

# **PIONEER MERTZES OF NORTHUMBERLAND AND BERKS COUNTY OH, HOW THEY CONFUSED EARLY GENEALOGISTS (A Research White Paper by C Oakley Mertz, [mertzgenealogy.com](http://mertzgenealogy.com))**

I was born and raised, as were a lot of Mertz (and Martzes), in Northumberland County, Pennsylvania. When I started my genealogical research, I didn't think there was much work left to do on my Mertz line. I had in hand the work of my father's cousin who (together with several other cousins) worked hard in the 1970's and 1980's to identify their ancestors — especially their Mertz ancestors. These cousins traced their pedigree to John Henry Mertz, a fine man, an immigrant, who came to America and settled in Berks County in 1737 and gave the land for the establishment of a church still today known as Mertz Church. It is in Rockland Township, Berks County. But they were wrong.

Further, they said that John Philip Mertz, son of John Henry Mertz, born 14 Oct 1738 in Berks County, came to Northumberland County before 1800 and died there in about December, 1803. John Philip was the supposed ancestor of all of these cousins and, of course, mine too. Most of that biography is wrong, too.

So I began my work by just accepting that lineage as fact, but then over time, I began to find certain details about Philip that didn't quite reconcile or seemed out of place. I finally determined that a huge mistake had been made. These early family historians had confused our ancestor Philip Mertz, who did indeed die in Northumberland County in about December, 1803 and was known to have come from Berks County, with John Philip Mertz, who was born in Berks County in 1738 to John Henry Mertz and his wife Anna Maria. But they were two different men entirely.

What I eventually determined is that my ancestor Philip was of the Longswamp Township Mertz family, the immigrant of that line being John David Mertz who came to America in 1733 with his wife, daughter and teenage sons Nicholas and Peter.

My father's cousin was not alone in thinking persons named Mertz who showed up in Northumberland County in the late 1780's were descendants of John Henry Mertz. Jacob Mertz -- brother (I believe) of my Philip -- was confused with John Philip's brother Jacob, another son of John Henry. And one researcher of that era even went so far as to confuse David Mertz (another brother of my Philip) with another of John Henry's sons -- this one named Henry. It was really amazing to read how he rationalized and argued the case that a man who was baptized as and went by the name Henry in Berks County came to always be called David once he arrived in Northumberland County. Even a two year discrepancy in the known birth dates between Henry and David did not give him pause.

The problem all these early researchers had was that the obvious place to go look for someone named Mertz who came from Berks County was Mertz Church. And unfortunately, by pure coincidence, they found there men of the names Philip, Jacob, Conrad and Henry born in the 1730's and 1740's and thus of the right age to have moved to Northumberland County in the 1780's -- or so they thought.

Besides the work of my father's cousin and his associates, there are three sources that cover most if not all of the Pioneer Mertz of Northumberland County in published books or other documents.

- Genealogical and Biographical Annals of Northumberland County by J L Floyd (1911) is the earliest and original work, referenced as a source by others, that mistakenly purports to give the Berks County ancestries of Northumberland County Mertz men. It was a county history and like so many of its genre, it recounted the biography and genealogy of leading citizens of the day. And like so many, the early family histories it purports to tell

are sometimes so far from the truth as to make it seem they just made it up. According to J L Floyd, each pioneer Mertz of Northumberland County that they chose to profile was a descendant of Johannes Mertz who also appears (like John Henry) in Mertz Church records but has nothing to do with the Northumberland County Mertz line whatsoever. Floyd is wrong on every one.

