, births and deaths of this old family, when it is universally spelled Schell. This conclusion will be accentuated by what follows.

A Peter Schell is given as one of the settlers of Lancaster county, 1718. The following abstract of Schell wills to be found in the Register's office, Philadelphia, will prove interesting, and demonstrate how little dependence there is to be placed upon the early spelling of surnames:

106. Michael Shelly, (Schelle), 1758-L-182. Yeoman, Lower Milford, Bucks county, Pa., made 1756, Jan. 14, probated 1758, Oct. 24. The name is spelled "Shelly" in the body of the will. Wife Barbara, son John (not 16 years of age at the time the will was made). The estate is left in trust for him. He was to be apprenticed to a trade when 16 years of age. He had other children, but they are not named in the will. John Joeder (his father-in-law) and John Schell (his brother) executors. The name of the testator could not be seen, having been obscured in part by the seal; but the name of the executor-John-was written in German, Johan Schell. (From original papers.)

260. Peter Scholl, 1773-P-376. Lower Milford, Bucks County, Pa. Testator was evidently a man of considerable means. Wife Anna Maria. His eldest son Philip, and son-in-law, Benjamin Sommers, executors. The will is long and should prove interesting to his descendants. As one of the interesting items, his son Peter is bequeathed his Agate Snuff Box. A nephew Peter, living at the time on the farm, is provided for during his natural life, if he choose to remain. (From original papers.)

86. John Shelly (Schelle), 1770-H-70. Lower Milford, Bucks county, Pa., Wife Catharine renounced her right to administer in favor of her kinsmen, Christian Schelle, (this name was written plainly and unquestionably "Schelle" in German) and John Schans.

#### **PEDIGREE OF JOHN SCHELL, SCHELLSBURG, PA**

I. Michael Schell was most probably born in 1675, but whether in Alsace, the Palatinate, or in America has not been determined. He died in February, 1770. He married, first, Veronica, whose maiden name and place of birth is unknown, but she died prior to 1767; second, Magdalena, (other particulars unknown). Residence, Upper Hanover Township, then Philadelphia, now Montgomery County, Pa. His will was made May 27, 1768, and probated February 19, 1770. At the time of making the will he declares

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himself to be of "advanced age." He was possessed of considerable property, and provided for all his children, as well as his wife by the second marriage, and confirms the deed of gift for 140 acres of land in Upper Hanover township to his youngest son John; "being the same tract of land which William Parsons, John-Ross and Robert Greenway, by indenture May 16, 1749, granted unto (the above named) Michael Schell." Record Book H. B. p. 230. Upper Hanover Township was a part of the region known as Goshenhoppen.

The time of his arrival has not been definitely determined, but he is known to have paid quit rents on 150 acres of land prior to 1734, in Hanover Township, where he lived and died. It is possible that he returned to Germany to bring with him to America his son Michael, Jr. They arrived in the ship "Nancy" and qualified September 20, 1738. We are led to this presumption by the ages given in the Pennsylvania Archives, 2d series, Vol. 17, p. 164, in connection with similar names.

No issue is known by the second marriage. The issue by first marriage:

1. Jacob Schell, of Virginia.
2. Michael Schell, Jr., Hereford Township, Berks County, Pa., married Catharine Lauer.
3. Mary Schell, married Henry Sell, of Upper Saucon township, Northampton county, Pa., to whom was willed "the old family Bible."
4. John Schell, born Jan. 22, 1729. The will was written in English. (No. 346 Record Book O. P. 465.)

