



# OFA Bulletin

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Oberholtz	Uberholtzer	Overholser	Oberheuser
Overhults	VanHulser	Overhuls	
Overhalser	Overhalt	Atherholt	Obold
Uberholser	Overholtzer	Overholt	
Overhulster	Oberholser	Oberholtzer	

Hello Everyone,

It has been a most wintry winter in the Northeast U S A to say the least. The groundhogs (or, whistle pigs, as the mountain people call them) could not make up their mind if Spring was coming, or if they were still sleepy!

This year's Reunion will have a special speaker from along the Susquehanna River. Joe Hottenstein is from the Haldeman Mansion Historical Society. He lives on the property originally owned by Peter Bezallion, the French fur trapper who is associated with the Conoy Indians, the MC, ML, ML1, & HA Oberholtzers, and a newly connected Earhart Oberholtzer from Dauphin County PA.

Since there is little interest in taking a field trip to the Millersville area to see the Immigrant locations of SL Samuel, ML Michael, and MM Matthew/CH Christian, Dennis will be making a "map tour" to be handed out to those who come to the Reunion this year.

So please join us for a festive celebration. Lunch will again be meat and fruit trays from Shady Maple, and bring a pot luck addition for some variety.

**Overholser Family  
Association Bulletin**

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**Welcome New OFA Members!!!**

Steve & Macy Kay Dilling, Raleigh NC

Kathryn Stevens

**New Way to CONTRIBUTE!**

You can support the OFA by visiting our website  
at [www.overholser.net](http://www.overholser.net) and clicking the Donate button.

We have PayPal for your convenience. Please e-mail  
[gmartin@overholser.net](mailto:gmartin@overholser.net) if you have any questions.

**Losing a precious host**

Kathy Ann Overholser passed away on April 12, 2025. She and her husband Jim are avid supporters of the OFA. Kathy was a great help in setting up the Reunions to make a pleasing atmosphere for the people who join us. She had a sweet countenance which made you feel welcome. Kathy and Jim resided in Roanoke VA. Born December 24, 1946 in Waynesville NC to Katherine Kay and Charles Hultquist of Maryville TN. She loved hiking and riding trains worldwide. She attended Wesleyan College in Macon GA, and the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. She is survived by her husband Jim, and son Gregory Overholser and wife Mary Virginia, and grandson Philip.

## Pre 7th Century Eastern Switzerland

by Dennis L Oberholtzer

Switzerland was originally divided into two areas of population. Riphath was a son of Gomer, and grandson of Noah of the Bible. Riphath was the ancestor of the Rhætians, who are called Etruscans in modern literature. The Rhætians lived in the southeast quarter of present day Switzerland. The Ice Man, covered in *National Geographic*, was discovered there. It is a highly mountainous region with very steep terrain. Over the centuries mining has occurred there, with the people being bred to become shorter than average. These people are the Appenzellers of Switzerland.

As early as the mid second century bc, Celtic settlers called *Pfahl-bauers*, meaning pile-builders, built homes on the lake shores, and large streams. Their houses were built on stilts into the waters, for convenience during the snowy winter months. They used swaying bridges to get to other buildings. The most extensive village was in Robenhausen on Lake Pfaffikon.

During the Alpine Bronze Age roasted barley was the favorite dish. The Helvetians, who originated between the Rhine and Main Rivers, were pushed out and migrated to Switzerland. This happened about 375 AD. They broke into four major tribes: the Tigurini were at Aventicum; the Toygeni, the Verbigeni, and the wild Allobroges resided in the area of modern Geneva.

There were at least 400 villages and 12 towns in Helvetia. But the Helvetians left the Alpine regions to a sturdier race. So when the Alamanni came, they moved to the higher areas. Druid worship was still their religion, gathering under a small group of trees. By 406 bc, the Alamanni had secured Eastern Switzerland, and amalgamated the Helvetians into their society.

During the first century bc, Helvitia split into two dialects. The Burgundians of western Switzerland carried on a French dialect, and the Alamanni of eastern Switzerland took on a High German dialect. The Zurich Canton contained about 3000 hofs (farms), yet only 100 hamlets and 12 villages sprinkled the countryside. The Alamanni retained their uncivilized and warlike nature. Their original house had 4 posts and leather walls. Later, canvas replaced the leather. Most of these tent homes were portable, being able to move when crops no longer produced the necessary food supply.

