

The Migration, continued,

Or how is it possible that the combined less than 4,000 immigrants to America could lose half or more of their number to an identity change before the end of the Nine-

teenth Century and the remaining part retaining the questioned identity remain with a number of well over a hundred thousand at the end of the Twentieth Century? INCREDIBLE!--made possible only by God!

The Peter Schrock Letters

Letters were a very important means of communication between Amish people in widely scattered settlements, as well as for society in general, in the 1800's. Travel was difficult and time consuming, so when they did visit relatives, it was often for several weeks at a time. Letters, however, were a relatively easy and efficient means of keeping in touch. As settlements of Amish sprang up as far west as Kansas, many Amish had relatives in several states by the late 1800's. The letters they exchanged allow us to get a glimpse of their various joys and sorrows.

The following letters are from a collection of letters which were sent to Peter D. Schrock (1829-1902). The collection consists of ca. 152 letters written in German and ca. 170 in English. The fact that they were carefully preserved in wooden boxes lets us know that they were important to Peter. The German letters were placed in O.A.L. a number of years ago by Peter's grandson, Roman P. Schrock, who had the letters in his care.

Peter D. Schrock was born in 1829, in the Glades settlement in Somerset Co. Pa., to David and Mary (Stukey) Schrock. In probably the fall of 1850 he was married to Susanna, the daughter of John P. and Anna (Beachy) Miller. They lived in Brother's Valley Twp., Somerset Co. until they moved to Preston Co. Virginia in January, 1860. During the Civil War this area became the state of West Virginia in 1863 and the settlement was known as the Aurora, West Virginia settlement. In the fall of 1860 Peter was ordained as a minister. Daniel Beachy was bishop in the church. Tensions between conservative and liberal elements in the church prompted Peter, a conservative, to look for

a new home by 1865. It went until 1868 that Peter with his family of seven children, ranging from 16-year-old Anna to 5-month-old Peter, moved to Holmes County, where he died in 1902. The letters in his collection were received by Peter while in all three of these locations. Peter bought a farm in Holmes County where his son Peter P. Schrock and grandson Joe P. Schrock lived, and were his great-grandson Ervin J. Schrock now lives. Many of Peter's descendants live in Holmes and Geauga Counties, Ohio.

Peter D. Schrock's father was David Schrock and his grandfather was Caspar Schrock (Schrack). Caspar is thought to have been the son of Nicholas Schrack who immigrated to America in 1753, arriving aboard the ship *Peggy* on September 24 in Philadelphia. An account handed down through Caspar's family says that three Schrack brothers; Hanes (John), Uli (Ulrich) and Caspar came to America with their father when they were young.¹

These letters, with one exception, were not written by Peter, but to him, by over 40 persons. Several persons wrote frequently through the years. They were John P. Miller's, his father-in-law, who wrote from Roxbury, Pa. and Cove, Maryland; his older brothers Benjamin and Christian who moved to Johnson Co. Iowa in 1857 and 1866; Judith Yoder, the daughter of his sister Veronica, and who married Jeremiah Kaufman; and Christian Petersheim, a close friend in the Aurora settlement, who also wanted to leave but could not reasonably sell his farm. The following letters were translated from the German, and contain interesting information.

1. Descendants of Peter D. Schrock 1829-1982, R.P. Schrock

The Schrock Letters, continued

The first several contain prices of land and goods, among other things. The last several contain accounts of sickness and deaths, in unusual frequency to today's standards, which the writers encountered.

The first letter was written to Peter while at Aurora, W. Va., by his brother Christian.

March 4, 1868 Iowa City, Iowa
C.D. Schrock

First a greeting to you Peter Schrock and wife and children, with best wishes here and in eternity. Further I let you know that we are healthy at this time, God be thanked for this. I hope this letter will also find you healthy.

I received your letter and was also glad because of it. That letter says you were in Ohio and you were impressed there, right and good. I have been there twice already, but I have seen better land around here, and also much cheaper. It grows wheat and corn abundantly.