II. John Schell, the youngest son of the forenamed pair, was born Jan. 22, 1729, presumably in the Palatinate. But this has not been positively determined. He died May 2, 1777. The records of the New Goshenhoppen German Reformed congregation reveal that he married Veronica Maurer, a daughter of Jacob and Sophia Maurer, on the - day of -- 1753. The exact date is not given because the officiating clergyman, Rev. Geo. Michael Weiss, neglected to make the entry at the time of the performance of the ceremony. This occurred in a number of instances. This Jacob Maurer was a wealthy, influential yeoman of Upper Hanover township, a member of the congregation

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above referred to, who took especial interest in the education of his children and made provision in his will that similar advantages be extended to his minor children after his death. His papers give evidence that he was a man of more than ordinary pedigree. (Two of his daughters married Paul Rothermel, who is believed to be the progenitor of the celebrated artist of the same name). She was born — day of — 1732, and died at the residence of her son John, near Schellsburg, Pa., Feb. 8, 1815. The inscription on her tombstone is German. Opposite is the translation:

*Hier ruhen die Gebeine von Fronica Schell, ist Gestorben den 8th Februar im Jahr (A. D.) 1815, ibren Alter war 83 Jahren.*

*Here rests the body of Fronica Schell, died the 8th of February in the year (A. D.) 1815, her age was 83 years.*

The fragrance of her memory still lives in the hearts of her posterity. The writer has the old spinning wheel with which she whiled away the passing hours of her declining years. Her remains repose in the old cemetery almost directly in front of the entrance to the old church on Chestnut Ridge, above Schellsburg, Pa. Her husband, the subject of this sketch, died in testate at a comparatively early age, and yet he was a man of local prominence, a representative merchant, a member of the New Goshenhoppen Reformed congregation (for which he acted as trustee with Wendell Wieandt in the purchase of 50 acres and 26 perches of land, as an addition to the original six acres donated by John Henry Sproegel, in 1749, to be used for church and burial purposes), and died possessed of quite a large estate for that time. The inventory filed May 10th, 1782, values the real estate at £1261.16.0, and the personal estate at £1404.19.1. The administrators were his son John Schell and Jacob Leidy, husband of his daughter Veronica. George Peter Hillegas, the father of John Schell's wife, was on the bond. Among the papers of the estate was found a comparatively small scrap containing the following: "Relating to the deceased John Schell's estate (who died May 2, 1777), it is observed: that the following persons, who were also debtors to the said John Shell, did after his death, by threatenings, in a manner force the said deceased's widow and children to take and receive of

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them their payments in Continental currency, which was nearly all lost, viz: Ulrich Graber, on November 27, 1778, £30.0.0; Andrew Graber, on January 29, 1779, £88.0.0; Abraham Sell, on April 25, 1779, £71.2.0; Thomas Fester, on September 12, 1779, £53.0.0.; making a total £242.2.0." Final settlement of the estate was made in 1791.

We learn from several sources that they had the following issue:

1. John Schell, born Nov. 30, 1754, died March 30, 1825; married Elizabeth Hillegas, born Oct. 17, 1763, died July 10, 1842.
2. Jacob Schell, born 13th day of April 1759, died — day of —. We have reason to believe that the following extract from the Orphan's Court Docket, (No. 13, p. 121) refers to this subject: "Jacob Schell, late a musician of Col. Proctor's regiment of artillery, aged about 24 years; that he was discharged from his said regiment on the 1st of March, 1781, on account of a wound received in the service of the United States."
3. Abraham Schell.
4. Anna Maria Schell, married Feb. 20, 1776, John Mack.
5. Veronica Schell, born June —, 1755, married April 6, 1779, Jacob Leidy, b. Jan. 22, 1759.
6. Catharine Schell, married —, Michael Hoffman.
7. Susannah Schell, married April 15, 1786, Peter Hollbush.

It is important, and we trust it will prove interesting to give in this immediate connection a brief abstract of the original deed of John Schell and Elizabeth his wife, to Jacob Schell for 106 acres of land in Upper Hanover Township, bearing date Oct. 12, 1784. "Whereas Michael Schell and Fronica his wife by their joint indenture of release bearing date the 20th day of August A. D. 1751, for the consideration therein mentioned, on record at Philadelphia in Book H, Vol. 13, p. 230, etc., did grant release and confirm 147 acres of land unto his son John Schell (father of the above mentioned John Schell) his heirs and assigns, \*\*\*\* and whereas William Parsons, John Ross, Robert Greenaway by their joint indenture of release bearing date the 12th day of Nov. A. D. 1751, for the consideration therein mentioned, on record at

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Philadelphia in Book H, Vol. 13, p. 223, etc., did grant release and confirm 53 acres and 123 perches of land unto the said John Schell, etc., etc."