- A Genealogy of Selected Northumberland County Pioneer Families – (Part XV) The Mertz/Mertz Family” written largely by Richard J Mertz in association with Joseph A Meiser, noted Northumberland County genealogist. This book a very extensive listing of all Northumberland County branches of the Mertz family. It specifically states that Philip Mertz who died in Northumberland County in 1803 was the son of John Henry Mertz and that Jacob Mertz of Northumberland County was another son of John Henry. It did, however, correctly determine that Peter Mertz of Northumberland County was most likely the son of the above mentioned Peter Mertz (the son of John David who came to America with him). And it gets the story right on Nicholas Mertz, son of the other son of John David. The author just “throws up his hands” on David Mertz.
- Allen Donald Tallman also did a lot of work on the early Mertzes of Northumberland County and built upon the work of the previous two works. There is a published white paper on the Northumberland County Genweb site “mertzdav.txt” authored by him. He comments on a couple of what I call “discordant notes” about the assumption that the Northumberland men were of the Mertz Church line, but never quite makes the leap of logic to reach my conclusion -- that none of them were. In fact, it is Tallman who spun the amazing tale of David and Henry being the same man. He named this “composite” man Heinrich David Mertz, a name that can be found in hundreds of places on the Internet today. THERE WAS NO SUCH MAN!

#### MY OWN RESEARCH

I have spent a fair amount of time studying every document I could find and every piece of hard evidence about all the Mertzes of Berks County and all the Mertzes and Martzes of Northumberland County. I have worked with many descendants of all of the various lines to share ideas and information.

I believe there were four Mertz immigrants who came to America before 1750 and settled in Berks County.

- Johannes Mertz. Johannes, I believe, emigrated in 1749. He married Rosina Hase. He appears in the records of Mertz Church but his marriage was recorded in the records of Moselem Lutheran Church of Berks County and that record says he was the son of Johannes “aus dem Wurtenburgishem Stochenhausen”. He came from Stockhausen.
- Johann Henrich (John Henry) Mertz. He emigrated in 1737 and settled in Rockland Township and gave the land for Mertz Church. Many researchers, including my father’s cousin, say he was also the son of Johannes of Stockhausen, Wurttemberg, Germany. But he wasn’t. His father was also named Johann Henrich and lived in Frankenhausen, Germany.
- Johann Jost Mertz. He emigrated in 1748. He married Anna Maria Seip and they worshipped and baptized children at Mertz Church. He was the younger brother of Johann Henrich.
- John David Mertz. He emigrated in 1733 and settled in Longswamp Township. Whereas the other three, based on their worship at Mertz Church, were Lutheran, John David and his family were Reformed.

Many of the first generation of descendants of the three Mertz Church immigrants lived their full lives in Maxatawny or Rockland Township, not far from Mertz Church and continued to

worship there. Some of that first generation descendants of these three moved to and lived out their lives in Northampton County including the part that later became Lehigh County. The two exceptions are William (Wilhelm) Mertz, son of John Henry, who moved to Somerset (then Bedford) County, PA after the Revolutionary War and his brother John George to nearby Frederick County, MD.

The John David line was quite apart from and never intermingled with those other lines. And DNA testing of descendants of the various lines proves that there was no relation whatsoever between John David and the others.

John David came from Alsace and his life there was documented by Annette K Burgert in her book Eighteenth Century Emigrants from Northern Alsace to America in which she identified persons who appear in German (Alsatian) Church records, on immigrant ship passenger lists and finally in American Church records. John David Mertz, my ancestor, was such a person and her work led me to the actual German church records where he worshipped and baptized his children. John David Mertz came from the Northern Alsace to Berks County, Pennsylvania in 1733 and settled in the area that became Longswamp Township, specifically the part of it that came to be named Mertztown. I believe that village was named for him or perhaps he and his immediate descendants. His two sons, who came to America with him, lived their lives in or near Longswamp Township. It was their sons, David's grandsons, who moved almost en masse to Northumberland County.

#### RECOUNTING THE FACTS -- PHASE I -- TWO MEN NAMED PHILIP MERTZ

The determination with certainty that there were two different men named Philip Mertz is basically told by the baptismal records of the early churches of Berks County. These records typically state the name of the infant baptized, the baptismal date and sometimes the birth date, the name of the father and generally the name of the mother and the names of the godparents (sponsors).