Roman Leader Aetius gave the Burgundians the land of *Sabaudia* (Savoy) in 443 CE. The Burgundians became neighbors to the Alamanni in 480 CE after a severe defeat by the Huns. In Italy, under Theodoric I the Great, the Ostrogoths amalgamated into the Roman nation. Theodoric I was called in German writings Dietrich von Bern. After his death, "the kingdom existed for a few years, but finally ceased about 554, and the Gothic blood mixed itself with that of the Lombards, the Helvetians and the Germans, losing all distinctive national characteristics.

The Merovingians were the rulers of central Europe from the 5th to 8th centuries. After King Clovis in the 5th century, the rulership began to deteriorate. By the end they were being called *Faineants*, meaning sluggards, who failed to innovate and correct the tyrannical counts and dukes. The masters of the court began to take over power, till by the time Charles Martel came along, there was little turning back.

## Area Organization Dates

- in Rev I E Oberholtzer notebooks

1727 – 1775 All males over 16 were required to take Oath and declaration to England as soon after arrival as possible. Prior to this, ages 12 to 14 were not recorded on immigration ships.

Philadelphia, Bucks and Chester Counties established 1682.

Donegal Twp organized in 1722. Peter Oberholtzer of Oregon Village. E \_\_\_\_\_ & Evans Pg834.

1722 Conestoga split into East & West Conestoga.

Lancaster County established 1729. formerly part of Chester County but called Conestoga.

1739 Lebanon Twp was reduced by making Bethel Twp.

York County established 1749.

Cumberland County established 1750.

Berks County 1752 formed from northeastern Lancaster County, Philadelphia & Chester Counties.

Botetourt Co VA founded 1769. Before that part of Augustus Co.

1785 Dauphin separated from Lancaster

Lebanon county formed from part Lancaster & part Dauphin Feb 16, 1813.

Floyd County formed from Montgomery County VA in 1831. Christiansburg is in Montgomery Co VA today.

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**The first meeting of the General Missions Board of the Church of the Brethren was held in the house of an Oberholtzer of Brookville Ohio. December 9, 1880.**

Additional ministers in Church of the Brethren:

Wm H Oberholtzer	Myerstown PA
Lewis B Overholtzer	Elkhart IN RD7
Wm Overholser	Warsaw IN
Jonas C Overholt	1830 Francis Ave, Grand Rapids MI
Darius Overholtzer	Covina CA
E C Overholtzer	Fair Oaks CA
D J Overholtzer	Covina CA
J Overholtzer	Glenn CA
S A Overholtzer	La Verne CA
J N Overholtzer	Keuka, Putnam Co FL

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## **Bibliography of Rev I E Oberholtzer notebooks**

A Brief History of John & Christ Fretz	A J Fretz bc7.180 Yale Pub
History of Dauphin & Lebanon Counties	W H Egle Yale ck 18.060
Names of Foreigners who took oath of Allegiance	W H Egle Yale ck 2 7/II 17
History of Berks & Lebanon Counties	I D Rupp Yale ck 18.116 I
Conestoga County	Lancaster County Historical Society Yale 19/17/25-26
History of Lancaster County	Ellis & Evans Yale ck 1/010
30,000 Names	I D Rupp Vol 17 2 <sup>nd</sup> Series PA Archives
History of Lancaster Co	I D Rupp Yale ck 19/22-23
Homeland of the 1 <sup>st</sup> Settlers of Lancaster County	Levi Oscar Kuhns Yale
An Authentic History of Lancaster County	I I Mombert
Provincial Papers Etc 3 <sup>rd</sup> roll Series Vol 17	W H Egle

Report of True Character	Lancaster County Historical Society
Assessment Lists of Lancaster Co prior to 1729	H Frank Eshelman
Guide to Materials for American History in Swiss & Austrian Archives	Dr A B Faust
gives immigrants to PA between 1734 – 1744 It is in the Zurich Canton @ b 3.30e	
George Oberholtzer	R D 6 Hagerstown MD
Lists of Swiss emigrants in the 18 <sup>th</sup> Century to American Colonies	A B Faust
Allgemeines Helvetisches oder Schweizerisches Lexicon	by Lew in a # of Volumes Zurich 1750 pub
Fretz Family History	Yale Library
Masonic Authorities	Mackey
World Almanac	Finney
Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Martin Oberholtzer	A J Fretz, Milton NJ
Evergreen News	Pres. Milton NJ 1903
Mennonites in America	C Henry Smith
The Mennonite Churches 1770	Morgan Edwards
Provincial List of 1693	Philadelphia PA
Pennsylvania Genealogies	Eagle
Record of PA Marriages prior to 1810	J B Linn – Eagle
Conestoga Neighbors Vol 19	H F Eshelman
Lives of Eminent Dead of Montgomery County	M Auger
History of Montgomery Co	W J Buck
Conestoga County	Lancaster County Historical Society
Reel Society of Commonwealth	John Beck, George Ford, Barclay
Biographical History of Lancaster Co	A Harrison
The American Ethnographical Survey	Marien Dexter Lear___
Campbelltown Graveyard	Visit by Rev I E Oberholtzer
Probate Court House in Philadelphia	
Fincastle Court House	Botetaut Co VA

