

Biographical Annals of Cumberland County, Pennsylvania; Containing Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens and of Many of The Early Settled Families. Illustrated. Chicago: The Genealogical Publishing Co., 1905.



John Zeamer. On Nov. 9, 1738, there arrived at the port of Philadelphia from Rotterdam a ship named the "Charming Nancy." She was commanded by Charles Stedman and among the immigrants she had on board was one whose name was entered upon the official records as **Jeremiah Zamer**. It is not known whether this young German immigrant settled, but it is probable that it was in Brecknock Township, Lancaster County, for it is in that part of the country that he is next heard from. When, in 1752, Berks County was formed, the new county line divided Brecknock, making two townships of that name, one for Lancaster and one for Berks County. On April 11, 1763, this same immigrant, then a full-grown and mature man, was naturalized before Judges Allen and Coleman, at Philadelphia, and he was then entered upon the records as **Jeremiah Zimmer**, of Brecknock Township, Berks County.

Jeremiah Zimmer remained in Brecknock Township, Berks County, to the end of his days, and became the progenitor of numerous descendants, some of whom yet live in the vicinity in which he first settled. The public records show that the proprietaries of the Province in January, 1765, patented to him 218 acres of land, lying in Brecknock Township, 172 acres of which he in November, 1787, conveyed to his son, **Henry Zimmer**. A part of this same tract of land is still in his name, being owned and occupied by **Peter Ziemer**, a great-grandson.

Jeremiah Zimmer made his will on Nov. 20, 1793, which was probated in the Berks County courts on March 14, 1796, and recorded in German. In it his name is spelled **Ziemer**, which form all of his descendants yet living in Berks County, and some who live in other parts of the country, still prefer. In his will he names his son, **Heinrich**, whom he made his executor, a daughter, **Christina**, and a son-in-law, **Andrew Bogart**. The **Heinrich Ziemer** of the will is the **Henry Zimmer** to whom **Jeremiah Zimmer** in 1787 deeded 172 acres of land.

Henrich Ziemer married **Catharine**, and had issue five children, named: **John**, born Feb. 5, 1773; **Henry**; **Catharine**, born March 17, 1776; **Jeremiah**, Jan. 25, 1778; and **Peter**, Nov. 21, 1778. **Heinrich Ziemer** died July 9, 1822; his wife, **Catharine**, died May 12, 1827, and both are buried in the graveyard of the Allegheny Union Church, in Brecknock. On his tombstone the name is **Johan Heinrich Ziemer**. **Jeremiah Ziemer (Zimmer, Zamer)** is likely also buried in the same graveyard, as it has been a place of interment for that section since in 1767, at which time the first church building was erected there. The subject of this sketch was a grandson of **Johan Heinrich Ziemer**, and was nine years old when his grandfather died. He cannot recall of ever having seen him, but remembers that he was nearly always spoken of by the name of **Henry** only. He better remembers his grandmother, who died five years later. After her husband's death she lived with **Peter**, her youngest son, and died in his home. **Johan Heinrich Ziemer**

was a large man, remarkable for his physical strength and great powers of endurance and stories concerning his feats linger yet among the traditions of the locality in which his lifetime was spent. **Jeremiah**, the fourth child of **Johan Heinrich Ziemer**, and grandson of **Jeremiah**, the immigrant, married **Regina Gephart**, also of Brecknock Township, but of whose family history little is known. They had issue as follows: **Catharine**, born in December, 1808, died in July, 1896; **Isaac**, born Aug. 27, 1810, died Feb. 24, 1883; **John**, born May 9, 1813; **Margaret**, Oct. 19, 1815, died March 1, 1892; **Henry**, March 2, 1819, died Feb. 21, 1899; and **Harriet**, born April 16, 1827. About the year 1822 **Jeremiah Ziemer** moved from Berks County to the vicinity of Churchtown, Lancaster County, where for ten years he engaged in farming as a renter. In 1832 he moved to a short distance west of Lancaster city, to a farm owned by **William Jenkins**, a Lancaster lawyer. There he lived for five years. In the spring of 1837 he removed to a farm on Conoy Creek, near Bainbridge, and the following spring to the vicinity of the ore banks on Chestnut Hill, in West Hempfield Township, where he lived for two years, and then removed to Cumberland County.

