

# Dreisbach Family Association Newsletter

*In the Name of God. Amen*  
*I, Simon Dreisbach of Allen Township*

March 2016 ©

Numerous documents concerned with the death of Simon Dreisbach Jr have been preserved, including his handwritten will and the estate proceedings. They provide a wealth of information about his life and that of his family as well as a picture of his house and living conditions in the last year of his life.

**What was life like for Simon Jr in his last year?** We have some hard facts about Simon Jr's life and his house, the most valuable being the two complete inventories of its contents – more information than we have about any other early Dreisbach! In addition there are useful tax and census records. Using these and some general information, it's possible to draw a reasonably accurate picture of Simon Jr and his family in 1806 – the year he died.

**First, a little history.** In 1773, after the death of his wife, Maria Dorothea, in childbirth, Simon married Anna Maria, the widow of Daniel Gucker. Shortly after this the newlywed couple and 8 of his 11 children moved to the Gucker farm in Allen Twp. The two oldest children, John (22) and John George (18) plus their 15 year old brother, Jacob, stayed behind to run Simon's first farm and his tannery in Lehigh Twp. Northampton Co., PA.



Fig. 1. This 200 year old log cabin is similar to the kind of small log house that Gucker would have built. The exterior of even this small house was weather boarded with vertical boards. Photo by M. Falconer 2010.

The Gucker house that awaited Simon Jr and his family in Allen Twp. must have been a tight fit. Anna Maria and Daniel Gucker had no children, so their log house would have been far too small for the Dreisbach family which included Peter (17 years), Adam (13), Elizabeth (12), Daniel (10), Sophia (8), Magdalene (7), Catherine (5) and little Susanna (3). To remedy this, Simon built

a two story log house with, for that time, fairly generous proportions of 35 feet x 22 feet.<sup>1</sup> We don't know what happened to the original Gucker house. It may have been demolished, or incorporated into Simon's new house, or it may have remained as an extra building.

**The dimensions of log houses** at that time were determined by the size of the trees used to build them. A 20 foot beam was standard and many houses measured 20 feet on one side. If a house had a center beam, the span could be longer. From the measurements of Simon's house, we know it must have had a center beam. It also would have had horizontal or vertical weatherboards on the outside to cover the logs<sup>2</sup>. This protected the logs and the chinking (the mortar between the logs) and provided some insulation.

**The floor plan of Simon's house is difficult to guess.** Pennsylvania German log cabins typically had two or three rooms on the ground floor, but in the 1770's, Simon had many Scots-Irish neighbors who were building houses with 4 rooms and a center hall. Which floor plan would Simon Jr choose?

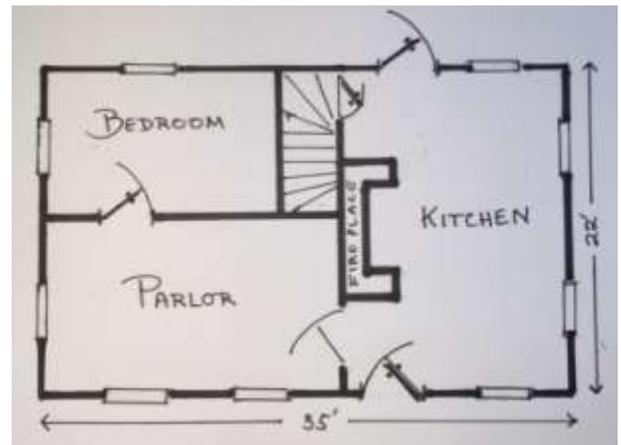


Fig. 2. A possible floor plan for Simon Jr's house. Drawing by M. Falconer.

**Two clues about the floor plan.** The first clue is the dimensions. At 35 feet wide and 22 feet deep, it is unlikely the house had only two rooms on the first floor, yet four rooms and a center hall would result in rooms that were too small to be useful. The dimensions best fit a plan with three rooms on the ground floor. This is a typical Pennsylvania German floor plan<sup>3</sup> where an off center door<sup>4</sup> leads into the kitchen. The kitchen itself is a long room that runs to the back of the

house and has a back door. A large fireplace is in the center of the kitchen on the interior wall. Adjoining the kitchen is the parlour and behind it was the master bedroom.

**The second clue to the floor plan** lies in the heating method. Simon's inventory mentions two, iron, ten-plate stoves. These are much like today's wood stoves in that they sit away from the wall, give off a great deal of heat, and are connected by a pipe to a chimney. Where were these stoves located? One was certainly in the parlor. The other probably was in the kitchen and may sometimes have been used for cooking even though cooking was certainly done in the fireplace as well.



*Fig. 3. A cast iron ten-plate stove. The top surface got hot enough to boil water and could be used for cooking. Google images.*

Based on these facts and a bit of guesswork, we can suggest that Simon had a two story log house, with exterior horizontal siding and three rooms on the main floor. The second floor was the sleeping area and it probably was divided to accommodate his large family.