York County Court House

York PA

Carlisle Court House

Cumberland Co PA

Adams Co Court House

Gettysburg PA

Dauphin County Court House

Harrisburg PA

Overholser Addresses of 1930's

Our Diamond Leader Comp Bk #2, Rev I E Oberholtzer

Philadelphia Oberholtzers addresses of 1932

Our Diamond Leader Comp Bk #2, Rev I E Oberholtzer

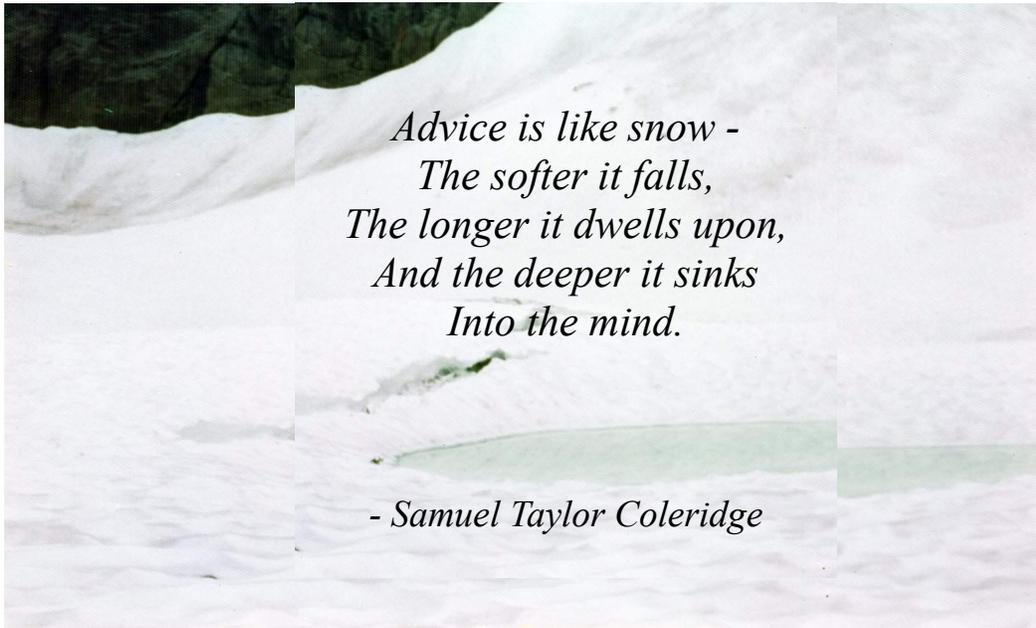
Graveyard beyond Groff Farm in [East] Petersburg

Huber Graveyard north of Lititz

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All assessment lists before 1750 [for Lancaster County] are gone. Lists now in existence extend from 1718 to 1726. Gilbert Cope found these in Chester County Court House in 1879. It includes Conestoga East & West, Donegal & Pequea.

- Rev I E Oberholtzer notebook, written prior to 1940



## Secretary Report of Summer Reunion 2025

A very noticeable member was missing: Dennis Oberholtzer. Dennis was invited to a symposium in St Louis, Missouri, because of his newly published book, *Shrouded in Secrecy, a Knightly Search*. Although we missed him, we were very honored to share him with the symposium on *The Shroud*.

Our Reunion started on Friday, August 1 at Yoder's restaurant with approximately 12 in attendance: enjoying our time to catch up with each other. At this juncture we introduced our new merchandise to those in attendance: our T-shirts, proudly displaying our Coat-of-Arms.

The following morning we met at St John's Center in Terri Hill at 9AM. We started with opening remarks by OFA President Michael Martin, who presented our new merchandise, our T-shirts containing our Coat of Arms to everyone.

Then we moved onto our Treasurer's Report by Geoffrey Martin. Since we have a sufficient amount in our various accounts a discussion produced a motion to allow Geoffrey to invest some of these dollars in interest bearing Certificates of Deposit: a motion was made and seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

OFA Secretary Thomas Armstrong then presented a great slideshow of old photos of Oberholz, Switzerland and others depicting Overholser history, which will be on a continuous feed during our upcoming Reunions.

A question was raised around possibly moving the annual reunion date - alternative Saturdays in August were proposed, as well as Sundays or even late July. We agreed to poll the membership to gather broader input ahead of a board discussion. Geoffrey agreed to initiate this conversation with our members.