I have 160 acres of it and 15 acres woodland, for \$35.00 an acre. My prairie is all fenced with board fence. There was about 55 or 60 acres in corn. We broke (plowed) only 20 acres of prairie last summer. We intend to break much more this summer.

We have four horses now. Last year, with one team, we grew 296 bushels wheat, also that amount oats, corn I don't know how much. About 70 loads of hay.

Our house is one story high, 16 feet wide and 44 feet long. It is English, but we like it real well here.

Horses are quite high priced. I gave \$320.00 for 2 head and \$242.00 for two more. A two-horse wagon \$120.00, a bob sled, \$30.00. The plows \$16.00 to \$20.00.

But plowing goes very well. Better than in the Pennsylvania garden.

It is well in the church at this time, peace was made at the beginning of winter, Now it's going well. It is a pleasure to go to church. Of course the people are not so conservative (nieder drechdig) as they were earlier in the Glades. But they still have the Amish modes. We still sing the old tunes. We had a beautiful winter, a little snow several

times. The road was dusty and dry.

I live 8 miles S.W. of Iowa City, along the big road from Iowa City to Washington City. The road is much travelled. A lot of wheat has been hauled here, already.

Christian Schrock
My box number is 334

The following letter was written by Peter D. Schrock to his wife's parents, John P. Millers. For some reason it was never delivered, and was returned to Peter by the Post Office in a postal service envelope.

November 1, 1868
Walnut Creek Post Office
Holmes County, Ohio

To begin with a beloved greeting to you grandfather and grandmother with wishing you all goodness to the soul and body in this time and yet much more in eternity. I inform you that we are in pretty good health as long as the Lord so desires except that my wife is not yet healthy, yet somewhat better than she was in the spring. I hope these few lines find you healthy and with the Lord's help. And also the 20th October we moved onto our place. We have bought out Paul C. Hershberger. We have a hundred acres at \$60.00 per acre, \$6000. \$3000 paid in hand. Now from November 15 for a year \$500, then \$500 until fully paid. Land is expensive. We and Jacob E. Millers are presently neighbors on the Southwest side. It pleases us well, very well. I wonder if you still go to Iowa or not. We have cradled 58½ bushel buckwheat. We have 5 acres corn on a half share. It gives about 400 bushels on the cob. The corn is \$.65 per bushel, wheat \$1.50, rye \$1.00, oats \$.50, and buckwheat \$1.00. The people are well as far as I know. Also I have sown 16½ bushel wheat. The seedlings look real well so far. The wheat harvest was quite good. For a time it was quite dry until yesterday there was a good rain and today it is somewhat cool. I want to close now. Yet a beloved greeting to you all. Remember us in your prayers, we are likewise minded. We are also in much poorness and weakness.

Peter Schrock and Susanna Schrock
to you John P. Miller
We have nice weather now.

The Schrock Letters, continued

The following letter was sent to Peter D. Schrock to the "Walnut Creek Post, Holmes Co., Ohio."

Pliny, Saline County, Kansas
February 16, 1883

Beloved friend Peter Schrock. First I let you know that we, praise and thank God, are all healthy and we hope that my few lines will meet you all in good health. Yesterday evening I got your letter from December 10 and we are quite thankful and rejoice from the heart that you have not fully forgotten us and are glad to hear that you are all healthy. To begin with, in your letter I understood that you have seen Jacob Miller and Elizabeth and that they are also healthy. To hear this has gladdened us. Being healthy and having enough and having no lack, this is a blessing from God. We can not say any differently that we are all healthy and have enough of everything. Now the question, are we worthy of this all? We are if we are not given to too much worldly things and if we do not forget to be thankful. In your letter I understood that Jacob wants to write to Pennsylvania to see if we are still living. He can spare all that. He would better write to Saline County, Kansas. Here he could soon get an answer and if he doesn't know my address anymore you can give it to him. You have written me that your son has bought a place @ \$4,000 for 53 acres. I think he has made a mistake. For this money he could have bought 320 acres in Kansas and of the best land. I have 160 acres and have harvested 1,215 bushels wheat last summer and 500 bushel oats, 50 bushel rye, over 2,000 bushel corn. I sold 900 bushel wheat from the machine at 71 cents. This makes \$690 and have sold pigs for \$203 and now have yet 56 pigs and have over \$300 worth of heifers to sell and have 3 good teams. For one of them I paid \$375.

