

South / North / West

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(A chapter for the Canadian Beam book)
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This book deals with the lives and genealogy of Abraham Beam and his nephew John Beam (Rev. Martin's son). These two men, together with their wives and children, were the pioneers of our Beam/Boehm family in Canada.

But, you may ask, what about others who carried the Beam name and who left Lancaster County, PA before the Canadian pioneers? And what of other Beams left behind in Lancaster?

First to leave that county was the immigrant Jacob III's son John (Abraham's brother). This John and Mary, together with their family, joined a group of Mennonites led by Henry Keagy and left Lancaster about 1766. The Keagy group left John and family in Woodstock, VA and continued on to New Market, VA. In Woodstock John purchased a small house for his family and worked as a drover, taking cattle over the Shenandoah Mts. to settlements to the west. After two years he left Woodstock and again joined Henry Keagy, who by this time had taken property along Smith Creek just east of New Market, which lies in the Shenandoah Valley, a truly beautiful location.

However, John was not happy in the valley and wanted to establish himself as a miller, which was his occupation in Pennsylvania. So, he took up land by patent of 90 acres for his mill site, another 179 acres at Beahm's gap, and later another 276 acres on the Blue Ridge.

This acreage lies about twenty five miles east of New Market on the western slope of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The present-day town of Luray, VA, laid out in 1812, lies in the valley just west of the foot of this slope. Here he built his grist mill along the headwaters of Pass Run, which joins Rocky Branch Creek, which in turn finds its way to the Shenandoah River.

As John Beahm's four sons, Jacob, Tobias, John Jr. and Abraham took up grants in the hollow formed by Pass Run, the hollow became known as Beahm's Hollow. Future generations spread throughout the area surrounding the mill and also across the top of the Blue Ridge Mts. to its eastern slope. The cut formed by the extension of Beahm's Hollow road, over the crest of the Blue Ridge was named Beahm's Gap because there were Beahms living on both sides of the ridge.

The spelling of the family surname was standardized just prior to the beginning of the Civil War in 1861 to Beahm. No record has been found as to whom credit should be given for this spelling or the reason behind it. So, all Beahms from our lineage that are descendants of this John use this spelling. There's usually an exception to every rule, however, so you will find descendants of John that migrated to Tenth Legion, just north of Harrisonburg, VA kept the spelling Beam.

The original Beahm pioneer cemetery is located just above the site of John's grist mill. John died June 21, 1800, but his wife preceded him in death. Burials were held here until 1930, after which time most Beahm interments were in Beahm's chapel cemetery or in evergreen cemetery in the town of Luray. Yes there is a Beahm's Chapel in Page County, VA and it is located on Highway 211, just east of Luray. The chapel was so named because a James Beahm donated the material to build this non-denominational chapel.

There were two main events that affected the lives of the Virginia Beahms. The first was the Civil War from 1861 to 1865. Many Beahms served in the army of the Confederacy and had no knowledge of their cousins from Ohio in the Union army. No record is known to exist where Beahms of Virginia ever met Beahms of Ohio on the battlefield. We are grateful for that fact.

More Civil War battles were fought in Virginia than in any other state. Beahms endured hardships, not only by having their men away fighting, but by being constantly harassed by foraging Union troops and even by their own Confederates.

Let us take a look at Benjamin Franklin Beahm, who at the age of nineteen was drafted into the Confederate army infantry on Apr 5, 1862. In less than a year after being drafted, he fought in the battle of Chancellorsville on May 3rd 1863, this was the last great battle of the Civil War won by the Confederates. Ben was wounded in the arm and was sent to the hospital where the doctors wanted to amputate his arm because they couldn't remove the musket ball. Ben told the army authorities to give him a pint of whiskey to kill the pain, and since he was no longer any use as an infantryman, to send him home.