We broke for lunch.

Melvin (Mel) Weaver, our invited speaker (Mel is a distant cousin of many of us, through Johann Anton Weber, who immigrated to Penns Woods in 1710), than gave a presentation with a slide show from a trip he took with his father, centered on the history of Anabaptism, which started in Zurich, Switzerland on January 21, 1525. .. Mel's 9th Great Grandfather George Weber was one of the Anabaptists

who was imprisoned for his faith in Switzerland. Although George was not martyred, he never recovered from the injuries and sickness of the tortures he endured. His talk also included the on going persecution during the 15th & 16th centuries. Mel also covered some of the main tenants of Anabaptism such as adult baptism, separation of church and state (primarily the government should not have dominance over the church), nonresistance and absolving many of the Catholic Church's rituals that can't be proven in the Bible.

We then had two guests: Luke & Bonnie Weaver (brother and sister-in-law of Mel, who traveled from Canada to join us), performed three songs; one being an original by Bonnie. Bonnie is a skilled pianist and singer as she played professionally with a Southern Gospel family, when she was young. We were well treated by their talents.

Melvin returned for a wrap-up of how Anabaptists immigrated to Pennsylvania and the role they played in building homes, churches, mills and successful farms as well as holding large tent meetings. Their contribution was cited many times by Benjamin Rush (Signer of the Declaration and the Constitution).

Final remarks from Tom as well as promoting our new shirts, followed by the group OFA photo.

The new merchandise seemed to go well as many shirts were purchased and we probably recovered the original costs. We still have some remaining. Contact Geoffrey if you would like to pick one up for yourself.

The Reunion was then adjourned. We hope to see you at our next Reunion in 2026.

## *Obituaries*

Sent in by Patrick McGarry:

Helen Shoemaker born Dayton OH, died Nov 9, 2024 of Marietta Georgia

Donald Denlinger Jan 13, 1928 - Feb 8, 2026 New Lebanon

Shane Roy Oberholzer, whose father was OGGB minister. Same tree branch as Edna Witmer

Widow of Genealogist Ron Seas 1935-2014, Ruth Eileen Wagaman Seas 1937 Jan 22, 2026

David Flora July 3, 1937 - January 8, 2026, s/o Howard and Viola Flora

Doris Metzger Wagoner died Dec 29, 2025, m Chet Wagoner June 12, 1949

Shirley Hoover died Dec 2025 at 95

Angeline Flora Fishburn April 30, 1931 Quinter KS - November 18, 2025

Phyllis Shoff died at 87 on Wed Nov 12, 2025

## **Correspondence**

Keeping up with phone and email connections have been difficult since Covid. Please give either Tom Armstrong or Geoffrey Martin your phone number and/or your email address to put you on the mailing list for the OFA Bulletin. Thank You for your interest in the Oberholzer/ etc genealogy.

## Population Fluctuations of Europe

Per 1 million population in Europe

Used by permission from Shrouded in Secrecy, A Knightly Search, by Dennis L. Oberholtzer

1 CE	1 million	25 year life expectancy
165-180 CE	10-15% loss	Antonine Plague
251-266	5-10% loss	Outbreaks of Plague
1st Millennium	25 % loss	Infancy to 1 year
1st Millennium	25 % loss	by age 12
War	- 10 % male	Annual average
Construction	- 5% male	Annual average
Flood	- 2% estimate	Each century
450 CE	60% loss since 1 CE	Total Population
Dark Ages	20% of 1 CE Total	European Population ; Slavery deaths outnumbered births
525 CE	- 33 % loss	Plague
542-3 CE	- 33 % loss	Bubonic Plague
End of Roman Empire	Cities depleted	Illiteracy due to education systems collapse
800 CE	+ 25% gain	Iron industry Employment
Till 800 CE	- 20 % loss	Food Shortages per Drought
After 800 CE	+ 30 % gain	Agricultural upgrades
2nd Millennium	1 million	35 year life expectancy
1000-1050	High population loss	Constantinople & Eastern Europe
1094 CE	High population loss	Bavaria
1149-50	High population loss	people & animals, Central Europe
1000-1300	Population doubled	Agricultural upgrades
1300 to 1450	- 60 % loss	Total population
1315 CE	- 34 % loss	Great Famine in England
1330-1340	- 5-10 % loss	Food Shortages

1348-1351	- 60 % cities	Black Death Loss of E Greenland, Towering Icebergs
1348-1351	- 10-15 % country - 21 % loss	Black Death Pope's residence at Avignon
1360-1379	- 5-10 % loss	Reoccurring Plagues
1390 CE	- 5-10 % loss	Plague outbreak
1405 CE	- 5-10 % loss	Plague outbreak
1464 CE		Plague in Italy

