

OUR DAY IN LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

Written by Muriel Thomas Weissler
my mother about a trip
in the 1940s or
late 30's.

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One of our plans in connection with our trip to Boston was to spend a day in Lancaster County, Penn. and see if we could find and visit the burial place of Will's grandfather, Peter Wissler, who had died while he and grandmother Wissler were visiting there (from typhoid fever). We had very few names or places to guide us, knew that a grave stone for his grave had been shipped to Columbia, Penn., so Will has written to the postmaster there to get the names of any "Wissler's" residing there and had received the name J. J. Wissler and address. Arriving in Columbia in late afternoon we hunted up the street and number and found the J. J. Wissler, wife and son very charming and delightful people. J. J. and wife and perhaps son were connected with a newspaper. They received us very cordially and talked of their Wissler family connections. He had a very interesting tale of his father and family who came to that section with Washington. They were also connected with the Baer family, publishers of the Baer almanac which was so highly prized by Grandma Bower. It was soon evident that they were not off the same branch of the Wissler family tree. He thought we should contact the Clay Township Wisslers or perhaps we might find some clues in Manor Township lying south of Columbia. We spent the night after leaving the J. J. Wisslers of Columbia at a very new and attractive tourist court. After a little wandering about we started south of Mountville. As we drove along we came across a man walking along the road and making some inquiries

about directions we stated we were looking for Wissler's connections. He told us his wife was a Wissler, Cora Wissler, now Mrs. Cora Wissler Green. We walked back a little way to the Green home and talked with Mrs. Green. She said she had heard her mother tell of the Wissler from Indiana who died of typhoid while on a visit to Penn., but she didn't know where he might be buried. They had known the Wise sisters who had been Grandma Bowers' friends and known to Will, living at Germantown, I think. Her mother still living 90 years old could probably give us some information. After a little visit with Mrs. Green we drove on south to Manor township to find her mother living on George Street, Millersville, with another daughter Mrs. Mellinger and granddaughter and husband. The granddaughter and husband received us very cordially and after the old lady, Mrs. Sylvannia Wissler Hubley, 91 years old, finished her lunch she was wheeled in, in her wheel chair, and she tried to recall some things about the Wissler family, but her memory was failing and she could not recall many things. Her parents were David Wissler and Leah Wissler, the Wissler name being the same on both sides of the family. They had met and married in Indiana and moved back to Pennsylvania. Mrs. Hubley's brothers and sisters, children of David and Leah Wissler were

Sylvannia Wissler Hubley -- whom we saw
Emma Wissler
Laura Wissler
James Wissler
John Wissler
Frank Wissler, living at Columbia, Pa.
Chester Wissler, living near Cresswell, Pa.

We felt that Mrs. Hubley's family were probably related, more than likely belonging to the Milton, Indiana, Wissler family. At their suggestion

we drove on to the home of Chester Wissler accompanied by the son-in-law. He, Chester, lived near the Crestwell Cemetery. He, Chester, was a small man, and not very communicative. Their kitchen had an old-fashioned sink and every appearance of the kitchen in the country years ago. Chester was unable to throw any light on the Wissler connections so we drove on to Crestwell Cemetery. It is a neat fenced, well-kept cemetery with many Wissler names on the stones but we did not find the one we sought.

We had been advised to hunt up a Mr. Lindamon, now an old man, living near Washington in Manor township where there was a cemetery also but we did not go on. That may have been our mistake. There seemed to be a feeling among the Wisslers we interviewed later that Peter Wissler may have been buried there. After lunch we found the name of Wissler, Abraham Wissler, garage man among Lancaster phones. Hunting him up we found his garage on an alley and he stopped work and on hearing our story he assured us that at last we were on the right track. He told us about his father, Pharis Wissler, who lived with his daughter Mrs. Harry Holbein, two miles south of Landisville (mail out of Lancaster, I think) and he assured us they would be glad to see us. Accordingly we drove to Landisville, and were directed to the Holbein farm. The roads run this way and that so that directions are hard to give and harder to follow but we arrived finally at a well kept, comfortable looking farm home. The men were putting up hay in a nearby field and we were met by Mrs. Holbein who received us cordially. She apologized for her appearance, quickly changed to a clean dress, sent one of the children to call her father in from the field. There was a baby,

evidently a late arrival in a family of rather grown-up children. The father, Pharis Wissler, came in from working in the garden or field, a man in his late seventies with a beard and long hair and a typical Dunkard look. It soon developed that he was one of the Wissler Cousins that had come out to Indiana on a visit many years ago. He got sick on the water (his story) and had returned to Pa. immediately. He didn't know where Peter Wissler was buried or what his grandfather's first name. Pharis's father was Abraham Wissler, brother of Peter Wissler (W. O.'s grandfather) and the grandfather was W. O.'s grandfather and the name we were seeking. We had a nice visit with the Holbeins. There were four children, two boys and two girls, besides the baby. Mrs. Holbein told us of her brother living in California who had a 10 or 11 year old son who was appearing in pictures and radio. Had been on the Rudy Vallee show, also had a small part in "Boy's Town." Pharis Wissler, the old father, is a Dunkard preacher and continues to preach in German. He was so absorbed in his role as preacher that he preferred to talk about the Bible rather than the Wissler connections. He gave us the names of his brothers and sisters, however, and a longer visit might have produced a good many facts. He could not recall his grandfather's name. This person was Will's great-grandfather. Pharis's father was Abraham who was a brother to Peter Wissler, Will's grandfather. There were four in this family, Abraham, Peter, Rudolph, and Catherine Brenneman. The father died young and the children were raised in other families. We finally wound up our visit to the Holbeins and after supper in Lancaster, we went to Ephrata, Pa., the home of Rudolph Wissler, brother of Pharis

whom Will remembered having visited in Indiana and staying in the Bower home where John Wissler, then a widower, was making his home. The Pennsylvania cousins were visiting John Wissler who had been to Pa. to visit, also. We called at the Buch home at 155 Park ave., after supper. Mr. Rudolph Wissler had retired when we arrived but the daughter called him and he got up and dressed. Being very hard of hearing, it was very difficult for him to understand who we were and from where and why, but finally he got it straightened out and recalled his visit to the Bower home in Indiana and incidents of his stay there. He didn't know where Peter Wissler, Will's grandfather, was buried nor could he recall the name of his grandfather. After a very pleasant visit with the Buchs and Rudolph Wissler we went back to the hotel at Ephrata.

A Wissler man of a different strain called at the hotel in the morning but he wasn't of our line.

And we were again on our way to Boston from Ephrata, Pa. We had not found the burial place of Will's grandfather Peter Wissler nor had we found anyone who knew the first name of Peter Wissler's father, Will's great-grandfather. We heard that this great-grandfather had died rather early and the four children had been raised in other families. The children were Abraham, Peter (Will's grandfather), Rudolph, and Mrs. Catherine Wissler Brenneman.

This very delightful day in Lancaster Co., Pa., was one of the very pleasant parts of our trip to Boston. As we drove through the pleasant country side seeing the well kept homesteads, the big stone barns, the neat houses and gardens, the well tilled fields with crops growing in strips, we wondered whether the wiser ones had not been the ones who stayed on in Lancaster, Pa.