

# OF MARTIN KIN SOMEWHAT

by Ira D. Landis

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The pioneer of many, David Martin, came across the briny deep with seventy Palatines and their families, about 300 souls, on the ship *Molly*, from Rotterdam. They docked at Philadelphia September 30, 1727. He comes to the heart of Weaverland to claim a 370-acre tract that was first surveyed in 1719 to David Priest, and later to Henry Miller, who died September 20, 1728. He is thus in the midst of the three Weber brothers, who came in 1723.

This tract included the site of the first Weaverland (Brick) Church and schoolhouse, half of the first cemetery northwest of the Church and extended west almost in a parallelogram across the Lakes to Sea Highway. The buildings were on the east bank of Blue Ball Run.

Rupp says that Martin hauled from Philadelphia the goods of John Diffenderfer who arrived in 1727 on September 30 and unloaded it under an oak tree "in Saeue Swamm (Pig Swamp), now New Holland, in the woods." A few days later good neighbors had erected a hut or cabin for the shelter of the goods and the comfort of the family. Then Mr. Bear gave them a cow. David Martin and Hans Groff gave them meat and flour. Martin apparently from the start was in more comfortable circumstances.

M.G. Weaver, in describing his home, remarks: "But the low ceiling, one and a half story house on the Zimmerman farm with its quaint low porch without ceiling, with seed corn, flax, empty bee-hives, fishing poles, threshing flails, apple butter stirrers and what-not, stored and hung on the space above the joists, and the quaint low straw-thatched barn on these premises is one of the pictures of a primitive farm site in Weaverland, which I fondly hope shall never be effaced from my memory." This not only describes the rude log buildings of pioneer days, but depicts the type of farming and the natural

communal life in the wilderness.

David the pioneer was born in Europe in 1691 and died in the heart of Weaverland, November 10, 1784. He was married at least three times. Theodore Herr claims that Barbara, granddaughter of Hans Herr, through Abraham of Lancaster Township, was one. Two others were Anna Groff and Elizabeth Herr Miller. The latter by a former marriage had a daughter Susanna Miller, who married a Christian Martin, son of the immigrant Christian of 1732. Christian II and Susanna settled in Manor Township and were the ancestors of Edward Martin, a former Governor of this Commonwealth (1943-1947). To two of these wives he had ten sons and two daughters, respectively.

When David Martin came to the beautiful Weberthal, a few Indians in villages of a half dozen families were among his neighbors. The whites were first only the Weber brothers, George, Henry and Jacob, but soon Jacob Sensenig, Michael Shirk, Jacob Martin, Christian Schneider, and other Mennonites came. Others included Judge Thomas Edwards (who walked to Lancaster with barefeet and so sat in court) and three Davises, William, David, and Evan.

The principal crops on cleared land included wheat, rye, oats, and barley. In the harvest the women would labor along side of their men. The men did the cradling and the women the binding. The harvest hands earned their thirty-three cents per day on wheat worth twice that per bushel.

Cattle were of more value for burden than for meat. Wolves prevented the raising of sheep and bears the extensive production of porkers. The forests abounded in turkey and deer. A twenty-pound turkey sold at ceiling for twelve and a half cents each and a fat deer for a quarter.

Tight fighting buckskin breeches or coarse home-spun made wearing apparel for men

"with honest home-made linen to cover their brawny arms and broad shoulders." Umbrellas were unknown. A heavy woolen blanket from the couch thrown across the shoulders gave them similar protection from the elements. Horses were unshod and men went barefoot. Boots and spectacles bespeckled only the "queer" before the Revolution in the Earls. The floors were carpetless, the walls unpapered, the platters of wood with the pewter dishes, spoons, and mugs, met all the table requirements of the average household. "When a bride went any distance to be married, she rode on a pillion (or cushion) before the father or kinsman, but after the ceremony she occupied a seat behind her husband."

The years were trying and the experiences bitter. In 1732 a severe locust plague destroyed everything green in Weaverland. In 1737 a severe earthquake left its ruins in this quiet valley. The following year the heat was so excessive "as to destroy many birds, while laborers fell exhausted and dead in their harvest fields; the cold was so extreme in 1740-41 that deer and turkey, the main flesh-food supply of the colonists, perished in vast numbers. The next winter was even more severe. The years 1750 and 1751 were so lean that a county meeting was called to devise means of relief, the establishing of an almshouse resulting. The harvest of the next year, 1752, was so bountiful that the wheat was marketless; it was fed to the hogs. Three trying years of drouth followed in 1753-5. The earth was parched and vegetation of all kinds perished for lack of moisture. A famine seemed impending. To add to these horrors, the French and Indian War broke out, and the frontier Indian tribes, having nearly all allied themselves with France, began killing and scalping on all sides. Terror and dismay filled all hearts; even after peace was concluded, the Indians continued their hostilities. So great was the danger in 1763 that the farmers in the most exposed districts carried the rifles with them to the fields." On June 17, 1763, a severe hail storm left the trees "as destitute of foliage as in mid-winter;" "hail-stones as large as turkey eggs fell" and "birds and small quadrupeds were killed in great numbers."