**Simon's house and furniture:** When Simon was active in politics, he spent a good deal of time in Philadelphia and saw homes with elegant panelled interiors and beautiful furniture. This must have influenced the way he decorated his house in Allen Twp. There can be little doubt that the interior walls of his house were plastered and painted. In addition, the parlor walls may well have had wooden panels which were painted in light grey, blue or green.<sup>5</sup>

Simon was engaged in financial matters and ran a tannery.<sup>6</sup> To accommodate his business transactions, he needed an office. The house was too small to have a room dedicated for this purpose, so he must have used the parlor. From the inventory of the estate, we know

that he had a treasured desk, a clock, a corner cupboard, a wing table and chairs. At least some of these pieces must have been purchased in Philadelphia and were similar to those Simon had seen in the elegant houses there. They would have been in his parlor, making it a pleasant place to do business.

The inventory indicates there were 3 tables and 14 chairs, 7 of which were Windsor chairs. This many were needed because of the number of people sitting down for meals. There would have been 9 or more at the table, not counting guests.



*Fig. 4. Simon's Windsor chairs may have looked like these made by Joseph Henzey of Philadelphia, between 1785 and 1790. (Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum, 5105 Kennett Pike, Wilmington, DE 19735.)*

**Upstairs in the house:** Most Pennsylvania German houses did not have open staircases. The stairs were fitted into a kind of closet, usually at the far end of the kitchen.<sup>7</sup> They may have originated in an effort to keep the heat in the living area rather than allowing it to rise up the stairs into the second floor. It is quite likely that Simon's house had a staircase like this.



*Fig. 5. Typical enclosed staircase of a Penna. German farmhouse in the 1700's and early 1800's.<sup>8</sup>*

The inventory indicates that there were “4 old beds and bedsteads” along with 6 bedticks (cloth bag mattresses filled with hay). One of the bedsteads and a bedtick must have been in the downstairs bedroom of Simon and Anna Maria, while the rest were upstairs. Who slept in them?

We have not yet discussed Simon’s four deaf and dumb children – and we will meet them soon. For now what you need to know is that the upstairs sleeping space was shared by *John George* and his wife *Sophia Jung*; *Adam* and his wife *Catherine Leidig*; along with their brother *Daniel* and their sister, *Sophia*, plus *Sophia*’s little daughter. The second floor may have been divided into four bedrooms to accommodate the couples. Or there may have been only 3 bedrooms and somebody slept in the kitchen as was often done. In any case, quite a few people were sleeping on the second floor!



Fig. 6. Typical bed and bedroom of 1800. Photo courtesy of <http://chambersarchitects.com/blog.html?start=42>

So there we have it – in 1806, Simon Jr’s house was full of people. Among them all, probably his 9 year old granddaughter Elizabeth, brought him the most joy. (more about her in a bit).

**Who worked for Simon Jr?** As Simon aged, it clearly became more difficult for him to keep the books and accounts so he hired three clerks, John Palmer, Jonas Harzell and John Daniel Paquet to do this for him. Palmer and Harzell are local people but Paquet is not a common name in the area. Searches turned up no additional information about him. We know that Simon and Anna Maria also had household help. Two 'servants', Barbara Merckle and Elizabeth Meyer are paid £25 and £10, respectively, out of the estate money in 1807.

**Writing the will on March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1806 – a possible scenario:** It’s a Tuesday morning in Allen Twp. Simon Jr knows he will not see live to see another spring and

asked his good friend and neighbor, Jacob Hiestand, to come and witness his will. Simon has also asked his clerk, John Daniel Paquet, to be present. It will be the clerk’s job to write down the will as Simon dictates it.

Simon has been ill for some time. One can imagine him sitting in the parlor with a blanket over his shoulders, the grandfather clock ticking in the background. Sun comes through the windows but there also is a fire in the ten plate stove, making the room almost unbearably warm. Simon is frail. The welfare of his deaf and dumb children after he dies, has been consuming his thoughts, and so he has gathered his strength to attend to this most important business.

Jacob Hiestand and Paquet arrive. Jacob greets his old friend warmly, Paquet greets Simon formally. Jacob, who is also elderly, settles into a Windsor chair while Paquet seats himself at Simon’s desk. Family sounds in the rest of the house have been hushed. Paquet begins writing the formal introduction to wills: “In the Name of God, Amen”. Simon starts to dictate: “I, Simon Dreisbach, being in a weakly and infirm State of health in Body but of sound and disposing mind, memory and understanding, thanks be to Almighty God, do make and publish this my last Will and Testament...” Occasionally Simon looks at scribbled notes to remind himself of what the will must include.



Fig. 7. This is not a picture of Simon Jr’s desk, but his desk may have been similar. Chippendale ca. 1780. Google images.

Anna Maria appears with hot coffee, an expensive drink in Allen Twp. Simon had become fond of coffee at the City Tavern in Philadelphia. Frequented by politicians, it had one room specifically devoted to serving coffee and introduced the drink to many.

