Essay on the Continuing Evolution of Our Haldeman History

Several years ago, I took up Aunt Betty's search for our lost GGGGF Christian Haldeman, his wife Susannah Spohn, and, in particular, his father John of Lancaster Pa. Finding records of these folks would hopefully allow us to connect our branch of the family tree to some of the older generations that have been documented by others. Through a series of fortunate events and a remarkable resource; that goal has been advanced. It is a complicated story and Betty's remarkable book will be helpful in understanding this history. Before reading any further, please get your little red book and warm up your internet browser, there is quite a story to our family.

First let us review the easy stuff. Stuff, I'm certain you can recite from memory.

- o Hershel b 1886 and Bea (Dobson) b 1892 were the children of Samuel and Elizabeth Davies
- Samuel b 1852 and his twin brother Edward along with Mary (Reasoner) b 1843 and Ardelia (Gigax) were the children of Dr. John Spohn Haldeman and Abigail Williams
- Dr John Spohn Haldeman b 1818 and his sister Caroline bc 1835 (Steele) were the children of Christian b 1792 and Susannah Spohn b 1793 both of Lancaster County. Dr John was an accomplished physician and a published biography (red book pg 14) stated that his grandfather John, was also from Lancaster.

This is where Betty hit a bit of a dead-end. As she discovered and I have confirmed, there are ample John Haldemans born in Pennsylvania between 1700 and 1780 but none with a son named Christian born circa 1792. Failing to find this John left us with three possibilities: we hadn't yet found the right record, there were no records (which could mean we came from a Mennonites line or another sect that shunned church records) or the least likely, we were looking for the wrong person.

Our first breakthrough was through an acquaintance in Maryland, but first, allow me to digress and to establish an appropriate context.

Elaine and I living in Columbia Maryland circa 1980 and we go out to buy a Christmas tree. Being of frugal Swiss-German stock we shop for several hours before finding a THE tree. Going to "settle-up" I came face to face with a "ringer" for our Uncle Art. Turns out this guy is also a Haldeman; he has a tree farm in Lancaster and because we were family he overcharged us and insisted on cash. I knew at that point we were somehow related. Fast forward to 2004 where I posted a question about Dr John Spohn on a geneological website and receive in return an e-mail from a Patty Haldeman Wise. We exchanged some information and she forwarded me some information her cousin had received from a lady named Betty Slocum. I explained my relationship to Betty, described her work and we discussed our missing John. She shared portions of her linage and revealed her ancestors were also from the Lancaster area. She went on to ask something to the effect: *Did I believe I was going to find some long lost relatives*? I responded in typical Haldeman fashion...with a tongue in my cheek....and mentioned running into the Uncle Art look alike while buying a Christmas tree. It turns out that we had bought that tree from her father.

Patty is the remarkable resource. She began helping us by looking for our Christian b 1792. Through her efforts we located three Christian Haldemans living in Lancaster County per the 1820 census. None had a father named John but one did live "down the street" from a Gottlieb Spohn. A parallel search then produced that Gottlieb was Susannah's brother. It seemed to be a reasonable operational assumption that this Christian was our best suspect. He was the right age, had access to Susannah and with respect to his age he clearly also had motive. This Christian and his brother, Jacob (who is Patty's 4GF), were thought to be sons of another Christian Haldeman who had moved his family to Shenandoah Va. Christian and Jacob were his oldest sons and they remained in Lancaster. (Subsequent research found that the Christian who moved to Va. had a family of 10, including, another wrong John).

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There is a web site called Haldeman Hollow (www.scioto.org/halterman/lineages) that has a plethora of information. On that site, there are several deeds posted. One shows a Christian and Eve selling 150 ± 150 acres of Lancaster land in 1797, land that was formally owned by a John Haldeman. Although this looked quite promising this John is not our Christian's father, however, the deed will but support a theory that will emerge in a couple paragraphs.

In the back of the little red book in the insert is a two sided chart. The one side contains many people that you know and is correct back to the Christian and Susannah Spohn generation. Now turn the chart over and look for Jacob's oldest son Christian. There is little information known about this man but we now know this Christian was b 1745 in Lancaster, and is the one who moved to Shenandoah Va. in 1784 with his wife Eva. Christian and Eva purchased and sold land in Virginia until his death circa 1803. As you will recall, his two oldest children, (Christian and Jacob) remained in Lancaster

This is where it gets fun:

On June 28, 2005, I visited the Lancaster Historical Society and asked to review their Haldeman file. The archivist produced a four inch thick file of loose papers accumulated over the last thirty plus years. There were newspaper clippings about some Megan Haldeman winning a softball game, articles about other notable Haldemans, letters from people looking for Haldeman relations, research papers and notes by other members of this obsessed (and as some of our spouses may say; obsessive) clan. I'm reading through these papers and learn that General Haldimand, commander of all the King George's troops in Canada came to Lancaster to visit his relative Jacob and offered to adopt one of Jacob's children as his heir (Jacob and many others were soon to become Americans and he apparently declined the offer). I turn another page and find a letter from a Mrs. E. Gard Slocum of Glen Haven Drive Pittsburgh. She had stopped by two year ago (1976) but the Society was closed for renovations and she was wondering if A pencil note in the margin indicated the society responded to her requests by sending her a copy of the chart pocketed in the back of the book entitled "Descendents of Jacob Haldeman".