Their mills were not built too early. Martin's closest were Shirk's (later Rupp's), Henry Martin's and Joseph Oberholtzer's on the Conestoga, and Frantz's (later Martin's), southwest of Goodville. The highways crossing the Earls were but three. The oldest was the Peters Road, so named for Peter Bazillion, the Indian trader. This came in near Zeltenreich's and across through the Hans Groff settlement at Groffdale. Later the Paxtang Road was opened. This is now the Lakes to Sea Highway through Blue Ball. Still later the Horse Shoe Road was opened to Lancaster Town over some of the present New Holland-Lancaster Pike. It was only in 1783 that the first two-horse carriage was used here and in 1790 the first coach.

He was an active promoter of the faith of his fathers, not only in his family but also in the community. In 1733 already he and the Weber boys had organized a congregation with the ministers from the older settlements of Pequea and Lancaster giving them the Gospel in their commodious homes and barns, such as David Martin called "Home, Sweet Home." By 1750 Peter Shirk was ordained for the Weaverland. By 1766 their congregation was large enough for a separate building. In this year (marked in the basement of the present edifice) George and Elizabeth Martin of the original David Martin Tract sold one acre and a six and three-quarter perches of land to "Peter Shirk (d. 1770), a preacher of the Gospel and Michael Widower (d. 1785), an elder of the Church, and in particular of the Mennonite persuasion of Earl Township." What progress!

After rearing his family for God and establishing them in the faith, even in this wilderness, his mortal remains were carried to the first Weaverland Cemetery alongside George Weber and his wife. Here are stones marked "D. M. 1784" for David Martin, "E. M. 1774" for Elizabeth, his last wife. Here also is a stone "A. M. 80-1759." The latter was Andrew, his father, who was imprisoned for his faith, when David left Europe, and did not join him in Weaverland until 1749 at 70. He brought along a German scythe which was very valuable in mowing the heavy green swards this Garden of Eden now produced.

Indiana and Ohio. They were called the Wisler Mennonites. The movement spread to Canada and eventually to Lancaster in 1893. Earlier, there had been a strong push to organize a Wisler church in Lancaster. But conservative Bishop George Weber, loyal to the Conference, managed to keep the district together and this issue quieted.

Things moved smoothly for the new bishop at first. The year 1889, however, began a long and difficult journey for Jonas and the church. He lost his wife, Sarah, in April, three days after the birth of their twelfth child. In addition, a close uncle, Preacher Abraham Martin at Groffdale, passed away. At Metzler's, singing in English posed a problem for Jonas. Some of the dissension that was evident earlier reared its ugly head when they dug out the foundation for the new Lichty's Church. The tension was so intense, the men had arguments as they dug and actually chased one another with shovels.

The new Lichty's Church was built and was to be dedicated on September 29. The building committee included a pulpit to accommodate Preacher "one-armed John" Zimmerman without receiving the counsel of the church. This created a fury among members. Jonas was quoted as saying, "It came in; I don't know how; I wish it would go; I don't know how." Well, the pulpit disappeared between September 26 and 27—several days before the dedication. The events that followed are difficult to imagine as having been a part of our heritage. The pulpit incident was only an indicator of a larger spiritual crisis that was looming on the horizon.

An intense investigation followed. There were false accusations and speculations. A committee was put in place to investigate the pulpit mystery. (Coinci-

dentally, Benjamin W. Weaver served on this committee and was later ordained preacher and bishop after Jonas's departure. This incident plagued the district and was unresolved for nineteen years—well into Ben's bishopric. When a confession was finally made in 1908, it was discovered that the wrong man had been falsely accused; Martin M. Zimmerman—the man with the church key—had been unjustly "put off" from membership for all those years. Upon hearing the confession from the guilty family, Bishop Ben went to the accused in deep grief and prostrated himself on the floor and asked forgiveness.)

In the meantime, however, as the investigation progressed, Jonas excommunicated three alleged culprits and eventually seven others for rumor and gossip. Another committee was put in place to try to make peace in the brotherhood. This saga was long from over. (Interestingly, John M. Sauder was one of those excommunicated for "being vocal and critical of the handling of the pulpit incident." He later was ordained as minister and then bishop, after the division.)

Jonas was under intense stress with church issues, in addition to trying to manage his family without the help of a wife and mother. He married Anna in December of 1890. It was well known that she was sympathetic to the conservative Wisler movement.

To add to the challenges, Sunday School was started in June of 1891. They planned to meet in the adjoining school. The crowd was too large and was moved to the church. This, too, was controversial as Sunday School was never approved by counsel of the members. On July 12, Jonas held a council for a vote on Sunday School. It was defeated by a vote of more than four to one to close Sunday School after only meeting three times. This outcome was picked

up by the news media, which was biased in its support of Sunday School; and, again, false reports and quotes were published. This added to the brewing storm.

In the fall of 1892, another committee was assigned to investigate the unsolved pulpit issue. When they were to disclose their findings, over 2,000 people packed into Weaverland. When it was apparent that some in attendance were not members, they were asked to leave; about thirty left. As the ministry rose to meet with the committee in the anteroom, a man stood and said he knew who was responsible. This was known to be a rumor and resulted in three more men being excommunicated for irreverently disturbing a meeting. The committee had no conclusive report to offer the ministry so the strife continued and went unresolved.

