

The Yeager Families of Slabtown

Kim Yeager-Holdren

This article is dedicated to CCGS member and my genealogy buddy, Milton “Don” Hughes (1945-Aug 2024). Don was dedicated to his goal of finding the parents of Peter Yeager Sr., an early settler in the Catawissa, Columbia County, Pa. area. Through research and DNA we were not able to determine Peter’s Sr.’s parents, but we have been able to expand his family to a new line. Don was aware of this possibility but passed before we could confirm it.

The Yeagers of Catawissa, Columbia County, Pa.:

This article is about four Yeager families that settle in Catawissa Township who shared the surname Yeager/Jager. Our story begins in the early 1800’s where we find three Yeager families residing in Catawissa, Northumberland County Pa: John Yeager Sr (1781-1865), Peter Yeager Sr (circa 1760- death unknown) and John Yeager (circa 1782-1840).

My dad, Robert “Bob” A. Yeager, a fellow Yeager researcher, always thought it odd that there were three Yeager families in this rural area so early in the nineteenth century with no apparent relationship. There was no supporting paper trail to suggest any relationships.

Using modern advancements, could DNA possibly change all of this? For many of us researchers these ancestors would be our 3rd, 4th or 5th grandfathers. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to use autosomal DNA beyond 3 and 4 generations. The game changer is Y DNA which traces the direct male line.

John Yeager Sr.:

I started with John Yeager Sr, my ancestor, born April 10, 1781, based on his tombstone. Many have John as being born April 10, 1784¹, based on a transcribed church record which I believe to be incorrect. I searched for years for the original church record without any success. If you look closely at John’s tombstone you will see that the year ends in a one, and not a four. Additionally, the newspaper articles mentioning his death list him as older. The newspaper “The Star of the North”, indicated “he was in his 84th year of his age,”² and the “Columbia Democrat” indicated he was “83 yrs, 3 mos and 3 days”³ at the time of his death. If John Yeager was descended from Frederick Yeager and Catherine Baum (a possible future article topic) as many suspect, he could not have been born in the years 1784 or 1782 because his sister Anna Maria was born in Oct 1784 and brother Daniel in Jun 1782.

In 1804, John bought an Inn/Tavern from Andrew Trone⁴ in Catawissa, Northumberland County, Pa. If John were born in 1781, he would have been 23 when he made this purchase. If he was born in 1784, he would have been 20 and not yet of legal age to be purchasing a Tavern. I have researched in Columbia, Northumberland, Berks and Philadelphia County Courthouses to find

the original deed without any success. What I do know is that in 1804 John Yeager applied for and was given a Liquor license by Northumberland County (this listing available at the Northumberland County Court house).

1806 – June 4: John Jager and Catherina Horner, both of Oley (Berks County) were married by the Rev. John Boos.⁵ I found this interesting because 2 years prior John had bought his tavern in 1804 and most likely was “commuting” between Oley and Catawissa courting his future wife (and possible first cousin). I have read that this trip was typically done in 1-3 days, not the couple of hours drive we know today. We know he had to have made the trip a few times because Catherine was pregnant with the first of their known 15 children at the time of their marriage. Their first child Susanna was born 27 Nov 1806 in Berks County.⁶

Their other known children were born in what is now Columbia County:
Mary “Polly”, Henry, Elizabeth born Apr 10, 1810, baptized Apr 20, 1810,⁷ Jacob, David, Catherine, John Jr (my ancestor), William, Sarah, Rudolphus “Rutch”, George Washington, Solomon, Rebecca “Becky” born Dec 6, 1827, baptized Jun 22, 1828,⁸ and Margaret.

I have not found many baptismal records for this family. Most of the validation of children’s names are a result of graves and court documents from when John died intestate in 1865.

Peter Yeager Sr.:

I believe Peter Yeager was most likely born between 1752-1765. There was a Peter Hunter in the 1800 census for Catawissa with four people in the household: two adults, a male child under 10 and one between 16 and 25. Could this Peter and Peter Yeager be one and the same person? There is a baptismal record which indicates the family was in Catawissa in 1800. On Jun 22, 1800, Peter Jeger and his wife Catharine were the sponsors for Samuel Stein, son of Michael and Margareta Stein.⁹ I believe that Peter Hunter and Peter Yeager are one and the same. I know from my Yeager family early records they often listed themselves with the surname Hunter, and not Yeager. Peter Yeager was listed in 1810 census for Catawissa, Northumberland County, Pa. and is in subsequent census records up until 1840.