I only wish that you could come out here and see where we live. Well some people think that the people of Kansas live as the Indians and are wild. But no, we have a meeting every four weeks and have of the best preachers. If Jacob Miller earnestly would know if we still live he should write to Saline

County, Kansas - Post Office, Pliny. About the market price, wheat is at present \$.78, oats \$.25, rye \$.35, corn \$.35, potatoes \$1.00, horses from \$75 to \$400, mules \$200, cows from \$30 to \$65, hogs \$.06 live weight, butter \$.25 and eggs \$.25.

Your letter that you sent me was sent to the wrong post office. It was advertised before I got it. Now I would be glad if you would write me right away again so I know if you got mine or not. I received a letter from my parents and they are all healthy and the Joseph Schrocks are also well. We had a hard storm today.

Do not forget us. Good night.

Elias Lehman and wife

The following letter was sent to Peter by Susanna Kinsinger. She was the daughter of Peter's sister Veronica (married to Bishop Abner Yoder), and was married to Elias Kinsinger. The Jeremiahs mentioned in the letter was probably Jeremiah Kaufman, who had married Susanna's sister Judith, who also wrote many letters to Peters. Judith died at childbirth in 1880 at 38 years of age, leaving five children under 13 years of age. Jeremiah then married another of the Yoder sisters, Barbara, who was three years younger than Judith, probably in 1881.

April 27, 1889

Amish, Iowa

First a greeting to you uncle Peter Schrock, we are quite healthy except the 3 smallest children have the whooping cough. Jeremiah's children have it also. This morning their youngest son was all at once quite sick. Yesterday I had started to church and then I went there. The Dr. says his sickness is in the stomach. Now at noon he seems better, but he just lays and sleeps. Barbara is not as well as she was but she is up and about and does light work. Many people die, the young and aged. Many from sore throat. How are you?

Is Sarah still at the place where she was when we were there. Do come and visit us sometime. Em. Schrocks child also died in Nebraska. They had three and are all dead. Barbara is housekeeping for Christian's Peter. They are Dannie's girls. So much from me,

The Schrock Letters, continued,

Susanna Kinsinger to you uncle Peter and children. Write sometime if it is worthwhile to you. I do not have my thoughts together, I have also much trouble in the world.

The following letter was written by Peter's brother Benjamin, also a minister, to Peter while he was still living in Somerset Co. Pa.

Johnson County Iowa City, Iowa
February 25, 1859

First a greeting of love and peace to you, brother Peter Schrock and wife, and wishing the best to your soul and body in this time and also in eternity. Furthermore, I let you know that we are healthy, as the Lord wills and I hope these few lines will find you in good health.

Let it be known that I received your letter on the 11th, the draft money was included. On the 14th I went to the City and drew my draft in gold, 347 dollars and 90 cents.

We have had a very nice winter. At times much snow, cold and freezing. For a while now we have nice sap cooking weather. The nights cool off and freeze. You wrote me that Jacob Schrock² will not pay until he sees the note. These he shall see one after the other until they are all. The times are pretty good, for those that have money. We can buy pine boards for 12 to 15 (dollars) per thousand. Horses 60 to 100 dollars, cows 15 to 25, oxen from 60 to 95, the yokes from 5 to 5.50, good wheat 80¢, oats 75, potatoes 50, butter 15, eggs 10 barley 37, apples 2 for 5¢, corn 40, chickens 5¢ a pound. The hired hands get 12 to 15 dollars a month.

Now I want to tell you what to do with that note. When I send it to you give it to Sam Philsen and he shall redeem it for money, pay that note, then send me a draft, the same as last time. I have no problem with that. When you pay the note, keep a little of it for yourself.