It was common in those days for a preacher to invite the congregation to prayer by saying, "If you are at one with me, let us pray." Incredibly, at the peak of the strife, as many as half of the congregation did not join the minister to kneel in prayer; and many did not commune.

In the spring of 1893, Jonas, not knowing what else to do to resolve the strife, turned to the Conference for help. Three deacons were appointed to help restore peace. While they did not find anyone offering a confession, they did find the ministry had acted too fast and not according to Scripture in expelling the three men at the Sunday committee report. In addition, the men who were expelled earlier had appealed to the Conference and were received back into the fellowship in 1892. The committee met three times and on September 3, 1893, Bishop Jonas, Preacher Menno Zimmerman, and Deacon Daniel Burkholder made confessions of error in the earlier expulsions.

The storm clouds grew darker and darker, and the inevitable threatening storm was about to break. On October 6, 1893, the Fall Conference was held at Mellingers. There was no Conference sermon as there is today, but each bishop shared his burden and testimony. Jonas had told the Bishop Board earlier what his testimony would be. They requested he refrain from sharing as it would disturb the peace of the church. Jonas shared his burden despite their request.

He announced that he, along with many of his people, was not in union nor in communion with certain articles and practices of the Conference. He mentioned three items that he was not at peace or harmony with in the Conference: 1) The Conference allowing bishops and ministers to solemnize at weddings of non-members; 2) Sunday Schools; 3) The Kauffman Church charter. (This involved the Conference moderator serving as an executor for the will of a wealthy non-Mennonite who bequeathed his farm to the Kauffman Church.) Jonas made no mention of the pulpit issue or some of the other issues that grieved him, such as singing school, prayer meetings, and revival meetings.

The Bishop Board, upon hearing his critical testimony, met together and conversed in the anteroom. They called in Jonas and asked him to recant for speaking so boldly against the rulings of the Conference and to make an acknowledgment of error. One source said that another bishop (likely Moderator Jacob N. Brubacher) pulled out his watch and told Jonas he has ten minutes to decide whether or not he was going to work in harmony with the Conference. The die was now cast by the Conference: conform or face disciplinary action.

Jonas refused to recant and walked out of the Conference with his ministry

following; and according to one source, they re-assembled under a tree in the church yard. The remaining bishops agreed that "there was no other remedy left for us in Scripture but to deal with him as a transgressor and expel him from the Conference; and if he is expelled from the Conference, he is also expelled from the church and is no longer a member of the Mennonite Church that holds to the Lancaster Conference." It is not clear if this is when his actual expulsion took place.

On Saturday, October 14, Bishop Isaac Eby instructed new applicants at Weaverland, and he announced that Jonas had separated from the church and Conference. A delegation of bishops also met with Jonas Martin between Conference and this service, but apparently nothing was accomplished. Word spread quickly.

The next day, Sunday, October 15, Rohrerstown minister, John K. Brubaker, gave a message on love. At the close of the service a Bishop Board statement was read by Brubaker on behalf of the Bishop Board to an overflowing crowd at Weaverland. There was "curiosity and apprehension" written on the faces of those in attendance. So great was the crowd that "many of the late-comers could not gain entrance." The number gathered that morning "surpassed anything known at that place." The statement outlined, in detail, the grounds of expulsion of Jonas. It also included the arrangements for the new church using the Weaverland building on alternating Sundays until a church is built; and how Weaverland will be served until a new bishop is ordained. It was also announced that "Jonas is off, and those that go with him are also off" (membership forfeited). These events were covered in detail by the Lancaster newspapers as well as the local media.

Jonas was at Martindale that Sunday with his ministry, baptizing and receiving new members into what was to become the Weaverland Conference Mennonite Church, or the "Martinite" church, as it was called then. Of the twenty-four who were baptized that morning, twenty-two went with Jonas's church; in fact, everyone at Martindale went with him except the sexton. Jonas was credited with taking one-third of the membership of the churches in which he gave oversight with him. The entire Weaverland bench went with him except for Preacher John Zimmerman and Deacon John Hollinger.

Needless to say, this division cut right through the heart of the church and its families. Families were literally divided. Some children went with the division; some didn't. Even Jonas's own daughter Mary left her father's church and joined with Weaverland some years later.

The two Weaverland churches continued to share the buildings on alternating Sundays through the winter of 1893-94. On Saturday, April 21, 1894, Weaverland sexton Isaac W. Martin had conversation with some "Martinites" cleaning up the horse sheds. Isaac walked up to the group and said, "Tomorrow I will not open up." The next day, Sunday, was just as Isaac had said, the "Martinites" came and found the church locked. Some of the men went to the sexton's house to talk to Isaac. He showed them the key hanging on a hook underneath his hat and said, "There is the key." The men left without the key and met in the church yard. Isaac said later that the east storm door was not locked but rather tied with a string which a hard tug would have broken. The inside door was also not locked. With this play on words, Isaac claimed, "I did not lock out the Jonas Martin group." Incredibly, it was reported that