When **Jeremiah Ziemer** moved from Berks to Lancaster County his son **John** went to live with his uncle **Peter**, who then was in possession of the original **Ziemer** homestead, consisting of part of the land which **Jeremiah Ziemer**, the immigrant, obtained from the Penns in 1765. He remained with his uncle one year and then went to the home of his parents in Lancaster County. When near fourteen years of age he was hired to a neighboring farmer, with whom he remained one year. Next he hired with a farmer who had a team constantly on the road doing hauling to Philadelphia and other points. The driver of this team unexpectedly quit, and, as the boy **John** had proven himself handy with the farm horses, he was temporarily given charge of the road team. He first did hauling about home, and did it so well that his employer considered that it was safe to send him to Philadelphia with the team, and to Philadelphia he went. On his first trip, a neighbor, also driving a team, accompanied him and gave him some attention, but after that the boy drove regularly to Philadelphia and back without attention or assistance from any one. He remained with this employer nearly four years, teaming on the road almost constantly. As a result he grew up among horses, and horses and teaming became to him an infatuation that remained with him through all of his long lifetime. When he quit the services of the man who had initiated him into the art of team driving he went home, and through the following winter and spring drove his father's team between Churchtown and Philadelphia. It was while the family lived at Churchtown that the spelling of the name was changed from **Ziemer** to **Zeamer**.

During the five years the family lived in Lancaster, **John Zeamer** drove his father's team constantly. The railroad from Philadelphia to Columbia was then being built and he hauled much material for contractors engaged upon its construction. Columbia at that time was a great stopping place for rafts from the upper Susquehanna River, and the young teamster found much to do at hauling lumber from Columbia to Lancaster and Philadelphia, and whiskey from Lancaster to Columbia, whence it was shipped down the river in arks and up the river in canal-boats. He passed the most impressible period of his existence at Lancaster and absorbed so much of its life and activities that he became essentially a Lancasterian. In after years he in a large measure practiced Lancasterian methods and judged men and things by the Lancasterian standards.

At Bainbridge the pressure of farm work did not permit of much teaming on the road and his time was almost entirely occupied on the farm. On Chestnut Hill it was different. There the ore banks, that afterward became so famous, were being opened and afforded hauling to all the teams for miles around. A **Zeamer** team, driven by **John Zeamer**, was regularly on the road hauling ore to Columbia, whence it was shipped by river and canal to furnaces, and the fine appearance of the team, and the heavy loads it hauled, gave its driver a reputation that secured him a lucrative position with one of the wealthiest team owners on Chestnut Hill. This employer he served for eighteen months, by which time the family concluded upon another removal. For some time there had been a general trend of population to the westward, and while **Jeremiah Zeamer** and his oldest son were on a visit to some friends who had drifted into the Cumberland Valley they bought a farm in the northern part of Silver Spring Township, Cumberland County, to which they moved in the spring of 1840.

In wagoning to Philadelphia from Lancaster, **John Zeamer** became acquainted with two young teamsters from the vicinity of Marietta, named **William** and **Samuel Hartman**. They became friends, and afterward, when on a visit to Marietta in quest of some hauling, **John Zeamer** met **Samuel Hartman**, who, after giving him some attention, asked him to the home of his parents for supper. He accepted the invitation and it proved an epoch in his history, for on that occasion he met **Susanna**, sister of **William** and **Samuel Hartman**, who on April 12, 1838, at the hands of Rev. H. B. Shaffner, pastor of the Reformed Church at Marietta, became his wife. **Susanna Hartman** was the daughter of **Peter Hartman** and **Anna Maria Voneida**, his wife, and was born June 25, 1812, near Adamstown, Lancaster County. **Peter Hartman** in his early days was a cooper and later engaged in distilling. Through bailing friends he failed in business and to recuperate his fortune he changed his calling and location. He rented a farm on the Chickies Creek, south of Mount Joy, where he lived for several years, and then moved to a farm at the edge of Marietta, owned by **David Rinehart**. When his sons became young men they, too, became wagoners and did hauling to and from Philadelphia.

