

A Red Rose Payment

Those who attended the June 12, 2016 Rose Festival held by the Zion Lutheran Church of Manheim, Pennsylvania had the pleasure of hearing the speech given by a descendant of Henry William Stiegel. The speech contains important researched information that should be shared with those persons who are deeply interested in the fascinating history of Henry William Stiegel. For this reason, we have been given permission to add the speech to our website. We are most grateful for this permission. HMPE

Hello, I am Barbara Wood, a 5th great granddaughter of Henry William Stiegel. I am honored to be here today to watch my son Joe accept the rose payment, just as I and my mother Alice Stiegel Cummings did years earlier.

Those here today know very well the history of Henry William Stiegel and I will now tell you some history of his son Jacob, and of his descendants in the line of my own family.

This history is from research done by my brother Richard Cummings.

Some books and articles mention Jacob Stiegel mostly in passing, as if he had disappeared from Pennsylvania into the wild lands of Virginia. They said that he became a wealthy landowner, married, and had one son. Some said that he was once High Sheriff of Shenandoah County or Augusta County. One article said that he was “honored and beloved by all who knew him.” Much of what has been written is true, but life is often complex, and that was true of Jacob Stiegel.

The facts, as gathered from court order books and deeds are that he must have come to the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia in 1783, for in early 1784 his future wife, Rachel Holeman gave birth to a son, and shortly afterward Jacob and Rachel married. Rachel was the daughter of Jacob Holeman, a justice and patriot who had been named Sheriff by the Council of Virginia in 1783, just months before he died. The Holemans were English and had owned land there since before 1750. Holeman owned about 1,300 acres around the town currently named Quicksburg and was very wealthy, keeping as many as 14 slaves, with many horses and cattle.

Jacob Stiegel was educated, capable, ambitious, and comfortable among the wealthy and powerful of that area, like the Holeman family. He was bi-lingual so could communicate with both Germans and the English. In the same year that he married Rachel he bought one of her deceased father's plantations and named it Boiling Spring. Within 15 years he had amassed much of the rest of Holeman's lands.

He then turned some of his attention to public service. Records show that he was often with friends and neighbors, and at the courthouse, acting as witness of deed transactions and wills. He even took on the responsibility as executor of estates, notably for a neighbor, Ann Barrington.

He seems to have had one indiscretion, just months after arriving in the area, when he was charged with selling liquors, but that case was later dismissed. He then maintained excellent relations with the law, eventually being named Deputy Sheriff in 1792. In that position for several years he reported on delinquent taxes owed on land and property. A highlight of his service came in 1793 when Jacob, as Deputy Sheriff, was one of three officials who certified the federal elector Archibald Stewart who then cast his vote for George Washington at his second election.

In 1796 he became one of the seven trustees responsible for officially establishing the town of New Market, and later acted as commissioner in the sale of property to satisfy debts. In 1798 he took responsibility for overseeing the contract to build a bridge across Tumbling Run.

Jacob Stiegel had achieved wealth, security, a small family, and the respect of his fellow citizens of Shenandoah County. His lands were full of useful timber and crossed by Holman's Creek or with much frontage on the Shenandoah River. It must have been an ideal place to live out his life.

But something happened that changed his life. It was not immediate, but the evidence began to appear about 1802 and came to a critical point about 5 years later. We have no journal or records to explain Jacob's actions but we do have enough information to formulate a possible explanation.

In the year 1800 a man named Sebastian Stegeler brought a bill of complaint against Abraham Bird into the Shenandoah Court. The suit in essence was that Abraham Bird had committed fraud by selling a piece of land to Stegeler in 1792 assuring him that the land contained buildings and a water source, when in fact it did not.

Did Bird know that the land he sold did not include the buildings and water? How could Stegeler prove that there was fraud? Our Jacob was called to testify about a conversation that he had with Abraham Bird years earlier. Please be aware that Abraham Bird was a Revolutionary War hero, a colonel, and had been a member of the Virginia House of Delegates.

