

Biog. of John Dan'l Stonesifer

John Daniel Stonesifer, the immigrant ancestor of most of the persons of that name and blood descent in Maryland and Pennsylvania, was born 1 Dec 1731, in Scelbach, Germany. His parents names are not known. However, the name of Stonesifer is a very old one, and it is said to mean stone polisher. Some variations of its spelling are Steinseifer, Steinseiffert, Stonesifer, Stonecypher, and Stonecipher. Some recent information indicates that his father was twice married, and that John Daniel was the child of the second marriage. It is said that while he was still quite young, his father moved the family to a home in nearby Elserfeld, and it was here that he grew up. This very old town is located about 70 miles east-south-east of the famous old cathedral city of Cologne beside the Rhine River. Elserfeld is thought to be the place where John Daniel's father was born being one of 4 brothers. One of these four brothers is thought to be Johannes (John) Steinseifer who came to America in 1749. This area where our Stonesifer ancestors lived is a very historic one, and in earlier days was known as the Principality of Nassau. Our home town of Elserfeld was located in Nassau-Siegen, one of the five counties then comprising this ancient principality. The house John Daniel grew up in was apparently built about 1561 and existed till 1961 when it was taken down because of its age.

Our John Daniel Stonesifer came to America on the "Ship Halifax", captained by a Thomas Coatam. The ship had sailed from Rotterdam, Holland, the main port of emigration for Germans coming here, stopped off briefly in the English port of Cowen, and after a long sea voyage landed in Philadelphia on Friday, Sept. 22, 1752. Historians tell us that such voyages lasted anywhere from seven to twelve weeks, and some even longer. All persons entering the port for settlement here, who were male and sixteen years of age or older, were required to sign an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. This our ancestor did, signing his name on a list in the State House (later Independence Hall) in Philadelphia as Johann Daniel Steinseiffer. He was 21 years old at the time. This information is from a three volume set of books by Strassburger and Hinke entitled "Pennsylvania German Pioneers", and which has a wealth of material regarding arrivals in the city of Philadelphia between 1727 to about 1808.

John Daniel settled in the general area of silver run, not too far from Uniontown, Carroll Co., Md., but which in his day was Frederick Co., Md. In the History of Western Maryland by J. Thomas Scharf, Vol. 2, page 851, the author lists the names of some of the early pioneer settlers of the Uniontown area, and one of them is Stonesifer. It is our belief that he came to America because a half brother or cousin, Johannes Eberhardt Steinseifer, was already living here. On Nov. 4, 1753, the Rev. Jacob Lischy, a traveling German Reformed minister, recorded that our John Daniel and an Anna Maria Sterner (also Steiner in those days) were the sponsors at the baptism of John Daniel, the new born son of Johannes Eberhardt and Anna Maria Steinseifer.

At this point it should be stated that Johannes Eberhardt Steinseifer was also a passenger on the "Ship Patience" which on Sept. 19, 1749 docked in the port of Philadelphia with "Johannes Steinsiefer" as he spelled his name then. This Johannes was probably the brother of John Daniel's father, & thus his uncle. Among the list of passengers on board was a Johan Ebert Stein, who was indicated as being sick and unable to sign his name. Prior to 1749 there is no record of any Stonesifer to be found in our area. But on Dec. 2, 1750 Johan Eberhardt Steinseifer's name begins to occur with the various baptisms of his children and others. It seems very likely that Johannes Eberhardt (as he was known) & his uncle, Johannes, travelled to his area together, and that the younger man married a girl from here and decided to stay. Johannes our uncle, moved on, perhaps being influenced to do so by the flowing reports of good land further south. These reports were sent back by the Scotch-Irish who, along with the Germans, were settling the interior parts of the original 13 colonies at that time. Thus, Johannes Steinseifer and his family went on, and eventually settled in Culpepper, Va. He was the immigrant ancestor of W.A. Stonecypher of Luceale, Mississippi who is very interested in family history and has been very helpful in supplying information for this History & Genealogy of the Stonesifer Family of Md. & Pa.