The three men finish their coffee and return to the job at hand. When the will is finished, Simon painfully signs his name and affixes his seal. Jacob Hiestand and John Daniel Paquet sign their names as witnesses and the job is done. It is a relief to Simon Jr. He has given a great deal of thought to providing for his four deaf children and his young granddaughter and now has done his best for them. That the instructions in the will are followed is in the hand of God.

**Increasing infirmity:** After making his will, Simon has another eight and a half months to live, something that probably surprises him. We can see Simon's increasing infirmity by comparing his signatures: top) written in 1780 when he was well; middle) his signature on the will in March 1806; and bottom) his signature eight months later on a codicil added to the will shortly before he died.

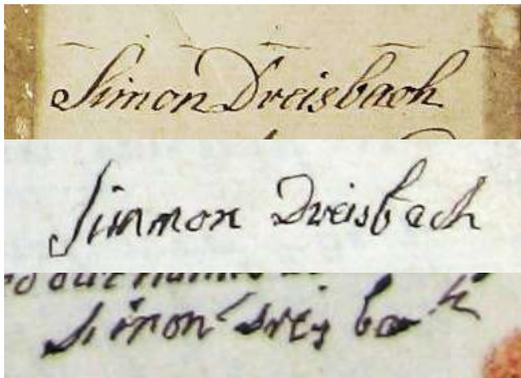


Fig. 8. Signature of Simon Dreisbach Jr.: Top: in 1790, Middle: March 1806, Bottom: November 1806.

**Simon Jr's Will does not deal with his properties,** those were sold or disposed of shortly after making his will while Simon was still alive. Most of the will concerns provisions for his four deaf and dumb children and because of this, we will meet them now.

#### **Who were Simon's deaf and dumb children?**

Simon's own handwritten list of his children<sup>9</sup> identifies four as deaf and dumb. They are:

*John George (1756 - 1826)*

*Adam (1761 - 1842)*

*Daniel (1764 - d. after 1806)*

*Sophia (1766 - 1834)*

That four of Simon and Maria Dorothea's eleven children were born deaf must be the result of a recessive genetic mutation in both Simon and Maria Dorothea. In such a case, about one quarter of offspring show the mutation (i.e. are deaf), half are carriers but not deaf, and one quarter are neither carriers nor deaf.

**The oldest of the deaf children was John George** born on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1756 at the beginning of the French and Indian war. Just a month before his birth, Indians were attacking in Lehigh Township. There were rumors of possible trouble already that summer and fall. Simon's pregnant wife and two little boys most likely went to stay with her parents or her brother, both of whom lived closer to Philadelphia, in a much safer area. John George was probably born in one of these houses.

**Growing up,** John George had two hearing brothers, John and Simon III, who were, respectively, 4 and 2 years older than he was. He also had two younger hearing brothers, Peter and Jacob, who were 1 and 2 years younger than he was. We can expect that he (and they) developed some means of communication and that, in general, his boyhood was not too different from that of his brothers. This childhood experience may explain why John George went on to have a somewhat independent life, to marry, to have children and to serve in the Revolutionary War militia. As we will see, this was not the case for the other two deaf sons of Simon Jr.

**Tragedy strikes:** When John George was 13, his older brother, Simon (the third), died on 9 May, 1769. This must have been devastating not just for John George, but for the whole family. And yet... the tombstone indicates that the death of the young Simon was something of a relief. A translation of his tombstone reads:

*Here lies in peace Simmon Dreisbach*

*Born the 19 day of May Anno 1754*

*Died the 9 day of May Anno 1769*

*My soul rejoices after (I was) release(d) from suffering*

The words suggest that the fifteen year old boy either had an accident which caused his death but not until he had suffered a great deal – or – he was ill with a disease which caused suffering.



Fig. 9. Tombstone of Simon Jr's fifteen year old son, Simon III. He was buried in the cemetery of the old church on Jost Dreisbach's land. His tombstone was moved and put into the monument raised in memory of the founders of "Zion Church" which is located in the old cemetery at Zion's Stone Church, Kreidersville, PA. Photo by M. Falconer 2010.

### It is 1774 and John George gains independence:

When Simon Jr moved to Allen Twp. in early 1774 he did not sell his Lehigh Twp. farm. Instead his oldest son, John (married to Catharine Nagle)<sup>10</sup> remained behind to run the farm and the tannery. John was recently married and the duties were many – he needed help. John George elected to (or was asked to) stay on at the farm to help his older brother. Their younger brother, Jacob, appears to have stayed to help as well.