Charles Martel's grandson Charlemagne had a brother named Carlomann. He killed many Alamanni "Grandees", the tribal leaders, and confiscated their lands. This did not include the Oberholz forest high above the valley below. By Lake Constance, St Gall's cell became an Abbey church and monastery. The 8th century monastery of St Gall included 160,000 acres. A Swiss historian claims there are still records of the Oberholzer people in Constance which discuss Oberholzers prior to their surname and settlements on the mountain. Because the monastery had been burnt, no known records of these pre Oberholzers exist there.

Jumping ahead by some eight centuries, the Thirty Years War brought devastation to the Palatinate region, where many Anabaptist refugees had fled from Switzerland in the 1600's. This mass killing and migration of people left the population, cattle and agriculture in such dire circumstances, that the Palatinate did not recover to its prior size and production till the middle of the 19th Century.

Most people take for granted that history is preserved in books, and the internet. But destruction, and natural occurrences, can destroy our history.

## *Obituaries Continued*

Richard Prischmann died March 27, 2025 @ 91 years, in Arizona,, son of Grace O Prischmann, and grandson of Norris V Oberholtzer - Jack Oberholtzer  
Brendan James Heisey July 17, 2003 - Sept 19, 2025 s/o Anthony R & Sandra Heisey of Elizabethtown PA.  
Survived by parents and brothers Darren and Chad

*Sent in by Jennie Sperling:*

Craig K Overholt passed away February 28, 2025 Sellersville PA 70 years. Husband of Patricia M Schlegel for 50 years on October 19, 2024. Life member of Sellersville Fire Co. Born Bridgeton NJ s/o Lloyd S & Mildred Haney Overholt. 3 sons: Jason, Joshua, and Jeffery Overholt

Taylor Schaible Sept 11, 1944 - Aug 21, 2025 of Telford PA, husband of Louise Herring. Born in Doylestown PA to Taylor J & Grace M Overholt Schaible. Surviving are Taylor III, Troy and Todd; sisters Mabel Keller & Grace McIlmoyle

Royden W Overholtzer Sept 4, 1937 - Sept 29, 2025 Lansdale PA, husband of late Virginia Snyder. Born in Sellersville, raised in Harleysville, life member Christ Lutheran Church Harleysville. Survived by sons James, Gary, and David

More Sent in by Patrick McGarry:

Larry Warner 82 died November 24, 2025 auto accident

Robert Lee Flora, s/o Noah & Mary Rockwell Flora, died November 9, 2025 @ 91

Gary Lavy, December 28, 1942 - October 26, 2025 s/o Dallas & Esther Barnhart Lavy

Don Loxley, October 7, 1936 - service October 22, 2025 2nd s/Ranald & Kathryn Loxley

Thomas Keiser, died July 10, 2025 Hazel Crest IL

Mary Kathryn Severs May 5, 1935 - Sept 24, 2025 New Carlisle OH

Elizabeth Studebaker Eby at 101, Oct 16, 1921 - Sept 3, 2025

Jane Booche Sept 26, 1039 - August 30, 2025

Brandon Basye, 30 of Covington OH February 24, 1986 - Sept 11, 2025

Charles Daniel Overholser, 1943-2025 Myrtle Beach SC

Richard Brumbaugh died Feb 13, 2026 age 82 Berne IN, formerly of Greenville

## OFA OFFICERS FOR 2024

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The Second printing of

***The Oberholtzer Book,  
1995 by Barbara Ford***

is now available. Price of \$40.00 includes shipping. It includes the first five known generations of Oberholzers in America and Canada.

Contact Geoffrey Martin, Treasurer for purchase information.

*The further society drifts from the Truth,  
the more it will hate those who speak it.*  
- George Orwell

*Reunions around the States:*

**116th Overholser Family Reunion , First Saturday is August 1, 2026**  
St John's Center Church, Rt 625 Terre Hill PA  
Overholser Family Association

**103nd Overholtzer Reunion, IA Community Building, Tingley IA**  
1st Saturday in August; Jenesse Tull, 435 E Main St, Tingley IA 50863

**Fretz Family Reunion, First Saturday in August, 11 AM**  
355 Kingspond Lane, Souderton PA 18964



*In Lancaster County  
we cover our  
bridges;*



*and leave our cars in the snow!*

Check out the OFA Website:

<http://www.overholser.net> or Contact Us at

[info@overholser.net](mailto:info@overholser.net); or Facebook at OverholserFamilyAssociation