Sometime in 1754 our John Daniel married Anna Maria Sterner. Unfortunately, nothing is known presently of her parents or background. It seems likely that her family came to the area about the time he did. And it is also likely that she was one or so years younger than her husband, as was quite often the case at that time. Thus her year of birth would have been around 1733. The couple had 3 known children who were as follows: Martin, who was born around Mar. 5, 1755, then Anna Maria, who was baptized June 7, 1761, and lastly, Barbara who was probably born about 1765.

In early 1762 John Daniel was naturalized according to the then prevailing Maryland law. He and many others arrived in Maryland at a time when there was a great deal of anti-catholic sentiment. At first the Maryland colonial government required that to be naturalized one had to have lived in America for seven consecutive years and also sign an anti-Catholic oath of abjuration in a Provincial Court. Changes were made by the time our great, grandfather arrived.

He was meely required to present a certificate at the Provincial Court which was attested to by 2 witnesses that he had been administered a Protestant communion within the preceding 3 months. Thus it is recorded in Colonial Maryland Naturalizations by Jeffeey A. and Florence L. Wyland (an abstract of material from Provincial Court Judgement books at the Hall of Records in Annapolis) that "Daniel Steinstaeuffer - German" took communion in Frederick County in a Reformed place on April 4, 1762 and which was administered by Rev. Lischy and witnessed by Benjamin Swoope and Jost Runckel. The Provincial Court of Frederick then naturalized him April 14, 1762.

Anna Maria, the first wife of John Daniel, died around 1765. She was likely one of the first prsons to be buried at St. Mary's Lutheran and Reformed Church cemetery in Silver Run, and which was orgnized there on May 31, 1762. Practically non of the tombstones from that early time have survived.

Sometime during 1765, our great grandfather married for the second time to Maria Elizabeth Yingling who was born in 1744. She was the daughter of John and Margaretha Elenore Banckert Yingling who lived near Silver Run. Eventually this couple had 11 children whose names and dates of birth (as far as can be determined are as follows: Jacob - July 21, 1766, John - abt.1767, Henry Sept. 23, 1769, Peter - abt. 1770, Louise - abt 1771, Abraham - Sept. 10, 1772, Isaac - abt. 1776, Christina - abt 1778, Daniel - July 8, 1780, Elizabeth - Sept. 19, 1783, and Hannah - Sept. 29, 1787.

Two neighboring families of the Stonesifers were Martin and Anna Margaret Study, and Erhart and Maria Eva Baumgardner. From known associations among them, it appears possible that both wives may have been sisters of John Daniel.

John Daniel was supposed to have been an only child, and it was handed won that he left a considerable fortune behind him in Germany when he came here. It is probably that he left his native land for the same reason so many others had done so - reported wars in Europe which usually used Germany as a battle ground, leaving the people there helpless and hopeless. Tradition credits him with being a School teacher, a good singer, and one who often officiated as preacher in the absence of a pastor by conducting catachetical calles, delivering funeral sermons, etc. He was a devoted member of the German Reformed Church, and helped to establish St. Mary's Union Church in Silver Run where Lutherans and Reformed people worshiped together.

He was also a successful farmer in his time, and accumulated considerable real estate. On June 21, 1775 it was recorded in Deed Book BD 1, pages 655-657 in Frederick that "Daniel Stinesiver" had purchased from Martin Study, farmer, for "thirty nine pounds Pennsylvania currency" three pieces of land which were part of a larger tract of land called "resurvey of High Germany." in what was Frederick County, in Maryland. The three pieces of land consisted of 33 acres, 92 acres, and 25 acres - or around 150 acres in all. (John) Martin Study made his mark, but Daniel signed the agreement. The Agreement also stated that Daniel (he began to drop the John as time went on) would allow the use of a path over the property to and from other land of Martin Study's. This purchase became what was to be known in later years as the homestead plantation. Eventually John Daniel's land holdings totaled some 403 acres.