Soon after his this, on June 10, 1774, John George married Sophia Young.<sup>11</sup> Their first son, Jost William Dreisbach was born 8 Jan. 1775, and their second son, Abraham Dresback (sic), was born 10 May 1777.<sup>12</sup>

**John George served in the Revolutionary War** militia from 1778 to 1782, attached to “Kromer’s” company from Moore Twp. and “Coon’s” company from Lehigh Twp.<sup>13</sup> This confirms that for a time, from 1774 to at least 1782, John George and his wife and children were living with or near his brother John on land that belonged to their father, Simon Jr. This property lay very close to the border between Lehigh and Moore Twps., which explains why John George served time in the militia of both townships.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Military Affairs		RECORD OF BURIAL PLACE OF VETERAN		Northampton County 3728	
NAME Dreisbach, John George		DATE OF BIRTH Jan. 31, 1756	DATE OF DEATH AUG. 1, 1826		
VETERAN OF Revolutionary		WAR	ARMY ( X )	NAVY ( )	MARINE ( )
DATE OF SERVICE May. 14, 1778-1781.	ORGANIZATION 4th Co. 4th Bn. "M. Kromer's"	GRADE 1782. 6th Co. 3rd Bn. Fred'k Coon's	CLASS End Class	NAME Private	
CEMETERY NAME Zion's Stone Church Cemetery		LOCATION Allen Township, Pa. (Kreidersville)			
LOCATION OF GRAVE OR CEMETERY SECTION Old Sec:		TABLET BRONZE Memorial Tablet			
LOT NO. Veterans Grave Registrar	GRADE NO. UN-KNOWN	SECTION NO. Served in Northampton County.	COMMISSION Militia in both Companies.	FAMILY ( )	
INFORMATION GIVEN BY DATE September, 4, 1940.		REMARKS Tablet erected by the D.A.R			
<small>After being recorded in the County Veterans' Grave Register, this Card is to be Sent to THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for Final Record.</small>					

Fig. 10. Burial Record of John George Dreisbach showing his Revolutionary War service.

**By 1790 John George had left Lehigh Twp.** and was living with Simon Jr and Anna Maria in Allen Twp.<sup>14</sup> The other deaf children were already living there and apparently had always lived with Simon and his wife. John George's brother, Jacob, also moved down from Lehigh Twp. about the same time and he was living with the large family as well!

John George, and his family continued to live on his parents' farm, even after Simon Jr died in 1806. On the first of August in 1826 John George died and was buried in the cemetery of Zion's Stone Church in Kreidersville, PA. His wife, Sophia, died in 1834. Her

tombstone has not been found. His children didn't stay around but moved west to Columbia Co., PA. and to Pickaway Co., OH.



Fig. 11.  
Tombstone of John George Dreisbach in the old part of Zion's Stone United Church of Christ cemetery, Kreidersville, PA. Unfortunately the text is illegible.  
Photo by M. Falconer, 2010.

**Adam Dreisbach was the second deaf child** of Simon Jr and Maria Dorothea. Born 2 May 1761, almost nothing is known about Adam, except that he was married to Catherine Leidig by Rev. Becker on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September, 1793, in the First Reformed Church of Easton, PA.<sup>15</sup> According to *The Dreisbach Book*, they had only one child, George William, b. 6 April 1794. To the best of our knowledge, Adam never lived independently, but instead lived with Simon Jr and Anna Maria until the farm was sold in 1836, ten years after her death. Where Adam lived from then until he died, 22 April 1842, is not known. He was buried in the cemetery of Zion's Stone Church in Kreidersville, PA. It is not known when his wife died, or where she is buried.

**Daniel, the third deaf child of Simon Jr,** was born 29 May 1764. Nothing else is known about him, not even his date of death. He is not listed in the *Burial Record of Zion's Stone Church*.<sup>16</sup> However he is recognized in Simon Jr's will and therefore lived at least until 1806 when the will was written. Apparently, like his brother Adam, he lived this entire time with his parents.

**Sophia, the fourth deaf child,** was born to Simon Jr on 1 Feb. 1766. Sophia lived on her parents' farm until she died in 1834. When she was 31 years old, Sophia had a daughter, Elizabeth, who was born out of wedlock on 25 Dec. 1797. Nowhere does Simon Jr say who the father was. *The Dreisbach Book*, with no acknowledged source, links Sophia to Frederick Bethold/Berthold. If this is true, then the father of Elizabeth was the husband of Sophia's cousin, Elizabeth!

**A tender spot for young Elizabeth.** Elizabeth was born when Simon was 67 and grew up in a house full of people who loved her. Exactly who was living with Simon and Anna Maria when the 1800 census<sup>17</sup> taker came to the house? Without names, we can only guess by their ages who was present. Certainly Simon and Anna Maria, were there. Her mother Sophia, her uncles John George, Adam and Daniel, and two unidentified boys, one under ten, the other 16 to 25 years old were also there. Finally two girls under the age of 10 are listed in the census. One is Elizabeth, the other could be a cousin or a local girl who was there as a playmate. It is important to note the census taker was supposed to list only permanent residents of a house but this was not always the case.

**Simon was determined** to give his 9 year old granddaughter the best possible life in spite of the community being aware of the girl's origins. The problem, he knew, would become critical when Elizabeth reached marrying age. Simon felt if he could not give her a legitimate birth, he could make sure that she was desirable from the point of upbringing, education and money. He did this with his last Will and Testament.