On April 3, 1802, in New Market, Jacob Stiegel gave his deposition. Under oath, he said that in 1791 or 1792 he was traveling with Abraham Bird up the Great Road from Woodstock when they passed Stegeler's house. Bird then said to Jacob that if he wanted to do it, he could take away Stegeler's house and water supply. Jacob didn't think that it was possible so he remained quiet. But by deposing the fact that Bird knew he had fraudulently sold the property to Stegeler, Jacob's testimony was damning to Bird's defense.

This testimony by our Jacob Stiegel against a powerful citizen and friend demonstrates Jacob's integrity at potentially great. But what evidence is there that Jacob's life changed after this event?

Over the next few years he continued to serve as witness or executor but less often than he did in earlier years. By 1808 he began to frequently sue for debt, even against his old friends and associates like Evan Jones, the former sheriff. Then something extraordinary happened. Jacob was taken into custody with a criminal charge:

The court recorded that Jacob was charged with terrorizing people and with bringing a dirk, or large knife, into the Courthouse. This was a serious charge and indicates that Jacob was very angry. The Court had the Sheriff confiscate the dirk and allowed him to post bail of \$1,000 – a very large amount at that time. The justices indicated that they would be watching him to make sure that he would keep the peace and be of good behavior toward the citizens of the county.

Jacob apparently did keep the peace, but it did not deter him from his continued lawsuits to force debtors to pay him. It became evident the next year that his plan centered on leaving Shenandoah County. In 1809 he bought his first property in Augusta County and then added to it a few years later. But it was in 1819 that he bought the perfect place for him to live out the rest of his life. It was of a manageable size, 253 acres on the south side of the Middle River, for which he paid an astronomical sum of almost \$16,000. His wife Rachel had died in 1815 and yet he built a large brick house about 1820 that survived until recent years when it fell due to neglect. Jacob had sold a portion of his Shenandoah lands in 1823, but when he died in 1828 he still owned several plantations there. It seems likely that after his death, his son Jacob took his father's body back to Shenandoah County to be buried there.

Young Jacob, born in 1784, was Stiegel's only heir. He reached adulthood and married "Katy" Bright in 1805. Some histories tell that young Jacob stayed in Greene County, Tennessee for many years. That was the home of Katy Bright's father, Michael Bright. Michael had come from a wealthy family in Reading Pennsylvania but he did not live up to his father's expectations in managing a tannery there. Michael went to Tennessee where he lived his life well and has many descendants living there today.

Young Jacob took up residence at the Middle River farm in Augusta County, about a mile from New Hope. He and Katy had 7 children who lived to adulthood, including 3 sons. I'm not going to spend much time talking about my 3rd great grandfather, Jacob Stiegel except to share the sad and unusual fact that all three of his sons were shot, under very different circumstances. William, former Deputy Sheriff of Brownsville, Texas, was shot to death in the Rio Grande Valley in 1853, apparently after a heated argument with a newspaper editor. Charles was badly wounded after being shot in the head at the Battle of Fort Stedman in the Civil War. Charles survived and began a second family with many offspring and descendants who live today in Augusta County. Unfortunately, there is not enough time in this presentation to provide the interesting details of these stories.

The third son of Jacob to be shot was my second great grandfather David who was shot to death by his miller in 1866, not long after the end of the Civil War. David married Sarah Frances Sibert in 1851 and they had two boys and three girls. David had a large plantation of 640 acres with a mill in Madison County and like his father and grandfather used slave labor. One traditional story of David's demise is from the Virginia Historical Inventory Project of 1937.

It told that David was not well liked by his neighbors and that several times he hit his miller. One day the miller was angry and threatened David's life and then a couple of weeks later David was found shot in the back. The miller then took his own life.

This is a very sad story and we've tried to figure out what could have brought David to this untimely end.