In the 1821 state Septennial census his occupation was listed as Cordwain. He was most likely married in the 1780’s, but I have found no record of a marriage. His wife was most likely Catherine surname unknown. I based this on various children’s and sponsor baptismal records. I believe the couple had at least three children based on available baptismal records:
Peter Jr, Maria Magdalena Jul 3, 1801, baptized Sept 6, 1801,¹⁰ and Rachel born Dec 19, 1803. Her sponsors were John Jeger and Catharina Geiger.¹¹

Other than Peter Jr, little seems to be known about these other children.

On Jun 6, 1813, Peter and Catharina Jeger sponsored Petrus (Peter) Eyer whose parents were Johannes Eyer and Magdalena (nee Schmickin).¹²

If we assume that Peter Hunter in the 1800c. was Peter Sr., then who were the male children listed? I believe that the child under 10 was Peter Jr. Could the male listed in the 1800 census between 16 and 25 years old be the third Yeager that we first see in the 1810c. - John Yeager (died 1840)?

Hughes Samuel	4	X				2	1					6
Horn Andrew	2											
Hunter Peter	1											
Hornick Michael	3	2										
Harty Christian	1											

From Ancestry.com. Year: 1800; Census Place: Catawissa, Northumberland, Pennsylvania; Series: M32; Roll: 37; Page: 682; Image: 119; Family History Library Film: 3633

The other John Yeager:

I am not sure when he was born but based on the year he married, I am guesstimating, that he was between 18 and 21 years old at the time of his marriage in 1805. If we assume he was 21 then he would have been born about 1782. We also know he died intestate in the fall of 1840. When I was originally researching, I thought he might have been the son of John Yeager and Susanna Reppert of Berks County because the family had intermarried with Schmeck's. However, several years ago, I found documentation that their son John¹³ died in Berks County in 1832 thus disproving this theory.

As I was looking through my records for this article, I found that in 1803 John Jeger and Catherina Geiger were listed as sponsors of Rachel Jager the daughter of Peter Jager and Catharina¹⁴ above. This piqued my interest. As I previously mentioned there was an unknown male in the household of Peter Hunter in 1800. Could John be the male listed with this family? Could he be a relation to Peter? Interestingly, John named one of his sons Peter.

In 2013, I found the original German newspaper the Reading Adler that indicated on Mar. 26, 1805, John Yeager married a Maria Schmeit or Schmick, both of Catawissa, Northumberland County Pa.

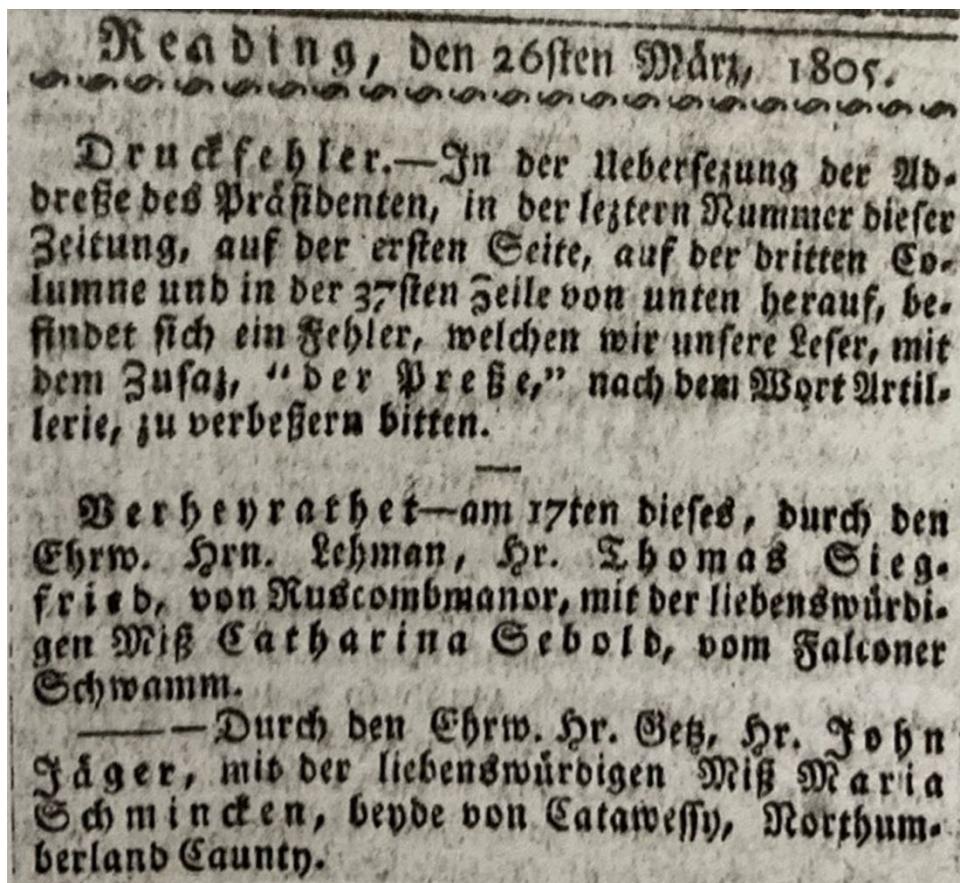
I believe that one or both had ties to Berks County because they had their wedding announcement (below) published in the Adler. There was a Schmick family who settled in the Catawissa area early. At this point, I have found no documentation proving a relationship of this Maria Magdalena Schmick to the early settlers in the area.