I don't think he liked it very well, as he did not get any honor for that note. He had first chance to buy it. No more of this. Take your pay out, I don't want it for nothing.

2. The writer had two uncles and a cousin in Somerset by this name.

Write me how you like your new harrow. You said you had a new kind and can harrow so much faster than with your other one. Write me how it is made. I will quit writing now. We would like to see you in Iowa. Here we know how things are. Come and I want to go along and show you around.

Again a heartfelt greeting. Remember us in your prayers. We are likewise minded.

So much from us Benjamin Schrock
and Catherine Schrock

The following letter was sent by Benjamin Schrock from Iowa to Peter in Aurora, Preston County, Virginia (later West Virginia).

Johnson County Iowa City, Iowa
September the first, 1861

First a heartfelt greeting of love and peace to you all, Peter Schrock and wife, also brother Daniel and his wife, with wishes of all that is good for soul and body in this time and also in eternity. Further I will let you know that so far we are still healthy in the body, but according to the spirit very weak.

I received your letter the 29th August with thanks and was very glad to hear from you again. I received your letter last spring. The reason I didn't write sooner is; The people said the postal service doesn't go to Virginia any more³. Many wrote and didn't get an answer. Lena⁴ and Mosiss also are healthy, as far as I know.

The weather was very dry and warm this summer. The water is very low, it rained a little today, but everything has grown enough.

We finished hauling grain and oats August 15. Joseph Shetler and I scythed over 13 hundred dozen [bundles] of wheat, 430 dozen oats, [and put out] 37 acres corn.

Lydia and Joseph⁵ went to his folks. Today we don't have church. I think we will have church every Sunday soon. There are too many [people] for one house. I believe it will be divided into two districts this fall, if we

3. Because of the Civil War

4. Peter's sister Magdalena first married to Benedict Lehman and later to Isaac Eash. They moved to Iowa in 1851.

5. Mose P. Millers (Peter's sister Lydia) Moved to Iowa in 1857

6. The writer's daughter Lydia, married to Joseph Shetler.

The Schrock Letters, continued,

live until then. There are twenty-two coming to instructions this summer. Today is Wednesday, tomorrow morning we want to take this letter to the city. If we live until Sunday, church will be at our place. So we have something to do, to get ready. We built a stall (barn), and want to have church in it.

As we have heard, some of your church members have been taken to the war. This troubled me very much. I thought maybe they took you too. God heed you from such blood spilling. Many are going from Iowa. At this time 800 are ready in the city. So far all have gone voluntarily. They have had several scimmages in our state, about 100 miles from here, close to the Iowa line.

I think I will close for this time, and again greet you heartily. The grace of God and the pure love of Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen. Further do not forget us in your prayers, we also have in mind to do likewise. Now be watchful altogether through Jesus Christ, Amen. So much from your weak brother and well wisher.

Write to us again, soon. Benjamin Schrock

The following letter was sent to Peter in "German Settlement, Preston Co. Va." in 1863. The writer was Peter's brother Christian, who was still living in Somerset Co. at the time. In 1866 Christian and his family moved to Iowa.

Shanksville Post Office April 23, 1863

Grace be to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. I remember you in my prayers. With this I heartily greet you. Furthermore I let you know that we are, praise and thank God, healthy again with the Lord's help and grace.

We were all sick except my wife. Five of the children went to school and there they contacted the measles. Then Aaron got the "Keter" fever and was very sick. We had the doctor out for him, three nights in a row. After the fever broke, he got the measles. Valentine, Rosi, Noah, Henry and Christian then came down with "Keter" fever. David also had a touch of it. Peter and Benjamin had the "Keter" fever very hard. When they were better, then Christian, David, and I got

the measles. I was very sick. We had to get the doctor to drive them out. After the measles, David got the dropsy and died on February 26. His age was two years, seven months, and twenty-five days. Then Christian also got dropsy and Peter had pneumonia very hard. But they are well again.