Now, it so happened that one of the top Confederate generals, Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson, was also wounded in his left arm by his own troops at Chancellorsville the night before Benj. Franklin Beahm was shot. However, Stonewall's arm was amputated and he died eight days later at Guiney's Station of pneumonia. Stonewall is considered to be the greatest military strategist of the Civil War and possibly of all time.

After Stonewall Jackson died, Benjamin Franklin Beahm returned to his parent's farm at Beahm, VA. This farm fronted on the New Market - Sperryville turnpike, on the western slope of the Blue Ridge, on what is now Route 211, and being eight miles east of Luray, VA.

Since Ben, because of his stiff arm, could not hold the reins of a horse and do very little manual labor, he opened a tea room on the turnpike that eventually also contained a branch of the U. S. Post office and the county toll gate. In years later the Clisor family opened an auto filling station on their property adjoining the Beahms. These two properties were called "Beahms" by the county, state, and federal governments and shown on all maps as being "Beahms ", even though there was never a town or village at this location. The family cemetery called "Jacob Beahm cemetery" lies behind "Beahms" and the entire complex is now a part of the Shenandoah national park. Ben was born Oct. 21, 1843 at Beahms and died there Nov. 10, 1914. He married Josephine Butler Oct. 16, 1873 and fathered nine children.

After the park service took over "Beahms", the buildings were all raised, and the highway relocated slightly lower making the cemetery hard to find.

The second event that effected many of the Beahms began to unfold in 1926/27 when the U. S. Congress authorized the formation of the Shenandoah National Park, and the state of Virginia began acquiring land to turn over to the federal government. In 1931 the construction of the Skyline Drive began along the crest of the Blue Ridge Mts. (a part of the Appalachian chain). Four thousand people living within the new park's boundaries were assured that they would not be forcibly relocated unless they were in the path of development.

But by 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration decided that all families must leave the park of 196,000 acres and offered them the appraisal value of their properties and homestead loans to relocate. By 1934 the central section of the Skyline Drive opened and on Dec. 26, 1935 the park was completed, formal dedication of the park occurred July 3, 1936, and efforts to remove squatters were still ongoing. Thirty-eight elderly persons were allowed to stay on their land for the balance of their lives.

Those residents of the Blue Ridge who hated to give up their mountain home called the eviction "the Appalachian trail of tears". Sometimes high drama flared during the evictions, but most families went quietly. One lady said, "we were up in God's country and they sent us down to this God-forsaken land". An estimated 4,000 people lived in these mountains in the 1920s but drought and chestnut blight drove many away. Ultimately, 204 families had to move to designated resettlement communities. Most of the park, stretching more than 100 miles along the Eastern rampart of the Appalachians is now forested, whereas it was cleared land when the mountain folk ruled. Just as nature heals itself over time, the bitterness of the displaced people will someday vanish. Some descendants of those displaced have found jobs within the park service, so they are no longer bitter. Families with the Beahm name were represented on both side of the relocation issue.

Today the Shenandoah National Park has 500 miles of hiking trails and the beauty of the skyline drive for residents and tourists to enjoy, just as Canadians have the Niagara Parkway and Niagara Falls to enjoy in the area where the Beams first settled. Also, at Luray, VA there are the Luray Caverns, said to be the most beautiful and colorful caverns in the U.S. Over 2,000,000 people a year visit this area.

So, we may summarize that after 230 years, the Shenandoah Valley is just as beautiful as when John and Mary entered, and the Beahms have prospered and multiplied just as their Canadian cousins have.

It is interesting to note that during the 19th century, many of the male Beahms were named after famous early Americans. There were four Andrew Jacksons, one William McKinley, four Benjamin Franklins, three George Washingtons, two Theodore Roosevelts, and one Thomas Jefferson.