**The contents of Simon Jr's will:** Anna Maria, Simon's wife, is to receive £200 immediately upon Simon's death. She is to have specified furniture and continue to receive her dowry of £10 a year. Most importantly, she and the four deaf children, are to be allowed to live on the farm and farm it. Simon's sons, John, Peter, Jacob and his son-in-law George Butz are named as executors to see to this and they are not allowed to charge commission for executing the trust.

Further, from the money in the estate, each of the deaf and dumb children is to get £200 to be invested. The interest from this is to be used by Anna Maria to clothe and maintain them. Out of it they also may purchase such things as they want or need. When they die, the money is returned to the estate and divided equally among the hearing children. There is one exception to this – the £200 invested for Sophia is, after Sophia's death, to go to her daughter, Elizabeth. In addition, Elizabeth is to get £100 when she reaches the age of 18 and in the meantime "she shall be educated and brought up out of my estate in a decent and genteel manner, shall receive the necessary schooling and be taught plain needle work in all its branches." The 4 dumb children are also to receive his or her bed and bedding 'compleat' with all appurtenances belonging thereunto and all their clothing in the 'compleatest'.

After Ann Maria dies, the farm and personal property are to be sold for the best possible price. Out of the monies earned, £1200 is to be set aside for his deaf children and invested. The interest on this shall be paid in equal portions to each of them as long as they live. Any money left over from the sale of the farm, etc. after setting aside the £1200 is to be divided equally among Simon's hearing children.

Finally, Simon specifies that the four dumb children "may live at such places and with such friends or otherwise as to them and each of them may be most agreeable."

It is clear that Simon felt a big responsibility toward his deaf sons and daughter wanting them to have the best possible life. Society at that time did not consider deaf and dumb people to be responsible adults. The three deaf men do not appear on the tax lists and cannot own property. They are counted, however, in the census of 1790 and onwards.



*Fig.12. The former Presbyterian Church in Allen Township<sup>18</sup> which served the large Scots-Irish community but also held Reform Church services. This is the third building on the site and was built in 1813<sup>19</sup> after Simon Jr. died. Photo by M. Falconer 2010.*

**A codicil is added to the will** on 13 September 1806. In it Simon tells his "trusty friend, Jacob Hiestand" to take £12 from the estate and give it to the "Clark or the elders of the Prispiterian (sic) and reformed Church of Allen Township to be invested and the interest used for the benefit of the church forever. This is interesting because while Simon Jr was clearly part of Zion Stone Church Reform congregation in Kreidersville, he must have also attended services at the close by Presbyterian Church, going to Reform services when they were held there!

**A second codicil added to the will seems to disinherit a daughter.** On the 27th of November, 1806, Simon added a second codicil to his will. In it he specifies that to his daughter, Elizabeth, who is married to Hanickel Hower, "I only give ... all the Book Debt Due to me, which shall be in full for her portion of any further demand of my real or personal estate whatsoever." What happened between March and November that caused Simon to write this codicil?

While it appears that the codicil reflects a kind of disinheritance, this may not be true. In the end Simon's daughter's portion of the estate was £100.18.4, the amount that Nicholas Hower owed to Simon. This was not a small sum and it meant that Nicholas did not have to repay the estate. It also meant that the money went straight to Elizabeth - and became hers, and not that of her husband! Had she inherited the money in the same fashion as her sisters did, it might be that the money would legally belong to her husband.

**How did things turn out for Elizabeth the daughter of deaf Sophia?** Estate proceedings tell us that in 1808 Elizabeth's guardian was John Lerch and she was being tutored by Daniel Paquet. She was boarding with a Mr. and Mrs. J. G. Miller who charged the estate for 6 months board and also for paper and one reading book!<sup>20</sup>

In November 1809, her uncle by marriage, George Butz,<sup>21</sup> petitioned the court to be Elizabeth's guardian.<sup>22</sup> George Butz ran a tavern which may not have been the most respectable of homes for an illegitimate girl. Whether or not his application was approved is not known. We do know that Elizabeth did reach the age of 18 and did receive the £100 bequeathed to her by her grandfather. Her mother died in 1834 when Elizabeth would have been 33. If she was still alive at this time, she received another £200. Unfortunately we don't know if she survived until then, if she married or not, or if she had a happy life or not.

**Some ideas about Simon's funeral:** Payments made from Simon's estate to various people who rendered services just before and after Simon's death, provide information not usually available. From these we can get an idea of what transpired after Simon Jr died.

**The funeral:** As was the custom, just after death Simon's body would have been washed by male family members then put in a shroud (a loose nightdress made of white linen with long sleeves) which had been sewn by his son, Peter. His body was put into a wood coffin

made by a local man, Peter Miller, at a cost of £3.15, and which seems to have been brought to the house by Nicholas Neligh. The open coffin was placed on saw horses in the parlor. Members of the family sat "watch" over the body the night after death. This custom was practical because there was no other way of insuring that the person was actually dead and not just comatose.