David lived in perilous times. Due to Emancipation and war he may have lost his slave labor. His close brother's wounding in battle and his wife's eye injury in a lamp explosion could have added to his stress. His plantation was not far from battlegrounds and his lands may have been used and abused by troops from both sides. He had enlisted in the Confederate Army at the same time as his brother Charles, but there is no evidence that he served.

When David died his wife Sarah moved back to the Valley and lived for a time in New Market, before settling in the town of Broadway. Two of her girls went to live with uncles. Her oldest son was John Calvin Stiegel, my great grandfather. John Calvin, who would later almost exclusively go by his initials, J.C., was born in 1854 and was only 12 years old when his father was murdered.

J.C. Stiegel lived through the Civil War and had a very supportive extended family. Most of his uncles were accomplished and well-to-do and he was eager to learn from them. One uncle was a justice, another was a militia officer, still another was a postmaster, and a fourth was a delegate in the Virginia General Assembly. When J.C. married in 1878, he was "of Augusta County." Although he might have been staying with his uncle Charles Stiegel at the Middle River farm, there is some evidence that he was with his uncle Franklin Coiner. Franklin Coiner was a very successful farmer whose wealth was so large that after the Civil War he was not allowed to take the Oath of Allegiance without a special authorization signed by President Andrew Johnson.

J.C. Stiegel accomplished so much in his life that a book could be written about him. It seems a shame to share just a few thoughts today and leave so much unsaid, but here goes. In 1878 when he was only 24 years old he married Maggie Keller of Frederick County. She was from one of the oldest families of the Valley and her ancestors came from Switzerland through the Ephrata Cloister here in Lancaster. Not only did she bring a worthy heritage, but also a substantial inheritance. This provided the initial funds to get the family off to a good start.

As you learn more about J.C. and his wife Maggie think about their portraits that hang in the church here and remember that in 1892 J.C. Stiegel was the first Stiegel since 1774 to receive the rose payment.

J.C. and Maggie first resided in Broadway. Maggie's parents had died so they gravitated to J.C.'s mother Sarah Stiegel who owned the hotel in Broadway. Sarah influenced the young family as the Siberts were Methodists. J.C. and Maggie were Methodists for the rest of their lives.

J.C. became bark manager of the Houck Tannery. Bark was critical to obtain the material necessary in the tanning process. But even more important was the life-long friendship he formed with the owner, J.P. Houck. J.C. became Houck's partner in the bark business and eventually formed his own company, the Stiegel Lumber Company.

When J.C. received the red rose payment in 1892 he was 38 years old and very successful – but with much more success ahead. The Sentinel article of that year described him. “Mr. Stiegel is of a commanding appearance, tall and well built, and is a fine, kind, open-hearted, courteous gentleman – a worthy descendant of the German Baron.”

J.C. formed the lumber company and had more than 200 employees, but he did not stop there. He involved himself in real estate and with a partner created a new subdivision in Harrisonburg, comprised of up to 38 lots of ¼ acre each. We have a list of more than 75 separate deed transactions and in nearly all cases J.C. Stiegel made money on the deals. In one example, J.C. took a good-sized farm with one water source, divided the farm and used a pipe to share the water supply. He took care to write into the deed special language to cover all situations, including drought. He made a large profit.

When he was quite young, living in Broadway, the railroad company wanted to access water for their trains at the property owned by Sarah Stiegel. J.C. Stiegel, acting on his mother's behalf, wrote into the deed that the railroad company could draw water from the creek so long as they allowed Sarah to use their pumps to put water on her flower beds. J.C. Stiegel was not shy and was brilliant in business matters.

In addition to his businesses, he also loved sport and raised prized livestock. He was the President of the Rockingham Horse and Colt Show and helped to build the race track in Harrisonburg. His horses often won races that were reported as far away as Washington, D.C.