Let us lift up just one of the George Washington Beahms. This George Washington was the great-grandson of John Beahm, the Virginia pioneer. This George Washington Beahm was born Apr. 14, 1826 in Page County, VA [N.B. then Shenandoah Co., VA] and married Sep. 15, 1846 in Rappahannock Co., VA to Nancy Ellen Bolen (born Sep. 17, 1829). George, who reached the age of

98 yrs. and 3 months left a total of two hundred and two direct descendants as follows: seven daughters, eight sons, seventy-five grandchildren, ninety-five great-grandchildren, and seven great-great-grand children. He had lived in one house for more than seventy years on Pignut Mountain in Rappahannock County, VA. Before Nancy Ellen's death May 3, 1915, this couple was proclaimed by the Virginia governor as being the oldest living couple in Virginia.

George learned to read when he was middle aged, and he learned from his own children, with the bible as his textbook. He could not read script, only print.

Another unique story told by descendants, is how George would kill stray dogs and tan and process their hides to make shoes for the family. The dog tongue would be assembled between the layers of the shoe sole because the tongue would squeak after it dried, and would warn George if any of his family was approaching. In the making of these shoes, George used wooden lasts, but there was no left or right foot shoe; so the footwear took shape during the "break-in period". Several of George's lasts are still treasured mementos held by descendants.

George and his family did most of their trading at the general store in Washington, VA (not to be confused with Washington, DC), the Rappahannock county seat. The account books for this store are now on display in the county museum and show that George never failed to pay his accounts on time, either by trade or barter. (George never went to town without wearing a suit coat - he didn't want to offend the ladies).

George Washington Beahm was an orchardist and farmer high up on Pignut Mountain and all of the land was cleared as was that of his neighbors. The view was like being in heaven say his grandchildren. Shortly after George died (Aug. 5, 1923) the site was taken over by the park service, which torched the house and out buildings. Of the house, only the chimney and gatepost remain. The family cemetery surrounded by a stone wall still exists, but it is almost impossible to reach since the park service will not allow a road to the property, and all of the once cleared land has now reforested itself.

On the occasion of George Washington Beahm's death, the local newspaper "The Washington, Virginia Blue Ridge Guide" said of him in part: thus passed a man, ripe in years, strong in faith, abundant in good works, honored by all that knew him, beloved by all who knew him best. He leaves to those who survive a family, brethren, and friends that which is more to be desired than silver or gold, the blessed legacy of an honored name. In his passing, Rappahannock loses not only its oldest citizen, but one of its best. May those who survive emulate his noble life ! "

The second migration from Lancaster Co., PA by our family was, of course, by Abraham Beam and Rev. Martin Beam's grandson, John Beam, as told elsewhere in this book.

The third migration was by one of Rev. Martin's grandsons, also named Martin (1781-1855), who founded the Ohio branch of our line of "Beams". He used the Beam spelling entirely after leaving Lancaster county.

But, let us view the formation of the state of Ohio just prior to Martin's traveling there. Water is the foundation of the inland state of Ohio. As ice it shaped the land; as rain and snow it nurtured dense forests. A primary tributary of the Mississippi, the Ohio river made the region strategic in the nations evolution. It served as the highway for exploration and trade and furnished power for industrial development. Lake Erie provided deep water harbors.

Ohio was first settled by Revolutionary War veterans. Marietta was the first permanent white settlement in the northwest territory and the region that is now Ohio. Marietta lies at the confluence of the Ohio and Muskingum river. In April 1788 forty-eight pioneers platted the community of Marietta just before three land speculators platted Cincinnati. But, it was not until the defeat of the Ohio Indians at the battle of Fallen Timbers in 1794 that the area became open for settlement. Steamboats began plying the rivers by 1811 and the Miami and Erie canals opened markets for produce by the late 1820s.

Chillicothe, founded in 1796 served as capitol of the northwest territory. The city was host to the states first constitutional convention in 1802, and became the capitol when Ohio was admitted to the union in 1803. It was not until 1812 that the capitol was moved to its present location in Columbus.

