

Letter from "Behind the Blue Mountain, March 30, 1752"

Transcribed and translated by John L. Ruth; endnotes by Joel D. Alderfer

This early piece of correspondence was discovered among a group of much later papers in the Norman M. Wismer Collection, recently donated to the Mennonite Historians. A literal translation is offered here.

Hinder dem Blauenberg 30t Marty 1752

Hertz lieber Bruder Christian Meyer und lieber Schwager Henrich Funck, wie auch ahn Eure weiber und Kinder, unseren allerseites freundlichen grüsz, nebst wünschung alles liebes und gutes nach seel und leib zu vor, Von mir Nicklaus Oblinger und Elisabetha Oblingerin.

Wir können nicht unterlassen euch mit diesen wenigen Zeilen zu berichten das wir Gott sey lob und danck annoch alle gesundt, ein gleiches allein zu vernehmen soll uns Von Herten sehr lieb und erfreulich seyn, Schwager Christian wird mir wohl von übel auf nehmen Dasz ich nicht zu euch Kommen bin da ich Dasz Letzte mahl drunten war Die ursach war dasz ich Von gewissen Leuthen Ver Nommen Habe dasz die Liesabeth nich mehr als Drey Pfundt in geld Von ihro Erbschafft Von ihrem Vatter erben solle ohne Dasz was sie Empfangen hatte welches wir unmöglich können glauben, weilen der Vatter noch auff seynen Todes Bett zu der Liesabeth gesagt Dasz sie ihro part haben solle so wohl als wie ein ander Kindt weillen sie Vorher in gefragt hatte wie sie Von anderen leuthen hätte gehört, Dasz er sie enterben wolte. So hatte er zu ihro gesagt Dasz es nicht dem also seye, sondern sie solle ihro Erbschafft gleich ein ander Kindt solte aber Vielleicht wie wir nicht wüssen Der Vatter etwas gemacht haben in seiner Krankheit, da er Vielleicht sehr krank und Schwach war Dasz er solte in seyner letzten Krankheit etwas gemacht und die Liesabeth solte enterben haben, Dasz ihm in seyner Krankheit und schwachheit derowegen wäre zu geschrocken und angelegen worden, so seynd wir gewisz Versichert, Dasz ihr in Eurem Herten und gemüther überzeuget seyndt Dasz es nicht recht und wohl gethan wäre, zu deme die mutter Dem Vatter befohlen in ihren Todes Bett, Dasz Die Liesabeth zu gehöret Dasz sie ja nicht enterben solle, zu mahlen wann ihr reizlich [reiflich?] überlegen und betrachten soltet, in wasz Vor einem überaus Hertzlich betrübten Zustandt sich Die Liesabeth und unser Kindt der Christel sich wegen dem groszen Mangel ihrer gesichter befinden, so Dasz wir unsere arbeit durch fremde Hände müssen schaffen und

Behind the Blue Mountain¹ March 30, 1752

To heart-beloved brother Christian Meyer² and dear brother-in-law Henry Funk³, as well as to your wives and children, our all-round friendly greeting, along with a wish for everything loving and good regarding soul and body, from me Nicklaus Oblinger and Elizabeth Oblinger.⁴

We can not neglect to inform you with these few lines that we are all, God be thanked and praised, still in good health. To hear the same from you would be dear and joyous to our hearts.

Brother-in-law Christian, you may well take it amiss that I did not visit you when I was last down. The reason was that I heard from certain people that Elizabeth was not to inherit from her father⁵ more than three pounds money of her inheritance, beyond what she had already received -- which we find impossible to believe, since the father had said to Liesabeth on his deathbed yet that she should have her share [just] like another child -- since she had asked him, after she had heard from other people that he wanted to disinherit her. So he said to her that it was not thus, but that she should [have] her inheritance like another child. But perhaps unknown to us Father did something in his sickness, when he was perhaps very sick and weak -- that he did something in his last sickness and disinherited Liesabeth, that he was frightened and led to doing so thereby -- [if so] we are certainly sure that you are convinced in your hearts and feelings that it was not rightly and justly done, [in light], further, of the fact that the mother [had] enjoined the father, from her own deathbed, which belongs to Liesabeth, that she was not to be disinherited. Further, if you consider and maturely meditate in what kind of general pathetically troubled condition Lisabeth and our child Christel⁶ find themselves, regarding their great lack of hope [apparently depression], so that we have to have our own work done by other hands, and thereby I myself am much hindered, and can not order my affairs as I otherwise could; if you see -- it is well known to you and as we know, while Father still lived, we were in fairly equal standing with each other regarding what

ian M.
b, 1752
r² and
your
ting,
od
blinger
ese few
ed, still
ould be
ake it
down.
le that
ore than
d what
ossible
th on his
ust] like
she had
inherit
t that she
ld. But
in his
weak --
disinher-
to doing
you are
was not
he fact
n her own
ie was not
d mat-
tically
ristel⁶ find
[appar-
r own
self am
as I
n to you
were in
ig what