Then Valentine and Rosi got the "Billien" fever. Valentine had it very hard. We had little hope that they would ever get better, but they did. Valentine did not eat for twelve days and was confined upstairs for four weeks. His now beginning to work again. Rosi did not eat for three days and stayed upstairs only two days. We are all eating well again, but we have not done much work yet. We were so broken down, that for eight weeks we cared for each other. Further, there were many others sick in our community this winter, and many died from diphtheria, scarlet fever, and typhoid fever.

The doctors were kept busy. We had Dr. Miller from Shanksville out around 24 or 25 times; 10 times in the night. I don't know yet what his bill is, but I gave him \$50 in cash and \$11 in a bank draft. We have not settled yet. When you have read this letter, give it to brother Daniel and Daniel Beachy, also.

Remember us in your prayers, we are likeminded. I almost can not write because of tears in my eyes. So much from your brother and well wisher.

Christian Schrock and wife
A greeting to you brothers, Peter and Daniel
Write again.

The following note was included:

Peter, I let you know that I received your letter through the doctor. He brought it to my bedside, and also one from Moses. At the time I was sick and so were my beloved children. Herman Lehman's wife is better again, and visited us. Sunday we will have church here. We are having much changeable weather. It is very wet and we have not sown anything yet. Christian Schrock

7. Daniel Beachy was the bishop in the Aurora, W. Va. settlement. He moved there from Somerset and was ordained in the Aurora settlement.

8. Moses Schrock was Peter's brother, the youngest in the family. He was married to Catherine Beachy and was living in Somerset at the time.

The Schrock Letters, continued,

The following letter was written to Peter at Aurora, W. Va. by his brother Benjamin.

Johnson County Iowa City, Iowa
November 16, 1864

First a hearty greeting of love and peace to you, brother Peter Schrock and wife, also brother Daniel and wife. We wish the best to body and soul here and in eternity. Further I let you know that we are healthy, as long as the Lord wills and I hope that these few lines find you healthy.

Furthermore I received your letter on 13 November and I was so glad to hear from you again.

There are some sick people around. Jacob L. Miller's wife and Marner's daughter, Anna have the typhoid fever. And a few others died from diphtheria. Two of Peter Brenneman's children, one of John Stutzman's, Daniel Shetler's son Daniel, two of John J. Miller's children, one of the Hershbergers. The two children were poor from birth. Mose Millers are healthy, the Eschs also. They have a baby daughter. Joseph Shetlers have a baby son. On Thursday, Peter Yoder, cousin to your wife, was married to Magdalena Gingerich (daughter of Daniel). We were there.

I don't know much to say. A bit about our church. We will have communion. It is now November 28. We had communion services at our place last Sunday.

Up by Deer Creek District a number of

people had moved out from Ohio. They gave us a great deal of trouble. But they have moved back to Ohio again and we did not shed any tears for them. We have to do what we can. They can now do as they please. We wish them the best.

A little about the war. Six have been drafted. Two, Joseph Swartzendruber, and Mose J. Kauffman got themselves free. The rest had to pay the \$300. We have gathered together 1200 dollars. These were John P. Miller, Jacob P. Brenneman, Joseph J. Gingerich, and Joseph J. Stutzman. This was the first time we were bothered.

Today I finished up husking my corn. I didn't get much because the bugs damaged it. Wheat was quite good, the bugs damaged some of it. I got 200 bushel. Rye and oats were good. Cattle and hogs are high priced. Hogs go for 6 dollars .50 per hundred.

About the elections. We did not want that people go and vote, but some did anyway. I suppose that if they go, but don't do any campaigning, it may not be wrong in times of peace. But since I live in Iowa, I have not gone to the big elections.

Have patience with me, I have arthritis in my arm so bad, I can hardly write.

Today is December 12. Yesterday Benjamin J. Hochstetler and Elizabeth were published. Tomorrow we want to attend the wedding of Christian J. Miller and Katie D. Gingerich. She is a niece to Peter M. Yoder.

Think of us when you pray. We are like-minded for you.

So much from me,
Benjamin Schrock