Meanwhile, another local man, Thomas Rogers, had been engaged to print a notice of Simon's death, including the date of the funeral and place of interment. Simon's long time good friend, Conrad Kreider, distributed the notice.

Back at the house - for the day or two after Simon's death, visitors came to pay their respects to the family. There was no embalming. Dried herbs were crushed and placed in dishes in the parlor. Other herbs simmered in water placed in containers on the ten-plate stove in the kitchen to help to cover up the smell of death. The stove in the parlor was not lit to keep the room as cool as possible.

The date of Simon's funeral is not known. In cool weather, funerals were usually 3 to 4 days after death. In summer they were often held the day after death. On the day of the funeral, Rev. Vandersloot spoke with the family. The young Rev. Vandersloot had just arrived in Allen Twp. in 1802 to serve eight congregations including Zion's Stone Church and the Reformed Congregation that met in the Allen Twp. Presbyterian Church.<sup>23</sup>

Simon's funeral occurred at a time when traditions were changing. Earlier, funeral ceremonies were held in the home of the deceased but by 1806 the funeral service was sometimes held in the church. We do not know where the Rev. Vandersloot preached Simon's eulogy. What we do know is that at some point the coffin carrying Simon's body was put on a horse drawn wagon draped in black, or perhaps even an early hearse was used. His body was taken to Kreidersville for burial in the cemetery of Zion's Stone Church (now Zion's Stone United Church of Christ).

After the funeral there would have been a reception at Simon's house. Conrad Kreider, Simon's good friend, was an inn keeper in Kreidersville and seems to have helped Anna Maria arrange the reception which cost about £14. Exactly what this money was spent on is uncertain. In some places it was the custom to present gloves to the mourners and important people attending

the funeral, including the minister. However this had become an ostentatious show of wealth and by 1806 the idea of giving large numbers of presents was falling out of favor. The £14 would have been sufficient to provide gifts to immediately family members and important people. However, judging by this amount of money, Simon's funeral would not be considered an elaborate affair.

At the reception there would have been much food and drink, all of it supplied by the family and friends. Simon's son, Jacob, was a distiller<sup>24</sup> who could have supplied whiskey for free (or at cost). Anna Maria's larder would have produced cakes and other food, while Simon's daughters and neighbours brought traditional funeral foods including a Pennsylvania German "funeral pie" made of raisins.

**Doctor and tombstone engraver:** One of the more humorous, or macabre, payments made by the estate were those to a doctor with a conflict of interest. Dr. Eberhard Freitag, (sometimes Anglicized to Friday) presented his goodly bill of £18.9 to Simon's estate for "Physicians services". However Dr. Friday billed the estate again, this time for a service that was useful if patients didn't respond well to his medical care. He also was a tombstone engraver! Friday billed for the engraving and painting of Simon's tombstone. The text on the tombstone is beautifully carved and must have been a difficult job because he charged the fairly hefty sum of £8.16.9! From the bill we know that the lettering was painted to enhance legibility. It may have been done with black paint or even gilded, which could explain part of the expense.



Fig. 13. Tombstone of Simon Dreisbach Jr in the cemetery of Zion's Stone United Church of Christ, Kreidersville, PA. Photo by M. Falconer, 2010.

**The tombstone text:** It's quite possible that Simon wrote the text for his own tombstone. It has all the characteristics of a man with many accomplishments. Today the letters are being eroded away and parts have disappeared so one has to make an educated guess about some words. Fortunately we have German cousins, Martin Dreisbach and Andreas Sassmannshausen, who deciphered the old German text.

Here is the translation - amended a bit from the one that our cousins sent in order to use English grammar and phrases. The words in parentheses are implied but not written in the tombstone text.

*Sofly  
resting in the grave  
are the earthly remains of  
Simon Dreisbach, Esq.  
He lived and labored for the wellbeing of his country,  
(for which he) offered up many years of faithful service  
and likewise a part of his best Energies:  
(He) treasured, honored and furthered Christianity  
and brought blessings to this Congregation  
with care, fidelity and upright Zeal  
(He fulfilled) a long series of years in the office of an  
experienced, meritorious Elder:  
Courageous, he won (his) final battle,  
Fervently praying, full of hope, as a Christian.  
He was born the 18th Feb. 1730  
in the county (of) Wittgenstein,  
in Oberndorf. Died in 1806 the 17th December  
Aged 70 Years, 9 Months.  
His funeral text was Job, Chap. 7 v. 12*

**Jacob becomes main executor of the will:** After Simon's death, Jacob Hiestand, declined to serve as a trustee as Simon had wished.<sup>25</sup> Hiestand gave his advanced age and infirmity as reasons for declining. Simon's son Jacob, took over the role of chief executor. All the extant estate file documents are written and signed by him. None are signed by John, Peter or any of the others mentioned in the will. Before the value of the estate could be known, there had to be an inventory of Simon's belongings as well as his debts and monies owed to him. This inventory of "all singular the good and chattels" is what has provided us with an amazing glimpse into the life of Simon and Anna Maria.<sup>26</sup>

**A picture of Simon in his later years:** According to the tax rolls, Simon was among the wealthier men in Allen Twp. In 1805, eighty people in the township paid tax. Simon is in the top 10% of wage earners. Only eight men paid more than Simon Jr, and only two of these paid significantly more. He certainly would have been considered well-off, yet by today's standards, he did not have a lot of clothing.