Thun lassen und derentwegen ich dann auch selbst
sehr Verhinderet und meinen affairen nicht nach
kommen kann wie ich sonst wohl könte wann sie
sehen thäten es ist euch Ja wohl bekant und so viel uns
bewust das wir da Der Vatter noch gelebet hat Die
Kinder wegen dem wasz ein Jedes Empfangen Hatte
alle gegen ein ander Ziemlich gleich gestanden seyn,
so hoffen wir, es wird uns von der Hinterlassenschaft
Der Liesabeth ihr Theile zu kommen so wohl als wie
ihren Geschwisterten auch, und gewiszlich wann ihr in
Consideration ziehet, und erweget den betrübten
Zustandt wegen dem mangel des gesichtes der
Liesabeth und Des Christels zu Die andere Kinder
Klein und unerzogen seynd undt noch mehr zu hoffen
Haben, über Dasz alles waren wir so unglücklich mit
unser Pferden letzten winter dasz wir so viel verlohren
Dasz es bey 40 Pfundt uns schaden thut, und ihr
solches alles wie schon gemeldet recht betrachte und
überleget, werdet ihr euch gewiszlich nicht wägern Der
Liesabeth ihren gebührenden antheil von Des Vatters
Hinterlassenschaft zu kommen zu lassen, und weillen
ich wie schon vor her gemeldet nicht so ab kommen
kann wegen dasz schweren undt betrübter Haushaltung
wie Ich sonst habe schon können so hoffe ich ihr
werdet so guth seyn und mir mit nächsten Eine antwort
zuschreiben wie es stehet, übrigens grüssen wir euch
alle uns gesamt alle unsere freunde nochmahl zu
hundert Tausend Mahlen, undt Empfehlen euch
sämtlich dem Theurer gnadenschutz Gottes Des
Allerhöchsten, undt verbleibe Euer allezeit getreuer
freundt undt Schwager.

Nicklaus Oblinger

Notes

- ¹ This area, above the Blue Mountain, in 1752 was an undefined and unsettled wilderness where American Indians lived. The Oblingers lived near the Lehigh Gap (on the Lehigh River) in what is now Lower Towamensing Twp., Carbon County, PA, twenty miles north of Bethlehem. The only other white settlement further north was at Gnadenhütten, the Moravian mission to the Indians.
- ² Christian Meyer Jr. (ca.1705-1787), of Franconia Twp., Montgomery Co., and a deacon in the Salford and Franconia Mennonite Congregations, was a brother to Elizabeth Oblinger, wife of Nicholas.
- ³ Henry Funk (died 1763), of Franconia Township was a miller and Mennonite bishop in the Salford-Franconia area. He was married to Anne Meyer, daughter of the immigrant Christian Meyer and a sister to Elizabeth Meyer Oblinger. Funk and Christian Meyer Jr. were executors of the estate of Christian Meyer Sr.
- ⁴ Nicholas Oblinger (ca.1712-ca.1785) was the son of the German Baptist immigrant Claus Oblinger, died 1730 in what is now Franconia Twp., Montgomery Co. Nicholas married Elizabeth Meyer, daughter of Christian Meyer (d.1751) of Lower Salford Twp. They owned land and lived in what is now Harleysville, until April, 1751, when they sold and moved above the Blue Mountain (now Carbon County), where they obtained land in June, 1751. Here, Oblinger built something of a stockade around his homestead, which became a stopping point for travelers above the Blue Mountain.

each had [already] received. We hope that Elizabeth's share will come to us from the estate just as to her siblings -- and certainly if you take into consideration, and weigh the sorry condition of the lack of hope of Elizabeth and Christel and that the other children are small and not grown up and [I] have yet more to hope for [them]. And on top of all this we were so unfortunate with our horses last winter that we had 40 pounds worth of loss. And [if] you rightly consider and think over what has been described above, you will certainly not deny allowing Elizabeth's due share to come to her from Father's estate. And since as I've explained I can not manage as I otherwise could, because of [our] difficult and troubled household condition⁷, I do hope you will be so good as to write me by the next opportunity as to how things stand.