Martin Beam, our Ohio pioneer, owned a farm in Soudersburg, Lancaster Co., PA from which he rode horseback on May 27, 1816 to travel to Ohio and search out living conditions there. Land was, even then, expensive in the Lancaster area, and it was Martin's intention to homestead elsewhere, where he could set up his sons with affordable land of their own. During his journey into the new state of Ohio Martin kept a diary in which he detailed his travels and impressions of places visited. The farthest he went west was to a Shaker village just southwest of Lebanon, Ohio. Today this shaker village forms a portion of the Otterbein Lebanon retirement community for senior citizens.

Martin made a notation in his travel diary, when he arrived in Cincinnati, that he thought "in time, Cincinnati will do a bit of Business."

Martin returned to his farm at Soudersburg and began planning his eventual move to Ohio. But, before he could do this, he needed to sell property outside Keedysville, MD which his mother had owned and willed to Martin upon her death in 1811. So, in 1824 the family moved to Maryland and thence to Montgomery Co., Ohio in the area of Germantown in 1831 with \$31,000 in his pocket. Once there he purchased a farm for himself on Diamond Mill rd. He then purchased two farms west of Germantown on Brown's Run road area for sons A. H. K. Beam and Jacob. Another son, John, was set up near Farmersville, a few miles distant. The fourth son was too young at the time to leave his parents hearth. This youngest son, yet another "Martin", eventually, became a cooper, taking time out from barrel making to serve three years in the Union army during the civil war as a cook.

To avoid confusion in family as well as legal matters, the Elder Martin became Martin Beam, Sr. While Martin, the cooper, became Martin Beam, Jr.

So, this was the legacy that Martin Sr. left behind when he died in 1855. His wife, Catharine Wissler Beam, preceded him in death in 1840. Both are buried in the Beam-Judy cemetery, a farm cemetery,

located in a grove of trees in the middle of a corn field on Brown's Run Rd. off state route 725 in German township. Germantown city cemetery was not established until 1851 and is the burial place of Martin Jr., his dates 1823-1903.

For unknown reasons all of Martin Sr.'s sons sold their farms after their father's death and moved elsewhere, leaving only Martin Jr. to the Germantown scene. A. H. K. (Abraham Hershe Keagy) had become an United Brethren minister in Germantown as well as a farmer, and in 1860 moved to Bartholemew County, Indiana.. A. H. K. conducted church services in his new farm home built just outside Columbus, Indiana. The road that the farm was built on was named "Beam road" in honor of this family. The 1860 house was torn down in August of 1972 to make way for a condo development. John Wissler Beam and wife, Polly, plus eight children removed to a farm at Euphemia (now Lewisburg), Preble County, Ohio.

Jacob Nissley Beam sold his farm and worked as a farm laborer until he died in 1874 at the Montgomery county infirmary (poor house) at the age of 68. He lies there in the infirmary cemetery but his wooden cross has rotted away.

So, the sons of Martin Sr., with the exception of Martin Jr., left the Germantown area, so the Beam name remained only with Martin Jr.'s family consisting of four sons and six daughters. But these four sons of Martin Jr. all left Germantown proper when they reached their majority. So, the name of "Beam" no longer exists in that area around Germantown where Martin Sr. had thought the Beam name would thrive.

In the 1800s Germantown, Ohio was a center for distribution of farm produce and had a large distillery and a half dozen cigar factories, but all of that is gone now.

Today Germantown is mostly a bedroom community for the cities of Middletown and Dayton, Ohio and for retired people. It is a laid-back place to live but does not have any attractions to draw tourism to the area.

To bring this chapter to a close, let us return to Lancaster county, PA and to the "Reminiscences of Rev. Henry Boehm". In his book, Henry states that in the year 1856 he paid his last visit to his native place, Lancaster Co., PA. Henry speaks, "my feelings well nigh overcame me, the friends of my youth were gone. There were none of my name remaining in that neighborhood. Generations had passed away, new ones had risen that knew me not. I wandered among the tombs in the old burying ground, then bade adieu to the old chapel, to the old homestead hallowed by so many pleasing recollections."