When he was not in Harrisonburg, he was at his River Farm on the Shenandoah River. It was a wonderful farm with an 1874 brick house of 18 rooms and lots of rich bottom land. It was there that he raised prize winning Hampshire-Down sheep and bred pure Hereford cattle.

J.C. Stiegel not only loved business, but also technology. He bought special Shay locomotives to haul lumber safely from the tops of mountains to the lumber yards below. For the farm, he invested in a new machine, the Geiser Peerless Steam Plow. And for the community he helped form a partnership to bring telephone lines to meet their commercial interests. He even decided to send his son Frank to Telegraphy School in Janesville, Wisconsin.

J.C. also was an original stockholder and vice-president of the Rockingham National Bank. And he did not even rest on Sunday, as it was then that he taught adult Sunday School at the Asbury Methodist Church in Harrisonburg. J.C. died in 1916 in Harrisonburg and the town's banks were closed in his honor.

J.C. and Maggie had four sons and one daughter. Two of the sons had no children and died at ages 34 and 40. The daughter and two other sons had children and descendants that live today.

J.C.'s son Frank, was my grandfather and I knew him to be kind and very good at working with tools. He had a big garage and workshop and could do wood work or automotive work with equal skill. Frank apparently met my grandmother Edith in Orange County, Virginia where J.C. had bought one of his great investment properties. Edith Jacobs lived on a farm "next door." The couple married, apparently against the wishes of both sets of parents, and moved to Northern Virginia. Frank tried many things to make his fortune there. Farming, real estate investing, automotive repairs and eventually he became a barber. He did not have the business acumen of his father, J.C., and he was a quiet man. He did not talk about his past and only once or twice took his very young family back to the Shenandoah Valley, and that was to visit his aunt Jennie Henkel.

When we first started researching my grandfather's life we had no idea of his adventures or life of privilege as a Stiegel in Harrisonburg. He never told his children that when he was a lumberjack in the mountains how his teammate killed a savage bear and how he took one of the cubs as a pet. He never told them the awful story of being on a Shay locomotive when his boss was thrown from the train and crushed by logs. We never knew that he had worked clearing forests down in Florida.

Frank and Edith Stiegel had four children, two boys and two girls. During World War II their house in Arlington had a flag in the window with three blue stars to show that three sons were fighting in the war. Both sons were in the Navy and daughter Margaret's husband was in the Army Air Force. The second daughter, Alice, was my mother.

Mom was very proud to receive the red rose and always admired the beautiful Zion Church's rose window and grounds. And she also attended the service when I received the rose payment.

I am proud to add to my line of Stiegel descendants as my four children have provided me with 12 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren – including the first Muslim descendants of Baron Stiegel!

I'll close with one final thought about J.C. Stiegel, my great grandfather. He tried to help his children succeed in life and offered them education opportunities. He also made sure that each one had a home and property, but in my grandfather Frank's case there was a catch. To get Frank out from under debt, J.C.'s estate attorneys paid off what was owed and Frank's house deed remained in J.C.'s estate. So for nearly 30 years Frank lived in a house that was not his own and when he died in 1953 the estate transferred the house to Frank's children, and not his widow Edith. After much wrangling, my parents and uncles and aunt agreed to form a life estate for my grandmother Edith to live in the house for the rest of her life. In the meantime, Frank's children were able to sell off most of the property – except for grandma's house. That is how my father, George Cummings, was able to get funds to build us a nice new house in Arlington while keeping our old house as rental property. So even 50 years after his death, J.C. Stiegel had a positive effect on our lives.

Thank you for being good listeners today! If you are interested in learning more about the people I talked about today please contact Linda Keiffer of the Zion Church. Thank you.

Mr. Cummings would like any researchers who are interested in the details behind the speech to contact him through our organization. It is his hope that by his sharing information he will find people who have information that can fill gaps in the research, and that if anyone has genealogical information about H. W. Stiegel's parents siblings and their descendants that he is interested in funding Y-DNA tests to compare to tests of those Stiegel men living today.