Here is just a sampling of actual church records, identified as either MC (Mertz Church) or LS (Longswamp Reformed). Most are baptismal records with one marriage record thrown in.

- (MC) Johann Philip Merz son of Johan Heinrich & Anna Maria, nee Rosemannin, born 14 Oct. 1738; bapt. 25 Oct. 1738, sponsor: Joh. Philip Bernhausel
- (MC) Philip Merz married Catharine Quierin 29 May 1765
- (MC) Christina Mertz daughter of Philipp Mertz & Catharina born 16 June 1776; bapt. 26 June 1776, sponsors: Anna Mertzin & Henrich Querin
- (MC) Esther Mertz daughter of Philipp Mertz & Catharina born 31 July 1776; bapt. 16 March 1777, sponsors: Anna Mertzin & Henrich Querin
- (LS) Anna Eva Mertz daughter of Philip & Eva born 9 Nov. 1777; bapt. 21 Dec. 1777, sponsors: Johannes Mertz & wife Margaretha
- (LS) Elisabeth Mertz daughter of Philip & Eva born 12 April 1779; bapt. 23 May 1779, sponsors: Peter Voegelé & wife Elisabetha
- (MC) Hana Martz daughter of Philipp Martz & Catharina born 15 Dec. 1783; bapt. 4 April 1784 sponsors Jacob Martz & wife Catharina
- (LS) Philip Mertz son of Johannes & wife born 20 May 1784, sponsors: Philip Mertz & wife Eva
- (MC) Johannes Mertz daughter of Wilhelm Mertz & Elisabeth 19 Aug. 1796; bapt. 17 Sept., sponsors: Philip Mertz & wife Catharine

- From "The German Reformed Church Archives" in Lancaster, Pennsylvania: Catharina daughter of Philip Mertz Jr. (Philip Heinrich Mertz, born in 1772) and Sarah Loscher Mertz on 23 Feb 1803 bapt. 4 Mar 1803 by Reverend Daniel Lehman. The sponsors were Philip Mertz and his wife Catharina.
- (MC) Benjamin Mertz son of Philip Mertz Jr. and Sarah bapt. 19 Jan 1812, Philip Mertz and Catharine sponsors.

**Summary.** John Philip Mertz married Catherine Quierin in 1764 in the Mertz Church and this couple – John Philip and Catherine – baptized their children at Mertz Church starting in 1765 and continuing into the 1780's. In 1796, they appear in the Mertz Church records as baptismal sponsors as they do as late as 1812. Moreover, in 1803, the year my Philip died in Northumberland County leaving his wife Eva, they are listed as a baptismal sponsor for their granddaughter. The place is not specified but the minister was a Berks County minister and their son Philip lived in Berks County as did they. Census shows them in Maxatawny Township in 1790, 1800 and 1810.

Philip Mertz and Eva appear as a couple often and always in the records of the Longswamp Church of Berks County starting in 1776 with the baptism of their daughter Susanna and continued to appear in the records of this church for some time. They also baptized Anna Eva, Elisabeth and Abraham. They last were named in 1784 at this church as sponsors for the baptism of Philip Mertz (yet another Philip Mertz, who was my Philip's nephew.)

Two near simultaneous events of late 1776 are typical. John Philip and wife Catherine baptized their daughter Esther not long after her birth in July 1776 at the Mertz Church, while at about the same time, Philip and Eva were baptizing their daughter Susanna, born in June 1776, in the Longswamp Reformed Church.

We know from tax records that Philip Mertz appeared in Penns Township by 1785 and Philip Mertz and wife Anna baptized Gertrude in 1787 and Anna Mary in 1789 at Zion (Morr's) Church in Freeburg. He seems to have been skipped in the 1790 Census but is found in Freeburg in 1800 and his widow in later years.