**From the inventory** we know he owned two hats (one old and one new), 2 pairs of shoes, 2 pairs of britches (knee length trousers with buckles, ties or buttons at the bottom), and 2 pairs of stockings to go with them, 8 shirts and 5 coats. The coats must have included an everyday winter coat, but will also have included coats that accompanied the shirt-britches-stockings set worn by Simon as a politician in Philadelphia in the 1770's and 1780's. He also had 2 pairs of trousers. At that time, trousers were worn only on the frontier and by working men. These must have been Simon's everyday clothing before he fell ill.

*Fig. 14. Left: britches, stockings, shirt, coat from about 1780. Wikipedia.*

*Right: shirt with leather trousers. These were worn by working men and on the frontier. Simon had two pairs of these. <http://www.lafnmoon>.*



**Inventory of house and farm contents**<sup>27</sup> was made on 27 January 1807 and gives a very good picture of what was inside Simon's two story house. We already know about the beds, stoves, chairs, desk, corner cupboard and clock. But Simon also had a stock of books consisting of a large Bible and a small Bible for taking to church, Guthrie's Grammar, 5 other books as well as 13 'old books'. There were 3 spinning wheels, a dough trough, a butter churn, 13 'case knifs [knives], and 17 forks and more household items and tools. He had 1 rifle and one smooth bore gun. As far as drinks –Simon had 6 barrels of cider and 4 barrels of whiskey!

**Animals on Simon's farm:** The will lists 8 cows, 2 yearling cattle, 3 yearling heifers, 4 calves, and 11 sheep, 1 Bay mare, 1 Black bald-faced horse, 1 three year old horse, 1 brown old mare, 1 two year old colt, 1 black blind mare and 1 other black blind mare, 23 hogs

and shoats and 6 hives with bees. The two blind mares were used in the tannery to push a heavy stone around a small circular course to grind bark for tanning hides (see March 2016 issue of DFA newsletter. In the barn Simon kept 1 old sleigh, 1 wagon and body, 1 old wagon, and 1 old stage wagon with gees.

**A picture of the tannery:** At the time of his death, Simon's tannery was in full operation as shown by the inventory of tools, hides, and animals. The will names: 1 draw knife, 7 currying knives, 3 barking knives, 2 fleshers and 3 workers, 3 dung forks and 3 pitch forks, 2 malls. In the tannery at the time of Simon's death were 48 hides in the tan vats, 32 sides of leather, 3 dozen calf skins, 5 sides of horse hide, and 2 rough hides.

**Simon's wife, Anna Maria,** outlived him by many years. She continued to live on in the farmhouse with her deaf stepsons providing the work force to keep the farm going. We don't have an exact date of death for Anna Maria, nor a known burial place, but a second inventory was conducted in June 1826 after her death, giving us an approximate date of her death as early 1826.<sup>28</sup> She would have been eighty years old.

After her death a second inventory was conducted by Peter Laubach and David Deshler and filed in June 1826 although the farm itself was not sold for ten more years! The executor at this time was a Daniel Dreisbach (1782-1853). He was a grandson of Simon Jr and the oldest son of John Peter (who had died 16 Aug 1810).

The 1826 inventory is not too different from the one done in 1807. There is "a lot of Sole and Uper lether" and "A lot of boxes and barrels with Salt". There are barrels of cider and two barrels of whiskey. There are now three sleighs, before there was only one old sleigh. The inventory also lists many yards of flax cloth and flax growing in the ground - clearly this was one of their commercial crops. There were 3 horses, 1 mare and 1 colt, 7 cows, 18 sheep, 11 hogs, 2 sows with 18 piglets. In short, although not as prosperous as when Simon Jr was alive, it was still one of the better farms in Allen Twp.

**The farm is sold:** The farm was not sold until 10 years after Anna Maria's death (see p.6 DFA Newsletter, March 2016). Who was living there during this time? It may have been Sophia, Daniel and Adam. All of Simon Jr's hearing sons had died.

Fig. 15. Barrels were used to store everything from whiskey and cider to apples and salted ham.  
<http://www.barrelsunlimited.com>



**What happened then?** After the sale of the house and its contents, the estate was distributed according to Simon Jr's will. Those listed in red were still alive and entitled to their portion of the estate. It's unclear if the remainder of the estate was distributed just to the survivors, or if the estates of the dead children received their portion of Simon's money. In any case, at the time of the final distribution of the money from the estate in 1837:

*John*, the tanner from Lehigh Twp, had died in September 1825.

Deaf *John George* had died in August 1826.

*John Peter* died already in 1810.