No records seem to remain as to what part our Stonesifer family may have played at the time of the Revolutionary War. Indirectly, however, we can fill in a big of the picture. We do know that two brothers of maria Elizabeth, the second wife of John Daniel, were members of the Maryland Associators in 1775. The Associators were the local militia units throughout the colony. It is very likely that Martin, the oldest son of John Daniel, would also have been in such a local unit and probably his father, too. In Vol. 18 of the Maryland Archives there are incomplete lists of soldiers who served in the Revolution. The introduction states that there are some missing, lists of soldiers and especially a list of those who composed the two companies who marched from Frederick Co. to the siege of Boston. It is quite possible that at least Martin Stonesifer's name may have been one. The likelihood that John Daniel himself would have joined such and expedition is remote because he had recently acquired a large plantation and also had several young children to l9ook after and provide for. Hopefully at some other time more specific information may come to light.

On April 11, 1792 an aggrement was made among a number of landholderrrs who were haveing property line disputes. One of the most vocal in the matter was Peter Erb, a near neighbor and friend of the Stonesifers. The dispute involved some eleven tract holders, of whom only two seemed to be causing all the trouble. It was all recorded and settled in Deed Book WR 13, page 135 on Mar. 26, 1795 in Frederick where it states that Daniel Stonesifer was a subscriber to the agreed settlement.

That same year on June 11, 1795, Martin Study and Daniel Stonesifer conveyed to Nicholas Dill (a local public official at the time) a tract of land to be held in trust for all concerned and the neighborhood in general as a public road for the sum of five shillings. This transaction was recorded in Frederick on Aug. 5, 1795 in Deed Book WR 13, page 433. Th land was a tract called "Resurvey of High Germany," and was probably a part of the road now passing through the area of the little town of Mayberry of today. Indications are that this was apparently the area of John Daniels home plantation.

John Daniel and Maria Elizabeth Stonesifer became quite prosperous in their later years. This led to their often helping out children, close relatives and neighbors when such persons needed a helping hand. On April 20, 1805 they sold to their son, Abraham Stonesifer, a tract of land of 102 1/4 acres for 500 pounds. It was part of a larger tract called "Ohio" and the transaction was

recorded in Frederick on May 27, 1805. From later estate papers of John Daniel and Maria Elizabeth it can be determined that they made various loans to quite a number of persons. These loans were made over a number of years to Fredrick Yingling, a brother of Maria Elizabeth, to Abraham and Jacob Bankert, first cousins of Maria Elizabeth and who were the sons of her Uncle Jacob Bankert (1716-1789), to Issac and Daniel Stonesifer, two of their sons, to John Bankert, a son-in-law who married their daughter Christina, and to Peter Bankert, also a son in law who had married their daughter Elizabeth. The names of several of the neighbors were mentioned as well.

The transition from the unsettled conditions of Europe to frontier America was a very successful one for our great grandfather. (the term great grandfather in all cases should have another two or three greats preceding it, depending on the degree of descent of the reader, but the shortened form has been used for the sake of brevity and ease of usage). Undoubtedly there was a great deal of hard work involved in carrying out "plantations", as farms and home sites were then called, from the natural state of the land. Yet in most cases our first family prospered, eventually consisting of fourteen children - eight sons and six daughters, whose names have been previously given. However, just as in all families, reversals did come periodically. The little daughter, Anna Maria, apparently died sometime in the late 1760's. Then in the last part of 1799 a son, John, died. That spring he had just started out on his own and had purchased a "plantation" near Taneytown. To survive him he left a widow and four children. A few years later the same scene was repeated. This time the oldest child in the family, Martin, passed away about 1805, (the exact year has been impossible to determine), and left a widow and six children. Although there is no written proof of it, it seems likely that John Daniel and Maria Elizabeth would have assisted these two families in any way necessary. Despite such setbacks John Daniel continued to have a firm hand on family affairs. It was not till Jan. 11, 1813 that he felt the need to write his will, at which time he did so, and signed it; apparently still vigorous for his age.

John Daniel died Aug. 9, 1813, and was buried in what is now the old cemetery at St. Mary's Church, Silver Run. He was aged 82 years, 8 months and 9 days. Maria Elizabeth, his wife, died around Aug. 20, 1821, and she was also buried in the same place. She was aged 77 years. His tombstone still exists; no marker can be found for her.

 **Description:** From Hist. of Stonesifer family by Doyle Wilderson.