The will of Philip Mertz who died in Freeburg in 1803 (or early 1804) mentions wife Eve, sons Peter, Henry and Abraham and daughters Catherine, Susanna, Eve, Elizabeth, Margaret, Gertrude, Mary and Sara. Not all of these children appear in church baptismal records but the known children of Philip and Eve (and/or Anna) whose baptisms were recorded are all named in his will.

So, once I had laid out and examined this evidence, I became 100% convinced that researchers who believe that John Philip, son of John Henry, was the Philip of Freeburg are dead wrong. A few researchers have tried to argue to me that maybe it was one Philip with two different wives. But again the evidence just doesn't allow such a conclusion. Their married lives overlapped in time and actually Philip and Catharina as a couple cover a timeframe preceding Philip and Eva's first child and lasting after his death.

#### CONSIDERING THE OTHER NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY PIONEER MERTZES

The records of Longswamp Reformed made it clear that my Philip was of the Longswamp family, but it was not clear who his father was. As part of determining Philip's ancestry, I found it necessary to make a very detailed study of all church records where a Mertz child is baptized or where a Mertz adult appears as a sponsor. I also studied all early Berks County wills and Orphan's Court records that named Longswamp Mertzses. As a result of this effort, I created a list of over 50 known Longswamp Mertzses born before 1800 (males and females).

It was while I was working on that project (found elsewhere on my web site) that I made the following observation. From Census and tax records, I knew the names of the adult Mertz males present in Northumberland County by 1790 -- Philip, Nicholas, Peter, Conrad, David and

Jacob (two different Jacobs actually). All of these names were Longswamp names -- including there were two adult Jacobs -- and all of these names which appear frequently in church records up until about 1785, just totally disappear from those records after that point in time.

I then began to systematically compare these Mertzses, who disappear from Longswamp and then appear in Northumberland County by 1790. In some cases, there could be no doubt we had an exact match. For example, Peter is in Northumberland County by the time of the 1790 Census and died in Northumberland County in 1813 and his son Jonathan was an executor of his estate. Philip's brother Peter Jr. baptized a son Jonathan at Longswamp in 1776. Jonathan is a unique name in the Mertz family pre-1800, many were named Johannes or given a first (biblical) name of Johann -- both John in English -- but there was no other Jonathan. So, there is no question that the Peter in question was Peter Jr. of Longswamp. And Nicholas was another name found in Longswamp and then later Northumberland and nowhere else.

I went through them all systematically. By 1800, when an age bracket was given in the Census to each head of household, the names not only line up but so do the ages. My conclusion is that every single Mertz male present in Northumberland County by 1820 was of Longswamp. Almost all of the Longswamp names that disappear from there appear in Northumberland and there are no extraneous names that appear in Northumberland that cannot be traced to Longswamp. It is a perfect fit.

This finding contradicts the work of a lot of other researchers and has totally rocked some people's conclusions about their own ancestries. But I think it an obvious conclusion. John David's oldest son Nicholas died in 1760 and his youngest son Peter died in 1787. I think the movement to Northumberland had begun by 1785 but soon after 1787, most of John David's grandsons had packed up their possessions and families and moved west.

#### AND THE PIONEER MARTZES

And an interesting thing then happened. It was five sons of Hans Peter who moved to and then stayed in Northumberland County. Two of those sons -- Philip and Nicholas -- settled west of the Susquehanna River (Freeburg and Middleburg, respectively -- both then in Northumberland County though now Snyder County). Three of those sons -- Peter, Jacob and David -- settled east of the Susquehanna River and for all of them, the spelling of their name almost immediately evolved to Martz. The Marts spelling is basically retained today for all of their descendants.

The Marts spelling also evolved in many other places. Over time, as certain of the descendants of Philip or Nicholas moved away, especially if it was before 1850, the spelling of their name became Marts. And it happened in the other Berks County lines too. When descendants later moved away, often the spelling evolved to Marts.