The farm which **Jeremiah Zeamer** bought in Silver Spring Township had upon it two houses, one located at its farther edge close by the foot of the North Mountain. Into that house **John Zeamer** moved with his wife and year-old babe early in the spring of 1840. Coming from a thickly populated section and settling in a secluded spot in a new country, where neighbors were few and all strange, was a radical transition, and years elapsed before they became reconciled to the changed conditions. Instead of driving a fine team on crowded turnpike roads **John Zeamer** was now chopping wood, splitting rails, building fences, digging ditches, quarrying stone and burning lime to fertilize the barren acres which his father had imprudently bought. He worked under the most discouraging circumstances, and when the prospect was at its darkest fell sick and came near dying. Medical skill and the careful, tender nursing of his devoted wife, however, brought him back to health and he lived to see happier days. After four years a neighbor whose confidence and respect he had won offered to rent him his farm. It was a tempting opportunity, but he hesitated, for he had not as much as five dollars toward buying stock and implements for the undertaking. But a way was found and in the spring of 1844 he began farming. **Jeremiah Zeamer** had an old gray mare that came over from the ore bank team on Chestnut Hill. He also had a black mare that was blind, and these two decrepit creatures **John Zeamer** bought to begin farming with, agreeing to pay for them \$25 each. On an equally cheap and simple scale he acquired cattle, sheep and implements, and when once he had got fairly started he found the

undertaking easier than he had anticipated. In four years' time he made sufficient progress on that little farm to rent a large farm in the lower end of the township, where he succeeded far beyond his expectations, accumulating stock and implements and reducing his indebtedness. After another four years he was able to rent a larger farm in the same neighborhood, but in the adjoining township of Hampden, where he farmed for thirteen years, all the while making steady progress. To his natural fondness for horses he could now give free rein, and he at one time had a team of six large blacks, well trained and in good condition. And so careful was he of them that no one in his employ was permitted to drive them. He always drove them himself and considered it trifling to haul small loads. When hauling lime from beyond the Conedoguet, or grain to Mechanicsburg, or flittings in the spring of the year, every horse had to be groomed till he glistened and properly hitched so the team would pass muster before the most critical judges. Whenever there were a number of teams in the line, as in case of a flitting, his, by general consent, was always given the lead; and when in the neighborhood there arose a question about horses and heavy hauling his judgment was almost always consulted and nearly always ruled.

In the spring of 1865 he made an important change. He was now fifty-two years old and physically had seen his best days, so to lighten his labors and cares he reduced his stock and rented a smaller place. He removed from Hampden to Monroe Township, in the vicinity of Locust Point. Here he farmed four years and then had sale and quit, after having farmed rented farms continuously for twenty-five years. By this time most of his children had reached maturity and left home. His family had dwindled to a few members and to relieve the growing lonesomeness he moved to the village of Churchtown, and for a while tried living in retirement. It was the second time in his experience that he had met with a Churchtown. Before another year had gone he bought a little farm a mile west from Churchtown, which he made his home for the next twenty-three years.

It was circumstances that led **John Zeamer** to leave his former moorings and settle in Cumberland County. The change was against his judgment, but once made he never went back to Lancaster County, as did the other members of his father's family. He, however, sometimes contemplated moving farther west or south. About the year 1846 he and a neighbor made a horseback trip into the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, visiting Harper's Ferry, Charlestown, Winchester and other points in that section. He was so well pleased with the country that he afterward made a second trip on a visit. In 1855 he went West, visiting Ohio, Michigan, Illinois and Indiana, bringing back with him very favorable impressions of the West and its grand opportunities, but he thought it wise to let well enough alone and remained in the Cumberland Valley. At the close of the Civil war he and a friend made a visit to eastern Virginia, but what they saw there was not sufficiently tempting to induce them to locate or invest, and so he ended his days in the section to which circumstances had brought him.

In January, 1849, **John Zeamer's** mother, **Regina (Gephart) Zeamer**, died in the sixty third year of her age. She was buried in the graveyard where now is the Stone Church on the State Road, in Silver Spring Township. After her death, her husband, **Jeremiah Zeamer**, made his home with his eldest son, **Isaac**. In March, 1852, **Isaac Zeamer** moved back to Lancaster County, and a few days after reaching his new home, **Jeremiah Zeamer** died at the age of seventy-four years. His remains were buried in a little private graveyard near the banks of the Chickies Creek, in Rapho Township. He was more than six feet tall, of powerful build, and

weighed over three hundred pounds. His large form, great strength and good humor were subjects of comment wherever he went. The little farm near Churchtown, which **John Zeamer** purchased in 1870, was a place adapted to his years and strength, and he there spent his declining years reasonably contented and happy until the death of his wife, which occurred July 16, 1889, at the age of seventy-seven years. Her remains were laid to rest in the Longsdorf graveyard in Silver Spring Township, where a daughter and her entire family had already been buried.