The very next page in the file, filed next to Betty's letter, in the handwritten scrawl of another researcher were two lists of children of two Christian Haldemans. The first list starts Christian, Jacob and lists 10 children in total. The second list was titled Children of Christian and Eve Souder m 9-29-1789. The list of children begins: *John b 1790 – Perry Co. Pa* followed by *Christian 1792 – to Ohio 1830s* and continues down to child number 14.

Betty had our Christian b 1793 moving to Ohio 1828 but as the son of John not Christian. Nevertheless, this reference was just too close to ignore. I wrote to Patty again. She responded immediately and confirmed the first list was the family of the Christian and Eva who moved to Shenandoah Va. The second list was new to her but the name Eve Souder was remarkably close to a reference she had as Eve Sando, the wife of the Christian who stayed in Lancaster when his father moved the family to Va.. Considering this information, we postulated the following history:

Jacob b 1722 & Maria Miller
Christian b 1745 & Eva ___
Christian b 1767 & Eve Souder
Christian b 1792 /3 & Susannah Spohn
Dr. John b 1819 & Abigail Stevens Williams
Samuel b 1852 & Elizabeth Davies
Hershel b 1886 & Edna Digby

This proposed line is credible with respect to the age of parents in each generation and each link has some historical documentation to tie it to the adjoining generations, (although we are leveraged from some anonymous handwritten notes). It does not have the complete "primary sources" that researchers want to validate the line and tie it directly to established records. Unbeknownst to me Patty (who is now a distant cousin, explaining why she is so helpful) had sent the information I transcribed to 12 other Haldeman researchers. Twenty-four hours later we received notice from one; that a Dauphin

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Township (Harrisburg) orphan's court record had confirmed that Rudolph Souder's surviving daughter Eve had married a Christian Haldeman in 1789. So we move closer although we're not there yet, and we still have Dr. Johns' biography stating his grandfather's name was John not Christian

Allow me to pause here and again refer to the Haldeman Hollow web site where under the Direct Line section there is a line of Haldemans headed by Casper Haldeman born circa 1645 in Switzerland. If you were to scroll through this line of Haldemans, you will see Casper (aka Gaspard) is the father of six including Hans and Peter and is the grand father of Jacob b 1722 (the gentleman who turned down the offer of the King's general and led the local resistance to the British during the revolutionary war) and whom is referenced above as the patriarch of our line. There is some uncertainty over who was John's father (Hans or Peter) but most sources have Peter as the father. Jacob is also the father of the famous John Haldeman of Locust Grove (see page 124 of the red book for a drawing of the still existing mansion or better yet go to www.haldemanmansion.org) for photos and bits of Haldeman history. This John was father to the famous biologist John Steman Haldeman (page 126 of red book). Clearly, I digress, so to get back on point, if we have correctly assembled our portion of the line (and I believe we have) Casper is also Hershel's G-6 Grandfather and our line will ultimately become attached to his through Jacob's eldest son Christian.

Casper bc 1640 & Margretha Herrenschwander
Peter d 1731 & Tyree Grissom Nickols (arrived in America c 1718)

Jacob b 1722 & Maria Miller
Christian b 1745 & Eva
Christian b 1767 & Eve Souder
Christian b 1792 /3 & Susannah Spohn
Dr. John b 1819 & Abigail Stevens Williams
Samuel b 1852 & Elizabeth Davies
Hershel b 1886 & Edna Digby

Even with confidence expressed in the line, how do we resolve the biographical reference to John? Well I consulted Patty on the land sale (mentioned above) and she confirmed that the former owner of that property mention in the transfer was Jacob' second son, John of Locust Grove (the famous one just mentioned above). Since Jacob's mysterious first son Christian had moved to Va., John was the oldest living Haldeman in Lancaster and one of its wealthiest citizens. Young Christian b 1767, John's nephew, was 17 when his father left for Virginia. So what does a 17 year old do? Does he purchased a plot of nearby land from his Uncle John, marry the neighbor Susannah Spohn; have a child (Dr John) and then (for reasons not known) move to Ohio (when Dr .John was only nine). Much later, after this child has become the successful Dr John Spohn Haldeman, he helps someone assemble his biography and his nine year old recollection has John as his grandfather rather than his grandfather's brother. After considering this scenario, I feel fairly certain my G8 Grandfather Casper will forgive him.

I think this is our story and I'm sticking to it. There are still several pieces in need of documentation if someone wishes to step up and further advance this research. I would urge all of you visit the web sites referenced above and to return often to the little red book, this profound treasure that has been endowed to the family. After the research I have undertaken, I remain astounded by how accurately Betty has assembled and distilled a considerable quantity of information into this source (and she did so without an internet connection).

I have attached a map locating our ancestor's homesteads (I stopped by the mansion last month looking for some relative ghosts). I am also working up an expanded generational record as an excel workbook. Should anyone want a copy, please send me any names births, deaths, and marriages not included in the little red book or corrections to the information therein and your e-mail address. I will include that information in the workbook and issue periodic copies as the expanded information warrants. Hope this has been of interest.

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