*Jacob* was dead, having died in 1817.

Deaf *Adam* was alive and lived until 1842.

*Elizabeth Hower* died in 1833.

Deaf *Daniel* died after 1806.

*Sophia Dreisbach* died in 1834.

*Mary Catherine Butz* was alive until 1849.

*Susanna Deshler Lynn* lived until 1851.

*Maria Magdalena (Molly) Hagenbuch* died in 1846.

**In retrospect:** Simon Dreisbach Jr was a successful immigrant. Arriving in 1743 as a 13 year old, he adapted well to his new country. At home both in German and English, he was also comfortable both in the country and the city. A self-taught man who helped to build a church, he was an ardent patriot serving in the fledgling Pennsylvania government during the Revolutionary War. The father of 11 children, he showed particular concern for his four deaf and dumb children. He was a farmer, a tanner and a business man. His life spanned both the ocean and the time between frontier settler and established gentleman. In short, he was an amazing man with an amazing life.

**You can view some of these documents:** Photographs of Simon Jr's handwritten will, the 1807 inventory of his estate and the text on his tombstone can be accessed at the Dreisbach Family Association website:  
<http://www.dreisbachfamily.org>

<sup>1</sup> *United States Direct Tax of 1798: Tax Lists for Pennsylvania*. M352 microfilm. Records of the Internal Revenue Service, 1791-2016, Record Group 58. National Archives and Records Administrations, Washington, D.C. accessed through Ancestry.com, *Pennsylvania, U.S. Direct Tax Lists, 1798*.

<sup>2</sup> Foster, Gerald, *American Houses, a Field Guide to the Architecture of the Home*. Houghten Mifflin Co, 2004. p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 62.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 137.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 122 and 127.

<sup>6</sup> Dreisbach Family Association Newsletter, March 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Van Ravensway, C., *The Arts and Architecture of German Settlements in Missouri: A Survey of a Vanishing Culture*, Un. Of Missouri Press, 1977, p. 158.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> A very poor photo copy of this list is held in the library of the Lehigh Valley Historical Society. The original was in possession of William Fiedler who died in 2010. It is not known what has happened to this genealogical treasure.

<sup>10</sup> Dreisbach, A.G., Dreisbach, B.J., Dreisbach, Rev. C., *The Dreisbach Book*, privately published in 1998. There is an error in *The Dreisbach Book* with regard to the name of John Dreisbach's wife. Catherine Nagle is correct. She is named as the spouse of John Dreisbach in the will of Frederick Nagle.

<sup>11</sup> Dreisbach, Ardis Grosjean; Bruce Jack Dreisbach, Rev. Charles V. Dreisbach, *The Dreisbach Book*, Privately published, 1998. Date is given in *The Dreisbach Book* but the original source is not known to the author.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 86-102.

<sup>13</sup> Ancestry.com. Pennsylvania Veterans Burial Cards, 1777-2006, Series 1 (French and Indian War to WWII) Doyne to Dreisbach; George John Dreisbach.

<sup>14</sup> Ancestry.com. *1790 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Original data: First Census of the United States, 1790 (NARA microfilm publication M637, 12 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>15</sup> Kieffer, Rev. Henry Martyn, *Some of the First Settlers of the Forks of the Delaware*, Easton, PA., 1902. p. 345.

<sup>16</sup> *Burial Record of Zion's Stone Church*, published by the church, 1 July 1940.

<sup>17</sup> Ancestry.com. *1800 United States Federal Census* [database on-line]. Original data: Second Census of the United States, 1800. NARA microfilm publication M32(52 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>18</sup> Located on the north side of Route 329 just east of Seemsville Road, Allen Township, Northampton Co., PA.

<sup>19</sup> Heller William J. *History of Northampton County (Pennsylvania) and the Grand Valley of the Lehigh*. Vol. 1, Am. Historical Society., N.Y., 1920, p. 45

<sup>20</sup> Estate File # 2513, The Second Account of Jacob Dreisbach, one of the Executors of the Last Will and

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Testament of Simon Dreisbach", Northampton County Archives, 999 Conroy Place, Forks Twp, PA.

<sup>21</sup> See Dreisbach Family Association Newsletter, Feb. 2015.

<sup>22</sup> Orphans Court Files, File #24, Folder #1599, Northampton County Archives, 999 Conroy Place, Forks Twp, PA.

<sup>23</sup> Heller, William J, Op. Cit. (Volume 2) p. 486.

<sup>24</sup> Allen Townships tax assessment of 1805. Northampton County Archives, 999 Conroy Place, Forks Twp, PA.

<sup>25</sup> Orphans Court, File #24, Folder 1599, Northampton County Archives, 999 Conroy Place, Forks Twp, PA.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Estate File, Simon Dreisbach 1807, File # 2513, Northampton County Archives, 999 Conroy Place, Forks Twp., PA.

<sup>28</sup> A copy of the inventory can be found on the Dreisbach Family Association website at:

<http://www.dreisbachfamily.org>