III. John Schell, (the eldest son of the forenamed John Schell and his wife Veronica Maurer), was born in the old homestead, part of which is still standing near the present borough of East Greenville, Montgomery county, Pa., in the upper part of what is now known and celebrated as having given birth to so many persons who afterwards became eminent, the Perkiomen Region. He was a merchant and at an early age became possessed of considerable means, which was augmented by what he received through his wife. Both were members of the Reformed congregation in the immediate vicinity and of representative German families. Like his ancestors, possessed of a desire to become a large land owner and surround himself with his immediate family and friends, he was doubtless led to take a prospecting tour through the frontier, including western Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky, as early as 1797, 1798 or 1799. There is a well-defined tradition coming down through his son Henry (born — 1797), "that he with his family left Montgomery County (May, 1800) for the West, their destination being Kentucky. On reaching Pittsburgh they found it would not be safe to go down the Ohio River in a flat boat on account of the depredations of the Indians, so they turned back, and having been favorably impressed with the country in the vicinity where Schellsburg is now situated, settled there, purchasing large tracts of land which were afterwards divided into farms and given to each of his sons. This vicinity was known at the time of his settlement as Shawnese Cabin Creek, Bedford County, Pa. Here he purchased some 1,500 acres of land at a cost of about £10,000 pounds. A little later on, one of his wife's brothers, John Peter Hillegas, and several of her sisters with their husbands (Abraham Levy, John Maurer and George Ewault) followed and settled in the immediate vicinity. In 1807 he gave the Lutheran and Calvinist congregations some six acres of ground for church and school purposes. In 1808 he located and laid out the village of Schellsburg. Also in 1814 he gave two lots in the town for church and school purposes. The citizens were given the privilege to use a spring at the west end of the town. As indicated he was a wealthy, public-spirited gentleman, honored and beloved by all who knew him. He was one of

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the prime movers in building the Bedford and Stoystown pike, of which his daughter Elizabeth's husband, Michael Reed was the chief engineer, and of which he (John Schell) was the president. There is still in the possession of the family, sketches, drafts and letters pertaining to the building of a canal across the Alleghenies, prepared by Michael Reed and addressed to John Schell, showing the feasibility of such an enterprise. Prior to his death he conveyed to each of his sons a farm, and gave to his daughters an equivalent in money and lands. His wife Elizabeth Barbara Hillegas, (the dates of whose birth and death, with that of her husband are given above), was the daughter of George Peter Hillegas, (1735-1810), grand-daughter of John Frederick Hillegas, (1685-1765), and first cousin, once removed, of Michael Hillegas, (1728/9-1804), first Treasurer of the United States.

They had issue:

1. John, born Oct. 30, 1782, died —; married Miss Michaels.
2. Peter, b. Aug. 1, 1784, d. Oct. 28, 1862; married Eleanor Statler.
3. Abraham, b. Feb. 23, 1787, d. —, married, first —, second, — Calvin.
4. Jacob, b. May 28, 1789, d. Oct. 10, 1834; married Maria Dannaker.
5. George Michael, b. Nov. 20, 1791, died in youth.
6. Elizabeth, b. Jan. 4, 1794, d. April 20, 1854; married Michael Reed, b. Sept. 18, 1788, d. April 16, 1872,
7. Henry Schell, b. Mar. 22, 1797, d. —; married Maria Louisa Schneider, Somerset, Pa.
8. Joseph Schell, b. Sept. 4, 1799, d. July 28, 1863; married Sarah Hazard Perry.
9. Catharine, b. Nov. 24, 1801, died in childhood.
10. Maria, b. Mar. 30, 1804, escaped from her home in Johnstown, over the debris, during the flood, to die a natural death at a good old age a few years later, married — Levy.
11. Eve, b. Apr. 4, 1807, d. —, Mansfield, Ohio; married Benjamin Blymyer, May 29, 1827.