Susanna (Hartman) Zeamer was a kind and loving wife and mother, modest and affectionate, but the most marked of all her admirable qualities was her piety. After the death of his wife **John Zeamer** continued on the farm with his youngest daughter till in the spring of 1893, when he moved to Carlisle, that he might be convenient to more of his children. He had now passed four score years of life and while he was comparatively strong it was yet apparent that he was rapidly approaching the end. Naturally in his closing years he became indifferent to the affairs of the world, but he retained his interest in horses until the last and owned one as long as he could give him attention. He died May 19, 1903, aged ninety years and ten days, and his remains were buried by the side of his wife in the Longsdorf graveyard. Physically **John Zeamer** was a large man, and while in his prime very strong. He was a little over six feet tall, straight as an arrow, and well proportioned both in form and weight. Never having had the advantages of the schools he lacked book learning, but the varied and trying experiences of his early life gave him a practical education that served him well in his intercourse with men, and his opinions and actions always commanded respect. Integrity was an especially strong trait in his character, and with people who knew him his verbal promise made his bond superfluous. He was a Democrat and as firm and consistent in his political convictions and practices as in other respects. He belonged to the Reformed Church, which was the church of his ancestors, as it was also the church of his wife's family.

John and **Susan (Hartman) Zeamer** had issue seven children, viz.: **Mary**, born April 4, 1839; **Jeremiah**, April 5, 1842; **Sarah**, Aug. 10, 1844; **Harriet**, 1847; **Christiana**, Dec. 22, 1850 (died March 5, 1852); **Susan**, March 7, 1853; and **John Henry**, Jan. 12, 1856.

Mary married **Charles Miller**, of Perry County, by whom she had three children, only one of whom is living. In October, 1873, **Charles Miller** was killed at Maryville while in the employ of the Pennsylvania Railway Company. **Frank H. Miller**, her surviving son, married **Alta Diener**, and has issue two daughters.

Jeremiah, the second child, remained upon the farm until his twenty-first year, when he began teaching school, teaching his first year in West Hempfield Township, Lancaster County. Afterward he took a course at the Millersville State Normal School, where he graduated in 1868. He then taught and read law until 1872, when he was admitted to the Cumberland County Bar. In the spring of 1873 he was elected cashier of the Columbia Deposit Bank, which position he held until December, 1878, when he resigned to purchase the American Volunteer, a newspaper at Carlisle which he owned and edited for twenty-two years. Since relinquishing newspaper work he has been doing special writing, principally of an historical character. In August, 1871, he married **Isabella B. Benner**, of North Coventry, Chester County, who has borne him two children, **Maud** and **Jay**. **Maud** is a graduate of Dickinson College, holding the A. B. and A. M. degrees from that institution. She has also done post-graduate work at Columbia University, and for five years past has been engaged in teaching, being now vice-principal of the Carlisle high

school. She was married to **John H. P. Keat**, and has one son, **Harold**, born Jan. 16, 1896. **Jay** is a stenographer and clerk in the employ of the Mexican National Railroad Company, in the City of Mexico, Mexico.

Sarah, the third child, married **Jacob Barnhill**, by whom she had three children. She and her husband and all her children are dead. They are buried in the Longsdorf graveyard.

Harriet, the fourth child, married **George W. Reeser**, of Upper Allen Township, by whom she has three children, two daughters and a son. The eldest, **Lizzie**, is married to **Robert Armstrong**, and has issue one daughter, **Pauline**. The son, **Richard**, is a graduate of Jefferson Medical College, and for several years has been surgeon on the Pennsylvania school ship "Saratoga." The youngest child, **Susan Gertrude**, is at home. **George W. Reeser** and family at present live in Mechanicsburg.

Susan, the sixth child, is unmarried and is living with her sister, **Mrs. Mary Miller**, in Boslertown, a suburb of Carlisle. Since October, 1893, she has been an instructor in the sewing department of the Carlisle Indian School.

John Henry learned the blacksmith's trade and followed blacksmithing for thirteen years, for a number of years in the town of Mechanicsburg. He afterward went into the livery business in Mechanicsburg which he has been conducting successfully for twenty years.

Such is the biography of **John Zeamer**, written and respectfully submitted by one of his family.

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