I had the Newspaper announcement transcribed by the Reading Historical Society. Following (on next page) is the original marriage excerpt from German Reading Adler (third listing).

On Nov. 18, 1805, John and Maria Magdalena welcomed a baby girl, Elizabeth.¹⁵ Elizabeth's baptismal sponsor was an Elizabeth Schmeit. Could this sponsor be related to Maria

Magdalena? I believe this Elizabeth Yeager died before her father's death because in 1835 there is a baptismal record for another Elizabeth. It is confusing because the 1840 court documents reference an Elizabeth Stein (minor) and not an Elizabeth Yeager.

The 1821 Centennial census lists John's occupation as a Carpenter.



The original marriage excerpt from German Reading Adler (third listing)

In Oct 1840 John Yeager died intestate. It is through various court records, especially those located in the basement of the Columbia County Courthouse that I was able to piece together information about this family. The courthouse documents list John's wife as Mary Magdalena.

Children:

Elizabeth born Nov 18, 1805, baptized Dec 8, 1805¹⁶ (not in 1840 court documents), John born Jun 1, 1808, baptized Dec 8, 1808,¹⁷ Peter S, Henry Jul 19, 1815,¹⁸ Mary, Lewis, Susanna, and Elizabeth born April 26, 1835, baptized Jul 17, 1835.¹⁹

Sometime after the death of John in 1840 the family left the area and settled in nearby Bear Creek, Northumberland, Pa.

Daniel William Yeager:

Daniel William Yeager, born 16 April 1811 and died 16 Nov. 1866. Daniel was the son of Daniel Yeager and Catherine Baucher/Bausher of Berks County. Sometime between 1840 and 1850 Daniel William and his wife Catherine (Hoffman) Yeager left Berks County and moved to Roaring Creek, Columbia County Pa. with their family. Daniel did not stay in Columbia County. He moved back to Berks County where he died in 1866. However, his son William Mahlon Yeager (1837-1915), stayed in Columbia County.

Are they related? Y DNA

What we know to date: Y DNA tests were done on FTDNA in the last ten years for the lines of Peter Sr, John Yeager (1781-1865) and Daniel William Yeager (1811-1866). Who tested:

- 1)Burton Yeager. Burton is the cousin of Don Hughes both descendants of Peter Yeager Sr. and Jr.
- 2) Robert “Bob” A Yeager. Descendent of John Yeager (1781-1865).
- 3)Robert Yeager Sr. Descendent of Daniel William Yeager’s.

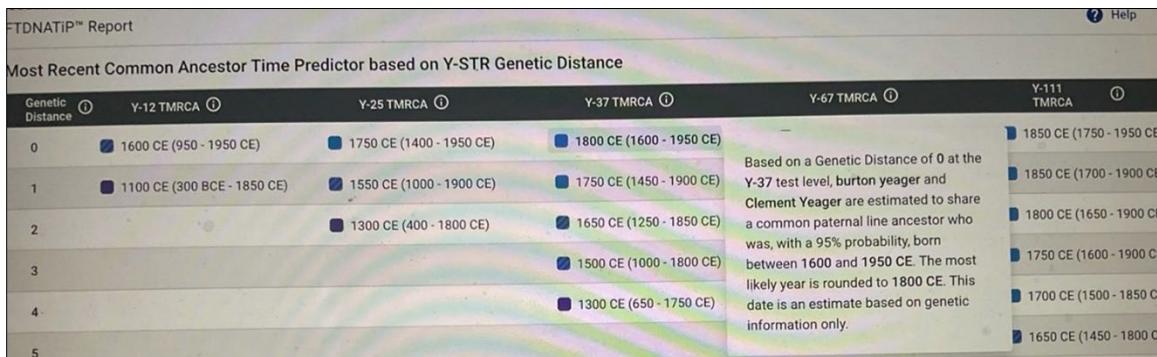
Based on analysis of this Y DNA testing we now know that they do not descend from the same male Yeager. I know that Burton and my father DNA have joined their DNA to the Yeager and Hunter Y DNA projects as well.