For the rest, we all greet all our friends again a hundred thousand times, and commend you together to the dear protection of the grace of God the all-highest, and remain always your true friend and brother-in-law.

Nicklaus Oblinger

Address on letter

This Letter to Come to Christian Meyer living in Franconia Township near Schipack.

Benjamin Franklin recorded stopping here for lodging on January 25, 1756 on his way to the site of the destroyed Gnadenhütten, where he was to erect a new fort (Fort Allen). During the construction of Fort Allen, Nicholas Oblinger hauled supplies to the fort. In February, 1756, he presented a bill for nine days work and three wagons used for hauling. Oblinger and his stockade later became entangled in, and was apparently the partial cause of some of the violence between Indians and whites in the area in 1763. Companies of soldiers were at times quartered at Oblinger's and on one occasion in August of 1763, several traveling Indians were murdered by soldiers in or near Oblinger's barn. This was probably one of the causes of the subsequent massacres by Indians in October, 1763. Nicholas Oblinger's son Samuel was enrolled in the Frontier Rangers. This raises a question about Oblinger's religious affiliations and sympathies.

⁵ Elizabeth Oblinger's father was the immigrant Christian Meyer (d.1751) of Lower Salford Twp., Montgomery Co. He and his wife Barbara were founding members of the Salford Mennonite Congregation and lived at what is now the intersection of Routes 113 and 63 in Harleysville. In his will, probated June, 1751, Christian Meyer names his daughter Elizabeth as an equal heir to his estate. This was at the very time that Elizabeth and Nicholas Oblinger left Lower Salford Township and moved above the Blue Mountain. And then the question of disinheritance arises. Why did the Oblingers leave Lower Salford and move to a frontier area? Was there a disagreement in the family? Was the father Christian Meyer unhappy with the Oblingers moving to the frontier?

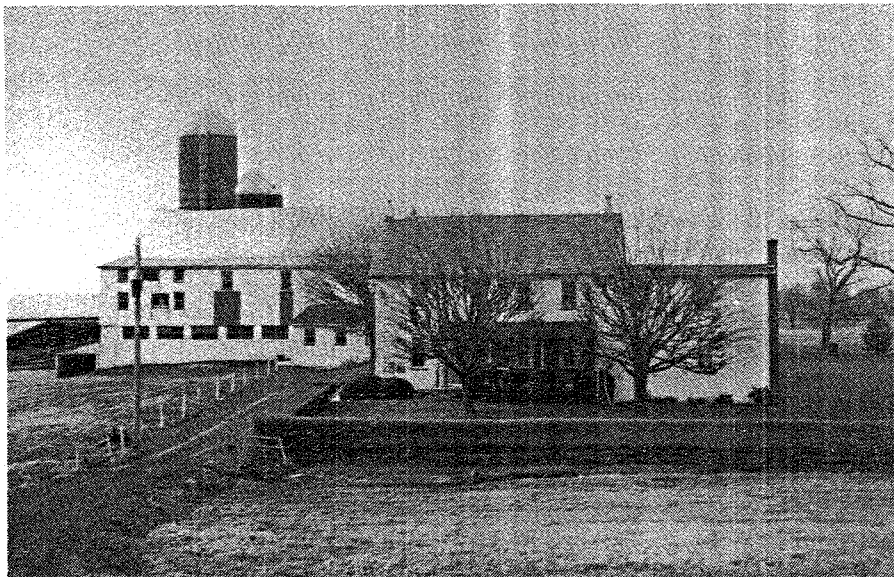
⁶ The Oblinger's son Christel, or Christian, who apparently had some physical or mental handicap, is not mentioned in the History of the Oblinger Family. He may have died young.

⁷ It would appear that Oblinger's wife Elizabeth had some handicap and was unable to care for the household, causing a "difficult and troubled household condition". Another reason for Oblinger to plead for Elizabeth's inheritance.

We have no record of the outcome of this letter, so we don't know if the inheritance was received. We do know that the Oblinger-Uplinger family remained in the lower Carbon County-northern Lehigh County area and left many descendants there.

Sources

1. Wm. H. Rinkenbach, *History of the Oblinger-Oplinger-Uplinger Family* (1964), pp. 7-12.
2. Rev. A. J. Fretz, *A Genealogical Record of the Descendants of Christian and Hans Meyer...* (Harleysville, PA., 1896), pp. 18-22.



Homestead of Christian Meyer, Sr. (intersection of Routes 113 and 63, Harleysville)