That left us with one line that had not tested. We needed a descendant of John Yeager (died 1840) to Y DNA test. I began the process of researching each of his lines until I found a living direct male descendant. I was lucky to find Clem Yeager who descended from Peter S Yeager, son of John Yeager (died 1840). After reaching out to Clem he agreed to Y DNA test on FTDNA. In Aug 2024 we received the Y DNA test results for Clem Yeager. Clem and Burton at the 37-marker had “0” genetic difference and are considered an “Exact Match”. As you can see from the screenshot below it is believed that the common ancestor would have been in the 1800 timeframe.

At this point, we know that there is a connection between the family of Peter Yeager Sr. and John Yeager (died 1840). John Yeager would be the right age to be the minor listed in the 1800 census. Someday, new evidence such as baptismal or marriage records may become available to further document the relationship. While we do not have documentation to specifically prove John as the child of Peter and Catherine, we do have Y DNA to support such a conclusion.

DNA can open new avenues for us to research and build family relationships along with traditional research, such as with the Yeager families discussed in this article. While we have shed some new light on these Yeager families there are still many mysteries to be explored. As I have researched over the years, I have developed some “Theories/Speculation”, that should be further researched. I am sharing them in the hopes that others in the genealogy community may

find them of interest and willing to delve into them further. Continued research will lead to expanding families, better understanding of where we came from, and solving mysteries.



Screenshot from FTDNA. Y DNA kit of Burton Yeager.

Other Theories:/Speculation:

- Many speculate that John Yeager Sr (1781-1865) was the son of Frederick Yeager and Catherine Baum. If that is the case, he married his first cousin. Unfortunately, the baptismal records for this period for the Schwarzwald Reformed church are missing. Through various documentation (wills, deeds) we know that Frederick and Catherine did have a son named John but was he this John? Y DNA may be our only proof of this relationship.
- Peter Yeager Sr.: It is believed that Harmon Jost who settled in the Catawissa area was married to Magdalena Jager. Harmon was originally from Montgomery County. Could Peter be related to Magdalena. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find much documentation on Jager/Yeager's in Montgomery County.

Were there any other children of Peter Yeager Sr? If John was his son, then there is a big gap in ages until Peter Jr born in 1799. There was a Peter Yeauger listed in a 1790 Northumberland census with 1 Male over 16 (most likely adult Peter), 5 males under 16 and 3 females (most likely one was adult female). Could this be Peter Sr? Did he move between 1790 and 1800?

- Harmon Jost Jr's wife was Maria Schmeick. Could this be a relation to Maria Magdelena Schmeick/Smeich.
- Elizabeth Yeager born in 1835 (mentioned earlier) but listed in 1840 court documents as Elizabeth Stein. Why would Elizabeth Yeager be referred to as the minor child Elizabeth Stein in court documents?

Her baptismal record listed her parents as John and Magdalena Yeager. Is there another possibility, could she really be the daughter of Elizabeth daughter of John and Magdalena born in

1805? Did Elizabeth born in 1805 marry a Stein and possibly die in childbirth? Are there other possibilities?

Endnotes

¹ Pennsylvania, Church and Town Records, 1708-1985. Online publication - Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.Original data - Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Pg 38.

² *Star of the North*, Bloomsburg, Pa 26 Jul 1865, Vol 16. Pg. 3

³ *Columbia Democrat and Bloomsburg General Advisor*, 29 Jul 1865 Sat.

⁴ *Historical and Biographical Annals Columbia and Montour Counties Pennsylvania*. Pub. 1915. J.H. Beers and Co., Chicago. Ill. Pg 224

⁵ Church Record of the Schartzwald Reformed Church, Exeter Township, Berks County Pa. Kept by the Rev. John William Boos, 1781-1811. Copied from Mr. Unger's copy Feb-Jun 1941 by William J Hink. Document from Berks County Genealogical Society, Berks Co Pa.

⁶ Pennsylvania, Church and Town Records, 1708-1985. Online publication - Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.Original data - Historic Pennsylvania Church and Town Records. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

⁷ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 16.

⁸ Baptismal Book of St. Paul's German Lutheran-Reformed Church, Numidia, Locust Township, Columbia County, Pennsylvania, 1821-1874. Original translation by Rev. Amandus Leiby. Revised by David L Klees in 1983. Pg 10.

⁹ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 3.

¹⁰ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 5.

¹¹ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 7.

¹² Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach.

¹³ Administration Letters and Bonds, 1752-1851; Index to Administration Letters and Bonds, 1752-1915; Author: Pennsylvania. Orphans' Court (Berks County); Probate Place: Berks, Pennsylvania. Ancestry.com

¹⁴ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach.

¹⁵ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 10.

¹⁶ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 10.

¹⁷ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 16.

¹⁸ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 21a.

¹⁹ Record of St. John's Union Lutheran and Reformed Church, Catawissa, Pa. 1796-1873. Translated and transcribed by Rev. A.S. Leiby 1938. Rewritten 1963 by Raymond E. Hollenbach. Pg 39.